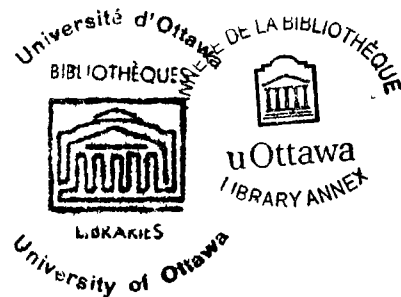


THE POETRY OF ALICE MEYNELL

by

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Thesis presented to the School of Graduate
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for the degree of Ph.D. in English literature



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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INTRODUCTION

Alice Meynell (1847-1922), a London poet-journalist, wrote poetry over a period of about sixty years, but her collected poetry is only a thin volume of 122 poems.¹ She was highly regarded both as a poet and as a journalist, and her poetry was frequently reviewed and anthologized, during her lifetime and for some years after it. As an example of her popularity, she was nominated twice as England's poet-laureate: by Coventry Patmore in 1895 and by J. L. Garvin and Sir W. R. Nicoll in 1913.

Interest in Meynell's poetry, however, has declined since about 1950 for various reasons. The interest in it which had been generated by attraction to her personality, her prose, and her subject-matter, attenuated in time. Some critics relegate Meynell to a backwater in the current of modern literature because they consider her a displaced Victorian out of contact with the zeitgeist or they consider her poetry narrow in scope or deficient in its expression of

¹This thesis uses as a text of Meynell's poems The Poems of Alice Meynell, First Complete Edition (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1923), which contains all her poems which were published up to that time. Poems are classified as "early poems," "late poems," and "last poems."

emotion. The Catholic Revival,¹ which promoted Meynell's poetry, was exhausted by 1950. Her poetry has received only impressionistic, not analytic, criticism. In opposition to these critics, this writer believes that Meynell's poetry is wide in scope, that it expresses strong, although subtle and complicated, emotions and feelings, that it reflects the main literary movements of the Age of Transition,² and that, because of its intrinsic merit, it is worthy of close analysis.

The purpose of this study is to establish the intrinsic worth of Meynell's poetry. Incidentally, its relationship to the Age of Transition will be seen.

Chapter One presents a biographical sketch of Meynell, relates her to the Age of Transition, and surveys representative criticism regarding the development, strengths, and weaknesses of her poetry. Chapters Two to Four present a close analysis of selected poems from Meynell's early, late, and last poetry.³ Each poem is individually analyzed with respect to theme, structure, diction, imagery, and rhythm and sound. Chapter Five synthesizes the results of the analysis,

¹This is discussed in Chapter One, pp. 22-25.

²The Age of Transition, the period of English literature between the Victorian and modern periods, is considered to extend from 1880 to 1920.

³Late and last poems are sometimes called "mature poetry," in contrast to the early poetry.

comments on the development, the strengths, and the weaknesses, of Meynell's poetry, and relates it to the Age of Transition. Within each category--early, late, and last poetry--the order in which the poems are analyzed is determined by their themes, not by the order in which the poems appear in the text.¹

¹Almost none of Meynell's poems can be exactly dated. The Meynell Collection at Boston College has manuscripts of nine of them, but only two--"Christ in Portugal" and "Reflections"--are dated.

CHAPTER I

MEYNELL: THE PERSON AND THE POET

Meynell belongs to both the Victorian period, and the Age of Transition, in English literature. Her personality was moulded, and her early poetry written, during the Victorian period, but her influence on society occurred, and her late and last poetry were written, in the Age of Transition. Before the intensive analysis of selected poems, Meynell's relationship to her times, and the general impact on critics of her poetry, will be examined. Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to briefly present some central facts and forces, and impressionistic comments, bearing on Meynell's poetry. The chapter gives significant biographical details and pertinent comments on her personality, relates her to the Age of Transition in general and to its three main literary movements--Aestheticism, the Metaphysical Revival, and the Catholic Literary Revival--in particular, and surveys representative criticism of her poetry.

A. Biography and Personality of Meynell

Alice Meynell was born at Barnes near London in 1847, the second and last child to Thomas and Christiana Thompson. Her father was a sensitive connoisseur of private means but of no profession or occupation, and her mother was an

accomplished pianist devoted to music and painting. Meynell's childhood was spent both in England and on the Continent, especially in Italy, but the Thompsons settled permanently in England in 1865. In 1872 Miss Thompson became a Roman Catholic;¹ in 1875 she published Preludes, her first volume of poems; and in 1877 she married Wilfrid Meynell, a journalist.

Marriage, which brought Meynell family and journalistic responsibilities, ended for many years the leisure she needed for composing poetry. The Meynells raised seven children and worked very hard as journalists. Wilfrid edited Merry England, his own monthly, from 1883 to 1895, and The Weekly Register, Cardinal Manning's paper, from 1881 to 1899. Meynell edited, translated, proofread, and performed other miscellaneous tasks connected with these papers, and she contributed numerous articles to other papers. In the 1890's her prose came to its fulfilment, and her essays in "The Wares of Autolycus," a column for women in the Pall Mall Gazette, brought her wide critical and popular acclaim and the friendship of George Meredith. Admiration for her prose was in fact so great that Max Beerbohm facetiously confessed a dread of

¹Subsequently in this text "Roman" is omitted from "Roman Catholic" and "Roman Catholicism." Meynell's mother became a Catholic in 1870; her sister Elizabeth, in 1873; and her father, in 1881 shortly before his death. Viola Meynell, Alice Meynell: a Memoir (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), p. 46, relates that the priest who received her mother into the Church encouraged her to write poetry, and that the termination of her friendship with him, a precaution to safeguard his priesthood, inspired such early poems as "Renouncement," "After a Parting," "Parted," and "Thoughts in Separation."

the future when "Mrs. Meynell shall have become a substitute for the English Sabbath."¹ These essays were later collected and published as books.²

For seven months, in 1901-02, Meynell traveled in the United States, lecturing on English authors and reading her own work. After this trip, in addition to her essays, she wrote art criticism, introduced anthologies, wrote a comprehensive interpretation of John Ruskin's work, and did other miscellaneous literary work. She returned to writing poetry in 1895, and she continued to write both poetry and prose almost until her death in 1922.

Meynell's reputation as a poet was high from about 1893³ to 1950. Admirers of Preludes include A. L. Tennyson, John Ruskin, and Aubrey de Vere. Ruskin, writing Meynell's mother, praises three of its poems: "I really think the last verse of that song ["Letter from a Girl to Her Own Old Age"] and the whole of San Lorenzo ["San Lorenzo's Mother"] and the end of the daisy sonnet ["To a Daisy"] the finest things I've

¹A. K. Tuell, Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1925), p. 41.

²These books include The Rhythm of Life and Other Essays (London: Mathews and Lane, 1893), The Colour of Life and Other Essays (London: John Lane, 1896), The Children (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1897), and The Spirit of Place and Other Essays (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1899). These essays greatly advanced Meynell's literary reputation in the 1890's.

³Preludes (London: Henry S. King, 1875) was reprinted, with some omissions and additions, as Poems (London: Elkin Matthews & John Lane, 1893).

seen or felt in modern verse."¹ In 1913 Meynell placed next to Rudyard Kipling in a plebiscite taken by T.P.'s Weekly, a widely circulated journal.²

A popular opinion just after Meynell's death was that her essays and her poetry, by virtue of its form and content, were of such high merit that her significance and permanent reputation in English literature were assured. For example, one critic considered that she was safer from time than any other contemporary English writer;³ another wrote: "She was among the six or seven best women writers in the records of English literature, and the only one to achieve greatness as an essayist";⁴ and a third wrote: "Not only was Alice Meynell the outstanding poetic genius of these later years, both by the matter and substance of her poetic message, she was such also by the form to which she molded it."⁵ In 1940 Meynell's poetry was included in the Oxford Standard Authors series.⁶ In 1947 two centennial editions of her work were published, and a

¹Alice Meynell: A Memoir, pp. 51-52.

²S. B. James, "A Catholic Singer," Ave Maria, XXX (Oct. 26, 1929), 516.

³George M. Shuster, "Inheritors," The Catholic Spirit in Modern English Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 152.

⁴John C. Squire, "Alice Meynell," Essays on Poetry (London: Hodder, 1923), p. 98.

⁵J. C. Reville, "A Poet's Angel Guardian," America, XXVIII (Jan. 13, 1923), 305.

⁶The Poems of Alice Meynell (London: Oxford University Press, 1940). One reviewer considers that this inclusion is equivalent to burial in Westminster Abbey--"The Poems of Alice Meynell," (anon. rev.), The Catholic World, CLIII (June 1941), 369.

permanent Meynell collection was established at Boston College in Massachusetts.¹ Her poetry was anthologized and reviewed, especially in Catholic periodicals, until about 1950; since then it has been largely neglected.

Meynell's girlhood journal reveals gravity and dreamy melancholy, but no girlish frivolity. For example, one entry mentions a "youth of sorrow";² and another, made at age seventeen, reflects strong feelings of guilt and of lost innocence: "I climbed into a field where I picked cowslips and tried to think myself an innocent little girl again with no love affairs. . . . Altogether I felt myself but a faint copy of that innocent child."³ Meynell apparently as a girl had a scrupulous conscience which was preoccupied with the wrongness and the danger of emotional indulgence.

Meynell's feelings of guilt, due to her failure to restrain her emotions, might have resulted from her father's influence. "That father's influence, I suspect, can hardly be sufficiently emphasized. It was he who created the permanent climate in which his daughter then and for ever after dwelt."⁴ Meynell's father, her sole tutor, gave his daughters two hours

¹Alice Meynell: Prose and Poetry. Centenary edition, ed. F. Page and others. Biographical and critical introduction by Vita Sackville-West. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947); and The Poems of Alice Meynell, 1847-1923. Centenary Edition, ed. Francis Meynell (London: Hollis & Carter, 1947).

²Alice Meynell: A Memoir, p. 38.

³Ibid., p. 39.

⁴V. Sackville-West, "Introduction," Alice Meynell: Prose and Poetry, p. 18.

of schooling daily, as he considered their education a prime responsibility which must be honored despite their semi-nomadic life. In an essay of Meynell her father's strong influence on her is easily seen:

His personality made laws for me. It was a subtle education, for it persuaded insensibly to a conception of my own. . . . I began to discern all things in literature and in life . . . that I was bound to love, not the things of one character only, but excellent things of every character.¹

That is, he guided Meynell in developing her own concepts; and she considered that his guidance was excellent, that it embraced all aspects of life, and that it was given so powerfully, although subtly, that it was irresistible.

In this same essay Meynell admires her father's silence, delicacy, abstinence, and reticence, when she describes him in this manner:

A man whose silence seems better worth interpreting than the speech of many another The delicate, the abstinent, the reticent graces were his in the heroic degree. Where shall I find a pen fastidious enough to define and limit and enforce so many significant negatives?²

Her discontent with her lack of control over her emotions is probably related to this admiration of his "significant negatives," and it is directly related to her conversion to Catholicism, which was motivated by a practical, not a philosophical, consideration; not trusting her own judgment and

¹"A Remembrance," Alice Meynell: Prose and Poetry, p. 227.

²Ibid., p. 226.

strength regarding morality, she embraced an authoritarian church which forcefully administered morality:

My reason for joining the Church is my reason for remaining in it--its administration of morals. Other Christian churches or sects . . . have the legislation of Christian morality but they do not enforce the law. The Catholic Church administers it by means of her Sacraments, that of the Confessional especially.¹

Meynell rationally and totally embraced Catholicism in such a fashion that it provided criteria for all her subsequent actions:

Never surely was so rational a choice as hers more absolutely embraced in its farthest implications. . . . No single act of hers in life or literature was not pledged and bound by her when she chose that law.²

Renunciation, the careful limiting of self-gratification because of belief in a spiritual reality, is a central principle of Meynell's life and a constant guide in its activity; she is characterized by a "constancy to renouncement as a principle of life, not alone in the name of the spirit but in the name of taste, of refinement, of original joys, and of the sacred word."³ She was a seemingly aloof person who spoke little and rarely of herself. She avoided movements, except the Women's Suffrage Movement, in which she firmly believed, and for which she held office, paraded, and wrote.

¹Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 5.

²Alice Meynell: A Memoir, p. 43.

³Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 52.

There was little exterior evidence of spiritual struggle, past or present, in Meynell. "No great battle, it seems, was ever fought on the field of her soul."¹ To a certain extent important decisions, like her conversion to Catholicism, were made early in Meynell's life and precluded such conflict. Also relevant in this regard were personality traits which resembled her father's--silence, reticence, and abstinence--and the will of a Christian stoic, which were foremost in Meynell; passion, although amply present, was well restrained by intellect: "There was no defect of that [passion] in Alice Meynell; she had much to control, and control never froze the springs of emotion in her."²

Besides being strong, Meynell's mind was delicate, discriminating, sensitive and non-conformist. Rather than echo or rephrase others' thoughts, she attempted to convey original subtle thoughts which were difficult to express precisely. "She always stood apart and separate. Hers was the elusive thought, so shy, so faintly adumbrated in some cases, as to be barely visible, yet always unexpected and rare."³ To her everything was rare, as her inner vision transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary: "The commonplace was

¹Virginia Moore, "Alice Meynell," Distinguished Women Writers (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1934), p. 165.

²Essays on Poetry, p. 99.

³E. H. Moorhouse, "Flower of the Mind: Alice Meynell and Her Work," Fortnightly Review, CXIII (January 1923), 71.

unseen by her eyes; it did not exist within her range."¹

One critic reflects on Meynell's appreciation of the matter-spirit duality of the physical world: "She saw an inner and very real spiritual meaning in tiny things of grace, just as she saw something homely on the inner side of magnificence."² That is, for her diversity and unity co-exist in the cosmos. By virtue of their materiality all objects, even the most magnificent, are finite, limited, and therefore "homely"; by virtue of their spirituality, however, all objects, even the most insignificant, participate in and reflect the same underlying spiritual reality. Meynell believes that one spiritual reality informs all cosmic activity, which follows one master plan in order for harmony to obtain. However, the restraint of individuals, which is necessary in achieving this plan, is compatible with their freedom and spontaneity. For example, she states that a garden should be neither wholly uncultivated nor totally shaven; it should be "not a wilderness, but [a production] having an enclosed wildness, a directed liberty, a designed magnificence and excess."³

¹Moorhouse, 67.

²F. Bone, "Alice Meynell," London Quarterly Review, CXXXIX (April 1923), 249.

³"Coventry Patmore," The Second Person Singular and Other Essays, ed. Fred Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 107.

B. Meynell and the Age of Transition

In one sense an age of transition began early in the nineteenth century, as the Industrial Revolution introduced diverse and profound changes. Great increases in population, urbanization, technology, and bureaucracy in England transformed patterns of living. England¹ became the workshop of the world and acquired a great empire through her factories, trade, banks, and colonization. Forces, such as evangelicalism, utilitarianism, laissez-faire capitalism, and broadening enfranchisement, brought her middle class power, affluence, stability, and prestige. The aftermath of the long struggle between science and religion was religion's pervasive loss of credibility. A society becoming more and more dependent on science and industry tended to reject the traditional values which had formerly ensured continuity and coherence.

Progress and decadence co-existed. "The great polar ideas of the Victorian period were accordingly the ideas of progress and the idea of decadence."² Progress is associated with new urban areas, mass education, railroads, and increased wealth; decadence, with slums, overcrowding, social injustice, the collapse of agrarianism, rampant materialism, ugliness,

¹Other areas of Britain were affected somewhat later and to a lesser extent than England by the Industrial Revolution.

²Jerome H. Buckley, The Triumph of Time (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 13.

alcoholism, disease, crime and delinquency. Optimism grounded on unparalleled prosperity gave way more and more after 1870 to pessimism grounded on significant deterioration in the quality of life, and by the late Victorian period even the most fervent apologists of progress harbored grave doubts concerning its establishing a millennium.¹

Around 1880, the general tempo of change, and the divorce of art and society, accelerated, as the artist became disillusioned with the anti-aestheticism of the middle class, and he sought escape from a constricting society through self-expression. A multitude of movements arose, each intending to provide the artist with interior standards to replace the extrinsic authoritarian ones being jettisoned. Max Nordau considered that three categories of degeneracy included many of these movements: mysticism included pre-Raphaelitism, symbolism, Tolstoyism, and the Richard Wagner cult; ego-mania included Parnassianism, diabolism, decadence, aestheticism, Ibsenism, and Nietzscheanism; and realism included movements associated with Zola and the young German plagiarists.²

Walter Pater was a seminal influence on the approach to art at this time. He advised the artist to seek out the focal point of activity, in order to encounter vitality and

¹Buckley, p. 52.

²H. E. Gerber, "The Nineties: Beginning, End, or Transition?", Edwardians and Late Victorians, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 58.

develop intensity, by cultivating an impressionistic eclectic attitude, when he counseled him to

be present always at the focus, where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy. To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy . . . to be for ever testing new opinions and courting new impressions.¹

Artists generally followed this advice, and attempted to break with conventions by exposing themselves to novelty in all forms and by experimenting with new techniques. Three chief schools of art which consequently developed include the realist, which allowed a greatly increased range, and new freedom of choice, in subjects; the symbolist-aesthetic,² which was related to the significance of art for its own sake; and the anti-traditional, which reacted consciously against conformity to traditions.³ The effect of the artist's interaction with a plethora of forces was threefold: he began to insist on his own authority and superiority and on the amorality of his art; to re-assess truth, using personal judgment, not tradition, to reach conclusions; and to express a pervasively melancholic tone.⁴ The artist was achieving greater personal freedom and

¹Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 197.

²Symbolism is not separate from aestheticism as a movement in English literature.

³Graham Hough, "George Moore and the Nineties," Edwardians and Late Victorians, pp. 4-9.

⁴Gerber, p. 75.

the detachment of his art from non-artistic considerations. His developing melancholy reflected both the decadence of, and his alienation from, his society.

Experimentation and the search for novelty generated enthusiasm and excitement, which steadily grew in intensity throughout the 1880's, and which reached their peak in the first half of the 1890's, "a colorful, fervent, sometimes clamorous, often comic and just as often tragic decade."¹ Enthusiasm declined sharply, however, after Oscar Wilde's trial in 1895 and Aubrey Beardsley's death in 1898. Although decadence was at times very prominent, it was overshadowed by vitality. Multi-faceted experimentation, motivated by the desire to expand the horizons of knowledge and to interrelate the arts, included attempts to probe into the conscious and unconscious mind, and attempts to fuse fiction with music and painting, and to fuse the literal and the symbolic.² In fact, most activity was genuinely motivated by the desire to improve the quality of life; central to the decade was "a widespread concern for the correct--that is, the most effective, the most powerful, the most righteous--mode of living."³ According to one critic, any achievements of the twentieth century are merely extensions or pale copies of what was begun

¹Gerber, p. 55.

²Ibid., p. 56.

³Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1922), p. 14.

in the 1890's.¹

One opinion is that Meynell implacably resisted the zeitgeist of the 1890's: "Although she was in that world of the 'nineties, in the scintillating midst of it, she was very certainly not of it. She remained . . . an ever-faithful and unrepining Victorian."² Through her social and literary contacts, she was in an excellent position to apprehend and evaluate the major movements. Her home was a prominent center in the London literary world, especially frequented by those of serious disposition. "Poets and writers of high purpose came, and come, to this household, by instinct of a right of way to the things that matter."³ Meynell was prestigious and influential, "a veritable Egeria in the London literary world, the centre of a salon that recalled the salons of pre-Revolutionary France."⁴ However, she had no inclination to abandon her deep religious belief and to pursue the thousand ephemeral movements spawned by those in search of meaning; she considered indiscriminate experimentation an invitation to chaos. To assume that she lacked vitality because she did not wildly pursue that which she already possessed is absurd.

¹Richard Le Gallienne, The Romantic '90's (London: Putman, 1926), p. 137.

²J. L. May, "Alice Meynell: An Appreciation," Tablet, CXC (Oct. 11, 1947), 229.

³C. Lewis Hind, "Alice Meynell," Authors and I (New York: John Lane Co.; London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1921), p. 218.

⁴Le Gallienne, p. 129.

A related opinion is that Meynell's work does not reflect her time: "Alice Meynell's prose and poetry had nothing of a particular epoch, it is not markedly Victorian nor has it any of the subsequent Edwardian characteristics."¹ However, this opinion, seemingly based on excluding and narrow criteria, is unjustified, as her time was very complex and validly reflected in many different ways.

Aestheticism,² the dominant movement in the arts in England from 1850 to 1900, is associated with "art for art's sake," because it resulted from the artist's determination to ground his work on aesthetics and to disengage it from extrinsic controls. Aestheticism is reflected in both the workmanship and the spirit of Meynell's poetry. She wrote sonnets at a time when very few other English poets did. Her revising of and her reluctance to publish many of her early poems indicate a great concern with polish and perfection. She chose diction with scrupulous care for exactitude, believing that "the most finely exact word of thought, the most accurately responsive

¹R. Wilberforce, "Alice Meynell's Essays," The Catholic World, CLXVI (March 1948), 569.

²Aestheticism, according to Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1969), p. 34, is "the advocacy of artistic and aesthetic autonomy, especially of freedom of art from any interference on political, religious, social, or moral grounds. Influences on Aestheticism include Romanticism, the pre-Raphaelites, Walter Pater, and French poetry. Decadence, an offshoot of Aestheticism, was marked by artificiality, escapism through drugs and alcohol, perversion, the desire to shock, an obsession with death, and narcissism."

word of sense, is the only word which can forever make all things new."¹ Simplicity was the dominant principle which guided her economy of diction, her use of sound, and her disciplined expression of emotion; her growth was toward "a more and more sculptural simplicity of art: compression of phrase and heightening of music, a disciplining of emotion."²

One critic admires the uncontrollable, unanalyzable, "Romantic" strain which co-exists with classical control in Meynell: "In and above her classic control and perfection there is, at her best moments, the uncontrollable and unanalyzable 'divine' of the Romantics."³ Another critic notes that, despite her direct intention and commitment to truth, her work has an indefinable quality:

No writer ever lived with a more strictly direct intention, a more austere truthful mind, than Alice Meynell; yet, though this is felt to the full in her work, it is hard to define the quality of that work, or to assent to definitions of it.⁴

These comments suggest an aesthetic spirit in Meynell, in that she gives priority to the expression of insights and not to the accommodation of an audience; that is, she is concerned

¹A. K. Tuell, "Mrs. Meynell: a Study," The Atlantic Monthly, CXXXI (February 1923), 230.

²K. Bregy, "The Poems of Alice Meynell," America, LXV, 16 (July 26, 1941), 444.

³M. Armstrong, "Alice Meynell," The Bookman, LXIV (April 1923), 14.

⁴M. Kolars, "Lady of Letters," Commonweal, X (Sept. 25, 1929), 535.

with apprehending, not communicating, thoughts and feelings.

Meynell's poetry has never been the subject of objective analysis: "Alice Meynell has never invited the critical dissection of the impersonal critic."¹ This neglect is partly a consequence of her aesthetic spirit, of her attention to thoughts and feelings so elusive, fragmentary, and purely personal that they are not readily communicable. Another consequence is that her audience will not be great, as many people are not sufficiently motivated to attempt to experience her poetry, despite its merit: "Her appeal will always be to a few only, but of the excellence of her workmanship and the quality of her art there can be no question."² Also Meynell's poetry makes such demands on an audience that only those who share her sensibility, and not violent or apathetic people, will be attracted to it: "If her kingdom is not for the violent, it is still less for the sloven and the careless. It lifts one to something of its own height or it is out of reach altogether."³ Therefore, Meynell's aesthetic spirit, although

¹Sister M. Madeleva, "Alice Meynell, Poet of My Delight," Alice Meynell Centenary Tribute, ed. Terence L. Connolly (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1948), p. 24. Many impersonal critics are associated with New Criticism, a critical movement begun in the 1920's by I. A. Richards. This movement considered that literature was a social study and therefore that its language and structure were fit subjects of close, quasi-scientific analysis. In the 1930's T. S. Eliot shared Richards' prominence as a New Critic.

²Armstrong, 14.

³K. Tynan, "Mrs. Meynell's Collected Poems," The Bookman, XLIII (July 1913), 167.

largely responsible for her poetry's distinction, also contributes to limiting her audience.

G. K. Chesterton, who equates the Aesthetes with Stoics and Pagans, insists that Meynell is an artist, not an Aesthete:

Since she was so emphatically a craftsman, she was emphatically an artist and not an Aesthete. . . . She was strong with deep roots where all the Stoics were only stiff with despair; she was alive to an immortal beauty where all the Pagans could only mix beauty with mortality.¹

Elsewhere he contrasts her thoughts of life with the Decadents' thoughts of death, stating that any thought of hers "had in it the principle of life, where all the thoughts of the decadents had in them only a principle of death."²

Aestheticism, however, is not incompatible with deep roots, a sensitivity to immortal beauty, and thoughts of life. Meynell certainly reflects Aestheticism but not its offshoot, Decadence. Many Aesthetes, including Meynell, did not embrace Decadence; for example, the Parnassians--Edmund Gosse, Andrew Lang, and Austin Dobson--advocated morality as well as perfection of form.³ Meynell refused to contribute to the Yellow Book⁴ and dissociated herself from anything decadent but she

¹G. K. Chesterton, "Some Literary Celebrities," Saturday Review, XLV (Sept. 12, 1936), 13.

²G. K. Chesterton, "Alice Meynell," Dublin Review, V, 172 (January 1923), 11.

³K. Beckson and A. Ganz, A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1969), p. 5.

⁴This was an illustrated quarterly published in London in 1894-97 and having a decadent tone.

retained her aesthetic spirit.

Metaphysical poetry is characterized by intellectual wit, subtle psychology, learned imagery, argumentative subtle lyrics, and a blending of passion and thought, of feeling and ratiocination.¹ Seventeenth century poetry is generally metaphysical, as metaphysical characteristics are exemplified by all the best poets of the century.² The term "metaphysical" was coined by Dryden to describe the kind of poetry written by John Donne, who is considered the founder of, and the chief influence on, metaphysical poetry.³ Donne's love lyrics influenced such poets as Lord Herbert, Henry King, John Cleveland, Abraham Cowley, and Andrew Marvell; his religious verse

¹Some representative definitions of metaphysical poetry include: "Highly intellectual poetry marked by bold and ingenious conceits, incongruous imagery, complexity and subtlety of thought, frequent use of paradox, and often by deliberate harshness or rigidity of expression"--Webster's Third New International Dictionary, p. 1420; poetry in which the emotional element is subjected to a highly intellectual consideration, and rational relationships are expressed through logic, wit, and metaphors--Joseph E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), p. 26; and poetry in which the abstract may be connected with the concrete, the remote with the near, the sublime with the commonplace--Joan Bennett, Five Metaphysical Poets (Cambridge [Eng.] University Press, 1966), p. 3. Other possible characteristics include: psychological analysis of love and religion, a penchant for the novel and shocking, unusual or extravagant comparisons, the use of logic to express complexities and contradictions, simple diction, and argumentation--W. F. Thrall and A. Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature. Revised and enlarged by C. H. Holman (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960), pp. 284-85. Dr. S. Johnson's comments on Donne are often referred to in this respect.

²M. Van Doren, "Seventeenth Century Poets and Twentieth Century Critics," Studies in Metaphysical Poetry, ed. T. Spencer and M. Van Doren (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1939), p. 25.

³For examples of thought which makes Meynell's poetry metaphysical, see pp. 38, 46, 49, 54, 63, 72, 86, 106, 118, and 130.

influenced such poets as George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne.

Coleridge, through his lectures, conversations and aesthetic theories, was a precursor of the revival of metaphysical poetry in England. Although Charles Lamb, Thomas De Quincey, William Hazlitt, W. S. Landor, and Robert Browning especially, were attracted to metaphysical poetry, more general interest in it developed only in the 1870's. The first milestone of this revival was Alexander Grosart's edition of Donne's poems in 1872.¹ Grosart later edited other seventeenth century poetry, including that of Herbert, Crashaw, Marvell, and Cowley. E. K. Chambers, Rupert Brooke, and a critic for The Spectator, commented on Donne's popularity in the 1880's when numerous articles were written on him.² In 1899 Edmund Gosse's biography, and in 1912 Herbert Grierson's important edition, of Donne appeared.³ By 1912 poet-critics, such as Arthur Symonds, Rupert Brooke and Gosse, and the Catholic revivalists, had brought the revival to maturity.⁴ The

¹The Complete Poems of John Donne, D.D., ed. Alexander Grosart. 2 vols. (London: The Fuller Worthies Library, 1872).

²Duncan, pp. 113-14.

³Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's (London: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1899); and The Poems of John Donne, ed. H. J. Grierson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912).

⁴Duncan, p. 129.

revival firmly re-established this poetry in England, and it had an important influence on twentieth century literature.

T. S. Eliot's influential essays in the 1920's attracted further attention to metaphysical poetry. He was impressed by its integration of thought and feeling, its psychological realism, and its modernity.¹ Eliot's contribution to the revival has sometimes been overrated, however, as its direction had been determined, before his work, during a rich period of poetic experimentation and discovery.² His later diminished interest in metaphysical poetry scarcely affected its popularity. The metaphysical tradition has influenced most modern poets, including Wallace Stevens, the Fugitives, Elinor Wylie, Herbert Read, Edith Sitwell, and William Empson. In English literature, the metaphysical and symbolist traditions have blended but they differ in one respect: metaphysical poets have a primarily intellectual and logical approach to analogy, whereas symbolist poets have an anti-intellectual and intuitive approach to it.³

Meynell loved and wrote many essays on seventeenth

¹In an essay, "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), Eliot used the phrase, "dissociation of sensibility", to describe the regrettable divorce of thought and feeling in English poetry after the mid-seventeenth century.

²J. M. Munro, "Introduction," English Poetry in Transition, 1880-1920, ed. J. M. Munro (New York: Pegasus, 1968), p. 34.

³Duncan, footnote, p. 219.

century poetry.¹ She had a natural affinity with the emphasis which much of it gives to the intellect and to religious experience. No doubt she was well aware of its revival, but its influence on her own poetry is indeterminate.²

The Catholic Literary Revival is the return, after an absence of three centuries, of Catholic literature to England around 1890. This return has three stages of development: the first, 1845-90, in which literature of social protest introduced a Catholic viewpoint; the middle, 1890-1914, in which Catholic literature received some recognition; and the last, 1914 on, in which it became fully established in the modern consciousness.³

This revival is only one aspect of the Catholic Revival, "the gradual unification of Catholics in England after 1850 and their steady ascent in the religious, economic, social, intellectual, and political areas."⁴ Before the

¹Various essays in The Wares of Autolycus (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) concern seventeenth century poetry. In "My Lovelace," p. 23, Meynell mentions its sense of flight; in "Fair and Flagrant Things," p. 24, she praises the extraordinarily liberal, general, and elastic taste it exemplifies; in "Drummond of Hawthornden," p. 40, she writes: "The seventeenth century has possession of that 'morn' caught once upon its uplands, nor can any custom of aftertime touch its freshness to use or wither it."

²Duncan, p. 111, remarks that a metaphor in Meynell's "The Shepherdess" may come from Herbert's "Christmas."

³Calvert Alexander, The Catholic Literary Revival (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1935), p. 3. Prominent in the third phase are G.K. Chesterton, H. Belloc, M. Baring, T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis, E. Waugh and G. Green.

⁴The Catholic Encyclopaedia for School and Home, II (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965), p. 415. G.M. Hopkins' impact on the revival was not felt until 1918.

revival Catholics had taken very little part in political or public life. Central events in the revival include the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, the Oxford Movement (1833-45) which culminated in J. H. Newman's conversion to Catholicism, heavy Irish migration to England beginning with the 1840's, the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, the conversions which followed Newman's Apologia Pro Vita Sua (1864), and the admitting of Catholics into Oxford and Cambridge in 1870.

Around 1900 a new zeitgeist, resulting from the growing self-criticism and disillusion with materialism of the age and its keen desire for meaning, and from a deeper understanding of the nature and doctrines of the Church and of her task in the modern world, contributed to the general revival of Catholicism.¹ Many people felt that the nineteenth century's bourgeois sensibility, which concentrated on material prosperity, belonged to the old world, which had begun with the Renaissance and which had endured for four hundred years, and that a more sophisticated sensibility, which embraced the spiritual and the material, must be established.²

Meynell had a salient influence on the Catholic Revival. She has been ranked next to Newman in promoting English Catholicism because she intelligently and gracefully drew

¹New Catholic Encyclopaedia, VIII (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), p. 817.

²Alexander, pp. 10-12.

people nearer to Catholic truth, she encouraged other Catholic writers, and "she opened many an unwilling eye to the necessity of the Church amid the spreading chaos of irreligion."¹ Her influence worked powerfully to fructify undeveloped seeds and to co-ordinate scattered forces, "not in any obvious and mechanical way, but by a subtle organic process of inner development."² Meynell was strongly inclined to silence, so that it was her total personality, a product of deep convictions, and not her rhetoric, which won friends for Catholicism.

Meynell directed the Catholic Literary Revival into a movement by uniting isolated people who had no sense of solidarity or community of purpose.³ She linked the old Catholics, such as Aubrey de Vere and Coventry Patmore, with the new, such as Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Theodore Maynard and Alfred Noyes, who were to bring the revival to its peak. For many years her home was a gathering place where Catholic writers made stimulating social and literary contacts. Her prestige imparted great weight to her encouragement and advice to young writers to be at the centre, not the periphery, of their society. One younger Catholic poet describes her as "a

¹Valentine Long, "Alice Meynell," They Have Seen His Star (Paterson, N. J.: Anthony Guild Press, 1968), p. 328.

²B. Herbert, "Selected Silence," Irish Monthly, LXXV (September 1947), 399.

³Alexander, p. 115.

tower of intellectual and spiritual strength, lifting through the mists one of the very few steadfast lights."¹

It is largely to the Meynells' credit that Francis Thompson was enabled to write probably the best Catholic poetry of the 1890's. Wilfrid provided material sustenance for Thompson, and Meynell, by her tranquility, intuitive sympathy, and depth, provided much of his inspiration.

His work is inevitably associated with that of Alice Meynell who, with her husband Wilfrid Meynell, did so much for him. Mrs. Meynell's influence on the world of letters during the years of her life at Palace Court [1889-1905] had penetration and depth and a religious quality ultimately tranquil. She had a particular gift of intuitive sympathy and her poems exacted the power to approach a noble spiritual landscape.²

Meynell contributed to the Catholic Revival also through her work on Merry England, which greatly influenced Catholic art and Catholic social and political ideas,³ and which first published many young Catholic writers, including Thompson; furthermore, she wrote devotional literature, and her poetry is an integral part of the Catholic Literary Revival. She thus fully merits being called "the sun and centre of the Catholic Literary Revival."⁴

¹Alfred Noyes, "Alice Meynell," Pageant of Letters (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 328.

²David Mathew, Catholicism in England, 1535-1935 (London: Catholic Book Club, 1938), p. 229.

³Alexander, p. 122.

⁴Herbert, 402.

C. Criticism of Meynell

Meynell is a meditative, unobtrusively Catholic, poet who is preoccupied with the material-spiritual duality of the world. Religion informs and subtly suffuses her poetry: "Her religion breathes through all her poetry and is as unobtrusive as respiration, and as essential."¹ Her poems present insights into the familiar, which serve as meditations on the world's hidden spiritual meaning, and which have "a quality of freshness and of the unusual, enabling the mind to escape from the incubus of familiarity and to re-discover truth."² She is keenly aware of Christ's loving and sympathizing presence in the world; "she sees Christ crucified in every trampled flower, in every lost ideal."³ Although an extremely Catholic poet, almost all of whose profoundest poems relate to the Eucharist, and for whom the cosmos manifests Catholic Mysteries, she is not edifyingly Catholic and makes no emotional appeals for Catholicism.⁴

¹D. P. Kennedy, "Alice Meynell, Poet and Essayist - II," The Irish Monthly, LX (March 1932), 151.

²R. Edridge, "Poetry of Alice Meynell," The Catholic World, CXVI (November 1922), 156.

³J. C. Squire, "Mrs. Meynell: an Appreciation," Dublin Review, 172 (April 1923), 305.

⁴C. C. Martindale, S.J., "A Tribute to Alice Meynell," The Catholic World, CLXVI (November 1947), 176. The most relevant Catholic Mysteries in this context are the Eucharist, the transformation of the consecrated species into Christ in the Mass; and the Incarnation, Christ's human birth, by virtue

Meynell's religiosity establishes throughout her poetry a single mood, one which reflects her dissociation from contemporary apathy towards spirituality: "She was the poet of one mood--the mood of a fervidly spiritual soul who feels a melancholy loneliness in an age of no faith."¹ Her melancholy is related to man's transiency and his utter dependence on God; man's mortal existence--from beginning to end--is continuously contingent on God's power. "She has taught us more than anything else that we are lent by God, that we have no power apart from God, that at his call we shall return whence we came."² Meynell reflects on the central paradox concerning man: his soul, aware of a transcendent goal, is frustrated and depressed by its unnatural and restrictive union with a body corruptible in time. Her thought "is the thought of essence at the mercy of accident; or in other words, of the soul of man borne down by Time and Change and hard put to overcome the feeling of being dwarfed and depressed."³

However, Meynell's tone is complex and not one of unrelieved melancholy, because her faith and joy in immortality

of which He is continuously and mysteriously present in the world.

¹"The Rescuer of Francis Thompson," (anon. rev.), Literary Digest, LXXV (Dec. 23, 1922), 29.

²Patrick Braybrooke, "Alice Meynell and Her Poetry," Some Victorian and Georgian Catholics (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1932), p. 65.

³D. P. Kennedy, S.J., "Alice Meynell, Poet and Essayist - I," The Irish Monthly, LX (January 1932), 840.

counterbalance sorrowful thoughts on mortality: "Much that she wrote was sad, but the sadness was of this world, not of the next--the radiance of that always illuminated her mind."¹ In Meynell's world there is an awareness of a supreme divine power, and joy triumphs over melancholy. "Everything, in this aloof world, is high and white and bright; gloom itself is [made] 'all glorious within' by the interpenetrating light from above."² In this world transiency and decay contribute to the achievement of a total purpose, and fragmentation and chaos are only apparent, as all elements interlock into a unity. Meynell's cosmos has "a coherent and satisfying unity, a unity of meaning and of purpose reflecting the unity of the divine life itself."³

In Meynell's poetry exercise of intellect is as prominent as is religion, and strict discipline has evidently been imposed on imagination so that central thoughts are precisely expressed: "She never wrote a line, or even a word, without putting brains into it; or, in the most exact sense, meaning what she said."⁴ Her dominant intellect functions as a flood-gate which rigidly controls the turbulent waters of her

¹Moorhouse, 72.

²S. G. Ford, "Sisters in Song," The Bookman, LIII (October 1917), 27.

³T. Corbishley, "In Memory of Alice Meynell," Tablet, CXC (Oct. 18, 1947), 250.

⁴G. K. Chesterton, "Alice Meynell," Dublin Review, 441 (Autumn 1947), 5.

emotions, never allowing them to rush impulsively but only to escape quietly and gradually; therefore, the essence of her poetry is "feeling oozed through the pores of thought."¹

Meynell's dominant intellectuality is manifested also in her ingenuity, her logical frameworks, and her use of paradox. Her ingenuity, demonstrated in her discovery of a new subject or her fresh treatment of an old one, relates her to the metaphysical poets.² In her poetry mental constructs are presented which achieve a definite structure: "Mrs. Meynell tended to base a poem on a carefully constructed logical relationship, preferably a paradox."³ She is fascinated with any spiritual paradox, especially with "the sober and true paradox which is implicit in the very nature of human consciousness itself, that union of the one in the many, that play of opposites and reconciliation of contradictions."⁴ This paradox, of which man is naturally and powerfully aware, is that in the cosmos individuals, although physically independent and separate, are somehow all interrelated, and that contradictory phenomena are mutually reconciled on a higher level of being.

¹Francis Thompson, "Mrs. Meynell's Poems," Literary Criticisms. Collected by T.L. Connolly, S.J. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1948), p. 188.

²N. Kevin, "Collected Poems of Alice Meynell" (rev.), Irish Ecclesiastical Record, LVII (March 1941), 286.

³Duncan, p. 110.

⁴Llewellyn Jones, "Poetry of Alice Meynell," First Impressions (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 192.

In Meynell's poetry insights, generated by her personal vision and attitude, are central, and diction is chosen carefully, under the strict guidance of intellect, to express these insights. "Hers was a quiet, contemplative talent. She chose and used words, usually with infinite care, to express deep and often original insight into many aspects of literature, humanity, and natural beauty."¹ Because thought, its expression, and the vocabulary employed in it, are all so intimately interrelated, the success of this expression greatly depends upon the effectiveness of her diction. One critic remarks that she conveys the most elusive thoughts extremely well, that she has "an amazing gift for capturing with a phrase the most elusive turns of thought, for arresting the cloud shadows of emotions as they pass over the mind and giving them solid intellectual form."² Her intellectual control is responsible for her judicious choice of words in order to express precisely both denotative and connotative meaning: "No writer has had a more exquisite sense of the value of words, their shades of meaning and their associative evocative qualities."³ The prime function of the imagery generated by diction is to contribute to the expression of insight and not to call attention to itself; her chaste, disciplined,

¹New Catholic Encyclopaedia, IX, p. 789.

²John Drinkwater, "Alice Meynell," Muse in Council (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1925), p. 229.

³Essays on Poetry, p. 109.

exact diction, therefore, creates frugal unadorned imagery.¹

One critical judgment of Meynell is that her poems are satisfying intellectually, but limited emotionally, because they are deficient in the expression of emotion:

All the poems are ideas, visions, and prayers; but none of them could conceivably be quoted either in Parliament or in Church. And here is at once the secret of Alice Meynell's power and of her limitation; she goes infallibly to the reason of things, but seldom, if ever, to the heart of things.²

If this comment were valid and her poetry cerebral only, it would scarcely merit serious attention as art. Another critic, believing that the lyrical note is absent in Meynell due to her inability to express insights, maintains that it is their nature--sweet and pathetic--which precludes their effective expression: "Mrs. Meynell's thoughts and feelings seem to be half-suffocated by their own sweetness and pathos, so that, though they can speak with admirable delicacy, tenderness, and--that rarest of graces--unsuperfluousness, they cannot sing."³ This comment implies that Meynell's thoughts and feelings are unworthy of poetic expression because they lack detachment and coherence.

Another judgment, related to the one just cited and also unsympathetic, is that Meynell's verses "are literary,

¹John Drinkwater, Victorian Poetry (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), p. 121.

²Shuster, p. 150.

³C. Patmore, "Mrs. Meynell, Poet and Essayist," Fortnightly Review, LII (December 1892), 763.

through-and-through literary, habitants of a world remote from our world."¹ That is, her poems can have no emotional impact because they pertain not to the actual physical world, but to a mental or spiritual one. This comment implies that Meynell's poetry is not really poetry.² One critic considers that Meynell's poetry strongly reflects her salient personality traits, in that her tone is associated with silence and withdrawal, and her art is hedged in with inhibitions related to personal reticence.³

Other critics, however, believe that Meynell's poetry does express deep emotions, but that they are often too subtle to be readily experienced. The emotions which interest her are original rather than commonplace, and always to some extent intractable: "She deals with emotions which it might seem as impossible to communicate as to paint a wind."⁴ Despite stringent limitations, related to her personality and to her disciplined poetic approach--related to her reticence, her

¹"Collected Poems of Alice Meynell" (anon. rev.), The Sign, 20 (September 1940), 124.

²All poems naturally have emotional impact because they express poetic intuitions, interactions of poets with reality which involve their inner selves, the seats of emotions. A poem must be based on the real world, not on a mental or ideal world.

³Ifor Evans, English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century (London: Methuen, 1966), p. 184.

⁴Thompson, p. 187. Whereas Patmore's comment above suggests a deficiency, Thompson's suggests a special talent, in Meynell's power of insight.

precision of statement, and her avoidance of emphasis--her poetic voice is full, clear, and resonant; she has "a manner rarely compounded, reticent, and yet precise and uncompromising in statement, shunning every kind of emphasis, and yet of the most lucid and ringing accent."¹

Meynell's music, although not appropriate for platform and pulpit as it makes no appeal to the raw emotions of masses, is nonetheless intensely stirring and poignant, through its subdued chords and overtones. "We must not look for martial music, but for the ultimate note, those softer chords of melody, overtones of half-repressed emotions, yet pathetic in their intensity."² Because she exercises great restraint in expressing her feelings and thought, their depth is not obvious; her poetry, therefore, is usually best experienced meditatively, not impulsively. "You will not catch the full melody at first, nor will the real depth of thought be apparent. The imaginative quality, though profound, is always subordinate to a simplicity born of sacrifice and vigil."³

Meynell's poetry spans a period of over fifty years. There is a gap of about twenty years between her early poetry, mostly written by 1875, and her mature poetry, written from 1895 until her death. In a comparison of her early and mature poetry,

¹Muse in Council, pp. 235-36.

²Reville, 306.

³T. B. Reilly, "A Study of Mrs. Meynell's Poems," The Catholic World, LXXIII (July 1901), 523.

little development is found in workmanship, but a significant development is found in the relationship of thought and feeling. Her early fine craftsmanship is not later surpassed: Preludes (1875) "shows the poet already in the full maturity of her powers. . . . The workmanship of the book is exact and unflinching from the first page to the last . . . there could be no development of an art that seemed to have had no probation days."¹ Intellect controls the mature, much more than the early, poetry. Her early work is characterized by direct emotion and visual images; her mature work, by intellectuality, which is manifested in epithets, intellectual conceits, and paradoxes.² In the early poetry salient emotion, which is integrated with thought, produces assured characteristic music, which is absent in the mature poetry, in which emotion is restrained by or consequent and juxtaposed to, not integral with, thought.³ The effect of this development, according to one critic, is that in Meynell's mature poetry a cold classicism replaces the rapture of her early work.⁴

As Meynell develops, the chief subject of her poems changes. The early poems focus on nature; the later, on God;

¹Muse in Council, p. 227.

²Armstrong, 13-14.

³G. Bliss, "The Poetry of Alice Meynell," The Month, CXLI (April 1923), 316-17.

⁴J. O'Rourke, "Catholic Renaissance in English Literature: Alice Meynell," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, XXXIX (February 1932), 126.

and the last, on both nature and God: "The early poems make a friend of nature, the later poems by an upward movement make a friend of God, while the last poems are the natural reflexions of a mind which has been all the time the friend of nature and the friend of God."¹ The Catholic Renaissance introduced a new optimism, opposed to the prevailing pessimism, which was related to disgust with materialism. Meynell's later poetry, written from 1895 to 1917, the peak period of this renaissance, reflects optimism which contrasts with the pessimism of poets such as Thomas Hardy and A. E. Housman; therefore, "the main body of Alice Meynell's later poetry is representative of the fin de siècle Catholic Renaissance."² Her last work indicates a graver and deeper understanding of the spiritual.³ Accompanying this change in subject-matter is a change in mood: Meynell's early mood of sadness, associated with death, decay, and transitoriness, yields to a mature mood of serenity, associated with deeper spiritual wisdom.⁴

The following chapters, which are devoted to close analysis of many of Meynell's poems, will examine the validity of the impressionistic comments presented in this chapter.

¹Braybrooke, p. 63.

²O'Rourke, 133.

³L. Wheaton, "Sound of a Voice that Is Still," America, XXXI (April 26, 1924), 42.

⁴Kevin, 286.

CHAPTER II

MEYNELL'S EARLY POETRY

The section, "Early Poems," in the text corresponds to Poems (1893) except for two changes; Poems is a repetition of Preludes (1875), but five poems were dropped and seven were added.¹ This poetry centers on nature, especially on its mystery. Other dominant topics are time, which brings corruption and death to the body but fulfilment to the soul; love, which must be renounced in many cases; and man's relationship with a transcendent God. Poems chosen for analysis were considered to most effectively express these themes. Sonnets were favored because of their short length, their concentration, and their frequency (twelve of thirty-five are sonnets). The purpose is to analyze and evaluate Meynell's early poetry, with respect to theme and its expression. The chapter is divided into four parts, each of three poems, pertaining to time, love, nature, and the God-man relationship. In each poem, the theme is given, and the structure, diction, imagery, rhythm and sound, and tone, are discussed.

¹Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 20.

A. Time: Transiency and Continuity

Poems chosen for this section are "A Letter from a Girl to Her Own Old Age," "The Lover Urges the Better Thrift," and "A Song of Derivations."

1. The theme of "A Letter from a Girl to Her Own Old Age" is the sorrows and consolations of mortality. The poem has nineteen tercets, an expository structure, and a speaker, a young girl, who is addressing her future self, an old woman.

Outline of structure: Time-worn woman, think of her whose caresses bless this message. (salutation, ll. 1-3). You are my mother, because time has broken you, and also my daughter, because it has developed you from me. (our relationship, ll. 4-6). Do you remember the driven clouds, the great hills that stormed the sky, the great powerful winds that have relinquished you, the rain-bearing winds that fretted the mountain, and the sudden gleams that beset mountaintops? You are now a fainting traveller, wandering on a mournful plain in a grey silent world, but misty mountains await you. (images of past, present, and future, ll. 7-21). I do not know how much of my wild heart survives in you, but what you remember is what moved the maiden, what you regret is what darkened her morning, and your past sorrow is her sorrow. (our spiritual identity, ll. 22-33). Although you are so different from me, the constant kiss of the wind, the unchanging bliss of summer, and the eternal childlike vitality of

daisies, bring my heart to you. (our union through unchanging nature, ll. 34-42). I have not written to glorify your decline: the once bright life shrouded, the clouded day, and regretful old age. Your tears are saturating my words. Pardon my strange intrusion, put aside this sad letter, and forget the writer who imagines your faded features, caresses your grey hair, and blesses your sad twilight. (letter is blessing but futile consolation, ll. 43-57).

Commentary on structure: The salutation conveys the girl's blessings and love to the woman. The conceit¹ that time has transformed the girl into another person--a mother by age but daughter by origin--is stated. The girl introduces images to convince the woman that the changes wrought by time are beneficial: the past was turbulent, violent, and sorrowful; the present is calm, silent, and undisturbed; and the future will be characterized by renewed vitality. The spiritual identity of girl and woman is manifested by the memories and regrets which unite past and present and is corroborated by their identical response to winds, summer blisses, and daisies. This attempt at consolation, however, is followed by the realization that these memories will arouse not joy but such sorrow that the woman's tears will drench the letter. It closes with advice to forget the writer whose resurrection of the past out of love and sympathy has brought unintended

¹A conceit is an extravagant, strained, or fancifully ingenious thought.

anguish. Voiced thoughts of the advantages of old age are overwhelmed by unvoiced feelings about its disadvantages.

Diction: Diction highlights salient characteristics of youth, the journey of life, old age, and time. "Wild"¹ (applied to the girl's heart and to the winds of her youth) means natural and spontaneous and is frequently used by Meynell. For example, the summer growth of Rome is wild, as it "breaks all bounds, flies to the summits, lodges in the sun, swings in the wind, takes wing to find the remotest ledges, and blooms aloft."² "Fretting" (applied to rain-carrying mountain winds) means wearing away or corroding; "stormed" (referring to hills), attacked by storm; and "gleams" (associated with mountain-tops), bright transient flashes of light. These words, together with "besetting" and "bright life," suggest the spontaneity, emotional stress, violent passion, transient brightness, and impetuous energy, of youth.

"Migration" denotes an aimless drift or devious route; "wander" and "straying," movement with no fixed course or goal; "mazes," confusing patterns or complicated paths; "shifting phases," unstable or transient stages; and "misty," obscured or vague. These words, along with "lost," suggest that the journey of life is an undirected confused drift with

¹In the discussion of diction, line references are not given because most of Meynell's poems are very short.

²"Ceres' Runaway," Ceres' Runaway and Other Essays (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1909), p. 10.

an indefinite and obscure goal. Considerable diction relates to the woman's loss, as a result of her journey, of brightness, vitality, and happiness: her dark world is indicated by "twilight," "darkness," "over-shaden," and "clouded"; her proximity to death, by "shrouded," "near to sleeping," "fade to death," and "fainting"; her sadness, by "desolation," "mournful," "regrets," "sorrow," "poor," and "pining"; and her deep anguish, by "O" and "Oh," "press," "hush," "steeping," and "breaks thy heart."

"Time-worn," "weight of years," and the present participles--"pining," "declining," "forgetting," and "fainting"--suggest that time, by progressively increasing the woman's burden, erodes her vitality. Repetition emphasizes "O" and "Oh" (ten times in all), "hush" (five times), "mountains" (four times), "silent" and "mournful" (thrice each), and "wild," "lost," "regrets," and "listen" (twice each).

Imagery: Imagery principally relates to youth, a journey, old age, and nature. Driven clouds, great hills storming the sky, powerful winds, fretting mountain winds bearing rain, young flowers, and gleams on mountain-tops, suggest the violence, power, passion, freshness, and transient brightness, of youth. A fainting traveller, a long migration, wandering, mazes, and misty mountains, suggest the woman's near exhaustion from her life-journey, a drifting in confusion towards an unknown goal. A mournful plain in a grey silent world in evening darkness, and an old grey woman, with thin fingers, faded features, listless eyes, and feeble hands pres-

sing and copious tears watering a letter, suggest the exhaustion, desolation, obscurity, and sorrow of old age. Winds kissing the hair of a girl and woman, summer blisses, and ever-fresh daisies, suggest that nature's joys mitigate life's hardships.

Rhythm and sound: The poem may be scanned as follows:

Lìstén,/|ánd wènn|thý hánd|thís pàpèr prèssès,/|
 Ò tìme|wòrn wòmàn,/|thìnk|òf hèr|whó blèssès
 Whát thý|thìn fìngèrs tòuch,/|wìth hèr|càrèssès.//
 Ò mòthèr,/|fòr|thè wèìght|òf yèars|thát brèak thèe!//
 Ò dàughtèr,/|fòr|slòw tìme|mùst yèt|àwàke thèe,/|
 Ànd fròm|thè chàngès òf|mý hèàrt|mùst màke thèe!//
 Ò fàìntíng tràvèllèr,/|mòrn|ìs grèy|ìn hèavèn.//
 Dòst thòu|rèmembèr hòw|thè clòuds|wèrè drìvèn?//
 Ànd àrè|thèy càlm|àbòut|thè fàll|òf èvèn?//
 Pàuse nèar|thè èndíng òf|thý lòng|mìgràtìon,/|
 Fòr thís|òne súddèn hòur|òf dèsolàtìon
 Àppèals|tò òne|hòur òf|thý mèdìtàtìon.//
 Sùffèr,/|Ò sìlènt òne,/|thát Ì|rèmind thèe
 Òf thè|grèat hìlls|thát stòrmed|thè ský|bèhìnd thèe,/|
 Òf thè|grèat wìnds|òf pòwèr|thát hàve|rèsigned thèe.//
 Knòw thát|thè mòurnfùl plàin|whèrè thòu|mùst wàndèr/
 Ìs bùt|à grèy|ànd sìlènt wòrld,/|bùt pòndèr
 Thè mìstý mòuntàìns òf|thè mòrning yòndèr.//
 Lìstén:-/|thè mòuntàìn wìnds|wìth ràin|wèrè frètting,/|
 Ànd súddèn glèams|thè mòuntàìn-tòps|bèsettíng.//
 Ì cànnòt lèt|thèe fàde|tò dèath,/|fòrgèttíng.//
 Whàt pàrt|òf thís|wìld hèàrt|òf mìne|Ì knòw nòt

Will fòllòw wìth|thée whère|thě grèat|wìnds blòw nòt,/
 And whère|thě yòung|flòwèrs|òf thě mòuntain gròw nòt.//
 Yèt lèt|mý lèt|tèr wìth|thý lòst|thòughts ìn ìt
 Tèll whàt|thě wày|wàs whèn|thòu díd|st|bègin ìt,/
 And wìn|wìth thée|thě gòal|whèn thòu|shàlt wìn ìt.//
 Oh,/ìn|sòme hòur|òf thìne|thý thòughts|shàll guìde thée.//
 Sùddenly,/thòugh|tìme,/dàrkness,/sìllènce,/hìde thée,/
 Thìs wìnd|fròm thý|lòst còuntry flìts|bèsìde thée,--/
 Tèllìng|thée:// àll|thý mèmòries mòved|thě màidèn,/
 Wìth thý|règrèts|wàs mòmning òvèr-shàdèn,/
 Wìth sòr|ròw,/thòu|hàst lèt|t,|hèr lìfe|wàs làdèn.//
 Bùt whìthèr shàll|mý thòughts|tùrn tò|pùrsuè thée?//
 Lìfe chàngès,/ànd|thě yèars|ànd dàys|rènèw thée.//
 Oh,/nà|tùre brìngs|mý strày|ìng hèart|ùntò thée.//
 Hèr wìnds|wìll jòin|ùs,/wìth|thèir cònstànt kìssès
 Ùpòn|thě èvèning às|thě mòmning trèssès,/
 Hèr sùmmèrs brèathè|thě sàmè|ùnchàngìng blìssès.//
 Ànd wè,/sò àl|tèred ìn|òur shìftìng phàsès,/
 Tràck ònè|ànòthèr'mìd|thě màmny màmzès
 Bý thě|ètèr|nàl chìld-brèath òf|thě dàisìes.//
 Ì hàvè|nòt wrìt|thìs lèt|tèr òf|dìvìnìng
 Tò màkè|à glòrý òf|thý sìllènt pìnìng,/
 À trì|ùmph òf|thý mùte|ànd stràngè|dèclìnìng.//
 Ònly|òne yòuth,/ànd thě|brìght lìfe|wàs shròudèd.//
 Ònly|òne mòmning,/ànd|thě dày|wàs clòudèd.//
 Ànd òne|òld àgè|wìth àll|règrèts|ìs cròwdèd.//
 Ò hùsh,/Ò hùsh!//Thý tèars|mý wòrds|àrè stèèpìng.//
 Ò hùsh,/hùsh,/hùsh!//Sò fùll,/thě fòunt|òf wèèpìng?//

Pòor èyes,/|sǒ quìcklǎ moved,/|sǒ nèar| tǒ slèepǐng?//
 Pàrdǒn| thě gírl;||sùch stràngel|dēs|lǎrēs bēsèt hě.//
 Pòor wòmǎn,/lày|ǎside|thě mǒurnfǔl lètter
 Thát brèaks|thǎ hèart;||thě ònè|whǒ wrǒte,/|fǒrgèt hě://
 Thě ònè|whǒ nòw|thǎ fǎdéd fèatǔres guèssēs,/|
 Wìth fìlǐal fìngèrs thǎ|grèy hàir|cǎrèssēs,/|
 Wìth mǒrning tèars|thǎ mǒurnfǔl twìllight blèssēs.//

Rhythm is iambic pentameter.¹ Non-iambic feet include sixteen trochees, of which twelve begin lines, twelve spondees, five anapests, and eight secondary accents; this pattern of heavy stresses emphasizes many important words. Twenty-one lines have caesuras, all rhymes are feminine, and all lines are end-stopped. The rhythmic pattern and feminine rhymes establish slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, aaa/bbb/ etc., develops unity in each tercet and emphasizes key words and images, including related words--"blesses" and "caresses," "kisses" and "blisses," "pining" and "declining"--and related images of "migration," "desolation," and "meditation," of "fretting" and "besetting," of "shaden" and "laden," and of "shrouded" and "clouded." Assonance unifies nine lines. Alliteration unifies twenty-six and emphasizes key words and phrases, including "worn woman," "stormed the sky," "misty mountains of the morning," "fade" and "forgetting," "memories moved the maiden,"

¹As Meynell always uses iambic rhythm, subsequently rhythm will be named only by line-lengths (number of feet in a line).

"constant kisses," "'mid the many mazes," "faded features," and "filial fingers."

Conclusion: The theme is the sorrows and consolations of mortality. The argument used to console the woman is that time has given her more than it has taken from her, as she has undergone no essential change and suffered no real loss. Realizing this consolation is inadequate, the girl tells her to forget the past. Patterns of diction and of imagery suggest the vitality of youth, the loss brought by destroying time, the intense sadness of old age, the confusing journey of life, and the spontaneity and beauty of nature. Rhythm emphasizes diction and, along with feminine rhymes, slows movement. Alliteration emphasizes many key words and phrases. Thoughts and feelings of irrecoverable loss, present participles and contrasting patterns in diction, imagery (of youth, old age, and a journey), slow movement, and keening feminine rhymes, all contribute to a highly melancholic tone; images of the wind's kisses and of summer produce a very minor joyous tone.¹

This poem is marked by logical thought and sincere, completely tender, and acutely controlled feeling.² The

¹Tone is the overall, often complex, attitude expressed by conjunction of all poetic elements, including theme, structure, diction, imagery, rhythm, and sound; it is established by both theme and treatment. In all of Meynell's poetry, deep reflection on and serious treatment of significant, often religious, themes produce a tone which is usually complex and always meditative. To avoid repetition, her meditative tone is not mentioned.

²Reilly, 526.

logical thought intended to provide consolation is overwhelmed by feelings associated with thought, diction, and imagery. The girl is deeply moved by a vision of herself stripped of impulsiveness and strength; her pity and sorrow are too profound to be banished by reason.

Pity, too, inspires 'The [sic] Letter from a Girl to Her Own Old Age,' those moving verses in which the young poet prepares to console the old woman whom she herself will be--when the years, cruel, ruthless, timorous, will have deprived her of joy, ardour, strength. . . . The girl wants to comfort this sorrowful old woman with memories of the morning of life. . . but she cannot escape the melancholy vision. Sorrow overcomes her at the thought of what life gives and what it takes away.¹

The complete tenderness pervading this poem is exemplified by the girl's blessings and caresses, her hushing of the woman's sobs, and her begging pardon for her intrusion. Images of wild nature express Meynell's feelings as a girl and, by contrasting with images of evening calm, her sympathy for her future self:

The poem is at least singularly expressive of this girl mind [sic], taking thought for innumerable morrows, to whom our memory looks back from the generations of her age. It is full of her 'wild thoughts,' which lived in this singularly gentle heart. Its imagery is of the wild winds, of the flowering season, of driven clouds about the great hills that 'storm' the sky, but foretells a calm about the fall of even, ardent in sympathy for the years and the sorrows which will assuredly need their comfort.²

¹"Last Poems" (anon. rev.), Dublin Review, 172 (April 1923), 306-07.

²Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 28.

Hysteria is avoided and intense feelings carefully restrained, partly by the conceit's establishing of detachment through an oblique view of the speaker.¹

2. The theme of "The Lover Urges the Better Thrift" is the transiency of physical beauty. The poem has three five-line stanzas, an expository structure, and a speaker who is addressing her beloved.²

Outline of structure: My fair one, your beauty will last only in the eternity of my love. (conceit, ll. 1-2). Your fitful smiles, except the few given to me, are lost forever; your sweet words vanish daily, as every breath of mortals does; your past laughter exists no more; your vocal accents, except the few sung to me, pass away. (examples of transient beauty, ll. 3-10). Hide within my heart everything you treasure, and be kinder to both of us. (avoidance of loss, ll. 11-13). My cupful from the river will never reach the sea. (comparison and image, ll. 14-15).

Commentary on structure: The conceit that the speaker's eternal love of her beloved can preserve his transient beauty is stated. Examples of it--fitful smiles, sweet words, laughter, and dear tones--are presented. Although normally only

¹Osbert Burdett, "Poems of Alice Meynell," Critical Essays (London: Faber and Gwyer Ltd., 1925), p. 131.

²For convenience the speaker is considered to be feminine and her beloved masculine in this study.

as durable as breath, it will be preserved, and both will benefit, if it is given to her. The comparison of a cupful of river water to his beauty which is given to her suggests that she can preserve it from oblivion.

Diction: "Better thrift" expresses a paradox: the beloved's beauty is saved more if given to, than denied to, the speaker. Diction chiefly contrasts the transiency of life with the permanence of death. "Breath of mortality," "moment," and "fitfully," suggest that physical life and beauty endure only very briefly and insecurely, and that each breath of mortals brings their end nearer. "Past," "done," "cease," "pass away," and "lost," suggest that the passage from life to death is irreversible and final; "for ever," "long sad sea," and "vanish," that death is permanent, sorrowful, sudden, and mysterious.

Imagery: The river and the sea are symbols of life and death, respectively. The river flowing to the sea is paralleled by life: river water, due to gravity, necessarily flows to the sea and so loses its past identity; similarly, the process of life inevitably ends in death, the loss of mortal existence. The cupful of water saved from the sea suggests the speaker's humility in desiring only a very small part of her beloved's transient beauty. Images of it, conveyed by "fitful smiles," "sweet words," "laughter," and "dear tones", are very appropriate to theme.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Mỹ Fair, / | nỏ beauty ỏ of thine | will last
 Save in | mỹ love's | ẻternity. //
 Thỷ smiles, / | that light | thee fitfully, /
 Are lost | for ẻver - / their moment past -- /
 Except | the few | thou givest to me. //
 Thỷ sweet | words vanish day | by day, /
 As all | breath ỏ of | mortality; //
 Thỷ laughter, / done, / must cease | to be, /
 And all | thỷ dear | tones pass | away, /
 Except | the few | that sing | to me. //
 Hide then | within | mỹ heart, / | ỏ hide
 All thou | art loth | should go | from thee. //
 Be kinder | to | thỷself | and me. //
 Mỹ cupful | from | this river's | tide
 Shall never | reach | the lòng | sad sea. //

The rhythm is tetrameter. Non-iambic feet include three anapests, three trochees, and one spondee; there are two secondary accents and four caesuras. Anapests and caesuras slow movement. Trochees emphasize "save," "breath," and "hide"; and secondary accents, "tones" and "sad"; the spondee emphasizes "words." The rhyme-scheme, abba, contributes to stanzaic unity. Assonance unifies five lines; alliteration unifies three and emphasizes "hide" and "heart," and "sad sea."

Conclusion: The theme is the transiency of physical beauty. A conceit--that the beloved's transient beauty which is given to the speaker will be preserved--is followed by four examples of this beauty and the advice to hide it within her. Diction contrasts transiency of life with permanence of death. The central, and most effective, image is the river flowing to the sea. Statements, illustrations, diction, and imagery, produce a major melancholy tone; the conceit produces a minor joyous tone.

3. The theme of "A Song of Derivations" is the immortality given man by his thoughts and his poetry. The poem has five five-line stanzas, an expository structure, and a speaker, who is a poet.

Outline of structure: I come from nothing, but my undying thoughts come from past poets through long links of death and birth. (theme, ll. 1-5). I am like a short-lived blossom, but sun and shower, long since vanished, awoke me. (paradox, ll. 5-8). I track the past through the generations. (continuity of past and present, ll. 9-10). I am like a stream, fed first by cold springs that arose in distant hills a long time ago, and now fed by melting snow on a plain. (comparison, ll. 11-15). Voices foreign to me sang my "fresh" songs, and my thoughts are relics of the distant past. (joy of legacy, ll. 16-20). The immortality of my songs presses heavily on me. (burden of legacy, ll. 21-25).

Commentary on structure: The speaker states that her body is mortal but her thoughts immortal and compares her duality to a timeless blossom and a timeless stream. She has a sense both of joy and of responsibility because her "fresh" songs and thoughts were known in the ancient past.

Diction: Diction relates to mortality, immortality and the poet's legacy, and her ambivalence. "Death and birth," "vanished," "of an hour," "past," and "forgotten," suggest mortality and transiency. "Seed and flower and seed and flower," "undying," "immortality," "long ago and far apart," "far unknown," "long links," and "memories not my own," suggest the continuity, permanence, and transmission, of life through countless generations from its beginning to the present, and the poet's legacy from the past. Her sense of immortality generates both pleasure and pain: "happy," "sweet," and "blessed" express appreciative pleasure; but "heavily" and "presses," a contradictory sorrow related to burden and responsibility.

Imagery: Images of nature refer to the continuity and transmission of life from generation to generation. The stream, which formed from cold springs in the distant hills of "morning" lands, and which is now crossing a plain and being fed by meltwater from forgotten snows, suggests that human life has been continuous for an extremely long time from its original, fresh, and youthful period to its present maturity. Meltwater joining the stream indicates the contribution of the

past to the present. The blossom, continuous from far distant past to present, the development of seed to flower to seed, and the poet's fresh songs, which were sung in the unknown past, suggest transmission of life through countless generations. The speaker's happy songs associate joy with her legacy.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

I còme|fròm nòthìng; //bùt|fròm wèrè
 Còme thè|ùndýìng thòughts|I bèar? //
 Dòwn,/thròugh|lòng lìnks|òf dèath|ànd bìrth,/
 Fròm thè|pàst pòèts òf|thè èàrth,/
 Mý ìmmòrtàlìtý|ìs thèrè. //
 I àm lìke|thè blòssóm òf|àn hòur,/
 Bùt lòng,/lòng vànìshèd sùn|ànd shòwèr
 'Awòke|mý brèath|ì' thè yòung|wòrld's àir; //
 I tràck|thè pàst|bàck evèrýwhèrè /
 Thròugh sèed|ànd flòwèr ànd sèed|ànd flòwèr. //
 Òr I|àm lìke|à strèam|thàt flòws /
 Full òf|thè còld|sprìngs thàt|àròse
 In mòrning lánds,/ìn dístànt hìlls; //
 Ànd dòwn|thè plàin|mý chànnèl fìlls /
 Wìth mèltìng òf|fòrgòttèn snòws. //
 Vòicès,/I hàvè|nòt hèàrd,/pòssèssèd
 Mý òwn|frèsh sòngs; //mý thòughts|àrè blèssèd
 Wìth rèlìcs òf|thè fàr|ùnkñòwn. //
 Ànd mìxèd|wìth mèmòrìes nòt|mý òwn
 Thè swèet|strèams thròng|ìntò|mý brèàst. //
 Bèfòrè|thìs lìfè|bègàn|tò bè, /
 Thè hàppý sòngs|thàt wàkè|ìn mè
 Wòkè lòng|àgò|ànd fàr|àpàrt. //

Hèavily òn|thìs lìttlè hèart
Prèssès|thìs ìmmòrtàlìtỳ.//

The rhythm is tetrameter; substituted feet include seven trochees (of which six begin lines), three spondees, and four anapests; there are five caesuras and six secondary accents. The stress pattern and caesuras produce a slow movement. Trochees emphasize "come," "down," "voices," "woke," and "presses"; spondees, "long" (thrice), "past," and "streams"; and secondary accents, "world's," "back," and "fresh." The rhyme-scheme, aabba, contributes to stanzaic unity and to euphony, and emphasizes images of "hour," "shower," and "flower." Alliteration in nine lines and assonance in fourteen contribute to unity within lines and to euphony. Alliteration emphasizes important words and phrases, including "long links," "past poets," "sun and shower," "mixed with memories," "sweet streams," and "heavily" and "heart."

Conclusion: The theme is immortality, which is evident in thoughts and poetry. The poet compares herself to a blossom, and to a stream, originating in and continuous from the unknown past, and she experiences both joy and sorrow. Diction presents patterns related to mortality, immortality, and her ambivalence to it. Images from nature--blossom, sun and shower, seed and flower, stream and meltwater--suggest the continuity of life through time. Rhythm produces slow movement and emphasizes key words. Alliteration also as-

emphasizes words and, with assonance and the rhyme-scheme, produces euphony. The major tone, established by statements, diction, imagery, and euphony, is joyous; however, a minor sad note is introduced in the last two lines.

B. Love

Poems chosen for this section are: "To the Beloved," "Regrets," and "Renouncement."

1. The theme of "To the Beloved" is the subtle presence of her beloved in the speaker. The poem has six five-line stanzas, an expository structure, and a speaker, who is addressing her beloved.

Outline of structure: You are present in me as subtly as silence is present in winds, voices, pensive lays, and jubilant music; my silence, you come alive in every pause of sound; hush the melody that rises from you and wake for me. (comparison and conceit, ll. 1-10). Like silence you are unvexed amidst wild words and unperplexed; you are a secret and a mystery between footfalls. You are the dearest pause in a lay; you are inwoven with every air; the wildest tempests play with you; and small fragments of you create heavenly joys. I crave darkness and solitude, not the silver noises of the phenomenal world, and my very soul listens for you. You are the pause between sobs, the root of all thought, the interval between laughters, the shape of melodies, and the ecstasy of

prayers. (examples developing comparison, heavenly joy beloved brings to speaker's soul, ll. 11-30).

Commentary on structure: The conceit is that silence is subtly present in all sounds, comes alive when they stop, and causes them.¹ The beloved is as unvexed, unperplexed, and mysterious as silence. His presence in the speaker is compared to that of silence in sound in the last three stanzas. As silence is present in all sounds, including lays, airs, tempests, sobs, laughters, and melodies, everything the speaker encounters evokes her beloved, and therefore engenders heavenly delight within her soul.

Diction: "Inwoven" means incorporated or entwined; "subtly," delicately or in a scarcely indentifiable manner; "mingling," physically united but with components distinguishable; "strays," goes without purpose; and "unawares," unmindful. This pattern suggests that silence, although distinct from sound, is so intricately, delicately, and unobtrusively mixed with it as to be practically indistinguishable. An important pattern of diction associates silence with a neumenal world characterized by quiescent vitality, serenity, mystery, and profound bliss. "Darkness and solitude," "pauses," "trance," and "wake," suggest a neumenal world, quiescent and

¹This relationship of silence and sounds compares with that of substance and accidents in a material substance: silence corresponds to substance, the unparticularized being which exists in itself; and sounds, to accidents, particularizing features which exist, not in themselves, but in the substance.

transcendent, to which the soul is sensitive, and which underlies and informs the phenomenal world of silver noises, sobs, and laughter.¹ The serenity, mystery, and profound bliss of this world of silence are suggested by "unvexed" and "unperplexed," "a secret and a mystery," and "little heavens" and "ecstasy," respectively. Repetition emphasizes the key words "wake" and "listens for thee" (twice), and "pause" (thrice).

Imagery: Images identified with the beloved, which include pauses between sobs and in a mellow lay, thought within all thought, trance between laughs, shapes of melodies, ecstasy of prayers, and wildest tempests, suggest that the speaker encounters him in all sounds. Abstract images of silence in all sounds--winds, voices, lays, and music--and of a melody awakening out of silence, suggest that silence fashions sounds. "Mingling," "inwoven," and "strays," produce images which suggest that the speaker's thoughts of her beloved are so subtle and profound that she is scarcely aware of them.

¹This thought compares with T. S. Eliot's: "At the still point of the turning world . . . at the still point, there the dance is, / But neither arrest nor movement" ("Burnt Norton," Four Quartets, ll. 64-66).

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Oh, / nòt | mǒre sùbtly sǐlénce stràys
 Àmòngst | thě winds, / | bétwèen | thě vòicēs, /
 Mǐnglǐng | àlìke | wǐth pèn | sǐve làys, /
 And wǐth | thě mùsíc thàt | rějòicēs, /
 Thán thòu | àrt prēsènt ìn | mǔ dàys. //
 Mǔ sǐlénce, / lǐfe | rètùrns | tǒ thèe
 Ìn àll | thě pàùsēs òf | hěr brèath. //
 Hùsh bàck | tǒ rèsť | thě mèl | lǒdy
 Thát òut | òf thèe | àwàkēnèth; //
 And thòu, / | wàke èvēr, / wàke | fǒr mè! //
 Thòu àrt | lǐke sǐlénce àll | ùnvèxed, /
 Thòugh wǐld | wǒrds pàrt | mǔ sòul | fròm thèe. //
 Thòu àrt | lǐke sǐlénce ùnpérplèxed, /
 À sècrèt and | à mýstèry
 Bétwèen | òne fòot | fàll and | thě nèxt. //
 Mòst dèar | pàuse ìn | à mèl | lǒw lày! //
 Thòu àrt | ìnwòvèn wǐth èvèrý àir. //
 Wǐth thèe | thě wǐldèst tèmpests plày, /
 And snàt | chēs òf | thèe èvèrýwhèrè
 Màke lǐttlè hèavēns thròugh | òut à dày. //
 Dàrkness | and sòl | itùde shìne, / | fǒr mè. //
 Fǒr lǐfe's | fàir òut | wàrd pàrt | àrè rǐfe
 Thě sǐlvér nòisēs; // lèt | thēm bè. //
 Ìt ìs | thě vèrý sòul | òf lǐfe

Lìstěns|fǒr thèe,/lìstěns|fǒr thèe.//
 Ő pǎuse|bětweēn|thě sòbs|ǒf càres; //
 Ő thòught|wìthìn|ǎll thòught|thăt ìs; //
 Trànçe bětweēn làughtěrs ùnǎwàres: //
 Thǒu àrt|thě shàpe|ǒf mèlǒdìes, /
 ǎnd thòu|thě èdstāsý|ǒf pràyers! //

The rhythm is tetrameter. Non-iambic feet include eight trochees, three spondees, and three anapests; there are two secondary accents and seven caesuras. Trochees emphasize key words, including "mingling," "hush," "pause," "darkness," "listens," and "trance"; and spondees "wake" and "words." Caesuras reinforce sense and, with anapests, retard movement. The rhyme-scheme, ababa, unifies lines within stanzas and emphasizes the related words "unvexed" and "unperplexed." Assonance unifies three lines; alliteration unifies seven and emphasizes "subtly silence strays," "wild words," and "solitude shine." Internal rhyme (ll. 22, 26), the rhyme-scheme, and alliteration, develop euphony.

Conclusion: The theme is the subtle presence in the speaker of her beloved. The exposition displays thought, based on the conceit that silence is present in all sound and on the comparison between the relationship of sound and silence and that of the lovers. Diction relates to the presence of silence in sound and to the qualities of silence. Images suggest that the speaker encounters her beloved in all sounds,

that her thoughts of him are extremely subtle and profound, and that silence fashions sounds. Trochees, spondees, and alliteration, emphasize key words, and the rhyme-scheme contributes to stanzaic unity. Tone, produced by statement, imagery, and euphony, is dignified, serene, and quietly joyous.

2. The theme of "Regrets" is the sorrow of parting, and hope of reunion, of two lovers. The poem has six four-line stanzas, an expository structure, and a speaker, who is addressing her beloved.

Outline of structure: As the ebbing tide moves over the low sandy regions, the waves slip back to the shore; similarly, when the tide of my life carries me from you, my thoughts and memories cannot leave you abruptly; after the waving at departure, you are in my dreams, my cares, my saddest verses, my dim regrets, and my prayers. (comparison, images of parting and of ebb tide, ll. 1-12). I patiently await the day when I will return, reoccupy your desolated thought, and remove the still persistent pain of your loneliness. Shall I make you content just as the flowing tide brims sea-shore lakes, floats seaweeds, and fills pools, rivers, and rivulets inland? (comparison, images of reunion and of flowing tide, ll. 13-24).

Commentary on structure: The structure is bipartite: the first three stanzas pertain to the lovers' parting, which

is compared to the ebbing tide, and the last three, to their reunion, which is compared to the flowing tide.

Diction: Diction plays a key role in delineating the reluctance, involition, and extremely profound, intense, and tenacious sorrow, of the speaker in parting from her beloved. "Lingering embraces," "slip back," and "clasp," relate to the gradually increasing, and apparently undesired, separation of sea and shore as the tide goes out, and suggest the speaker's great reluctance to leave her beloved.¹ Present participles-- "ebbing," "parting," "lingering," "lessening," "waving"-- associated with prolonged action, reinforce this suggestion; "waving" also associates her parting with the ebbing tide. "Tide of life" suggests that, as gravitational attraction develops ocean tides, an external irresistible force necessitates her parting; and "waves," that her thoughts and memories of her beloved occur as periodically and naturally as do ocean waves. "Saddest," "broken heart," and "desolated," suggest that her anguish is maximum and has exhausted her reservoirs of feeling; and "still persistent pain," "dreams," "dim regrets," "so waited for," and "so patiently besought," that it is so profound as to be unconscious, inarticulate, irrational, and permanent.

Imagery: Images of the ebbing tide and of the lovers'

¹The pathetic fallacy is not involved: diction, an integral part of the comparison between the waves and the speaker, indicates her feelings on parting, not their feelings.

parting suggest their anguish in separation; that of the flowing tide suggests their ecstasy in reunion. Wave activity on a shore has three movements: ocean pressure forces water from ocean to shore (wave of translation); gravity forces this water back to the ocean (parting wave); ocean pressure, however, forces some of this water back to shore (backwash). The image of ebbing tide is effective because the two movements depicted--the parting wave and backwash--suggest the necessity for, and reluctance of, the lovers to part.¹ The speaker--her compulsion to part, saddest verses, dim regrets, prayers for and dreams of her beloved--and the beloved--desolated, lonely, and deeply anguished--also powerfully suggest extreme sorrow. The flowing tide--brimming sea-shore lakes, floating seaweeds, and filling pools, rivers, and rivulets, inland--suggests the ecstatic fulfilment of the lovers' reunion.

¹These two movements, although conveniently associated in this poem with the ebbing tide, characterize all wave activity.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

'As, / when | the seà | wàrd èbb'ing tide | dôth pòur
 Òut b' | the lòw | sànd spàces, /
 The pàrt'ing wàves | slìp bàck | t' clàsp | the shòre
 W'ith l'ing'ring / èmbràces, -- //
 S'ò in | the tide / of l'ife | thàt càrries mè
 Fr'om whère | th' trùe | h'èart dwèlls, /
 Wàves of | m'y thoughts | and mèm'ories | r'eturn | t' thèe
 W'ith l'èss'èning / fàrewèlls; //
 Wàv'ing / of h'ànds; // drèams, / whèn | the dày | f'orgèts; //
 'A càre | h'àlf lòst | in càres; //
 The sàd | d'èst of | m'y v'ers'es; // d'ìm | r'ègrèts; //
 Th' nàme | 'àmong | m'y pràyers. //
 'I wòuld | the dày | m'ight c'òmè, / | s'ò wàit'èd f'or, /
 S'ò pàt'iently | b'èsoùght, /
 Whèn 'I, / r'èturn'ing, / shòuld | f'ill ùp | 'ònce mòre
 Th' d'èsp'air'èd th'ought; //
 'And f'ill | th' l'ònèl'iness | thàt l'ies | 'àpàrt
 'In st'ill, | p'èrsist'ènt pàin. //
 Shàll 'I | c'ont'ènt | th'èe, / 'O | th'òu br'èk'èd h'èart, /
 'As th'è | tide c'òmès | 'àgain, /
 'And br'ims | the l'itt'l'è s'èa | sh'òre l'àkes, / 'and s'èts
 S'èaw'èeds | afloat, / 'and f'ills
 The s'ìl'ènt p'òols, / r'iv'èrs | and r'iv'ul'èts
 'Àmong | the inl'ànd h'ills? //

The rhythm is pentameter alternating with trimeter. Substituted feet include two trochees and seven spondees; trochees emphasize "waves" and "waving"; and spondees, "slip," "dreams," and "fill." There are four secondary accents, seven caesuras, and one extrametrical foot. Stress pattern and caesuras slow the movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, unifies lines in stanzas and emphasizes the related words "forgets" and "regrets," and "cares" and "prayers." Assonance unifies seven lines. Alliteration unifies ten and emphasizes "sand spaces" and "persistent pain." In the last stanza, assonance of "i" and alliteration of "s," "l," "f," and "r," develop euphony.

Conclusion: The theme is the sorrow of parting, and joy of reunion, of two lovers. Their parting and reunion are compared to ebbing and flowing tides. Diction relates to the sorrow, reluctance, and involition, of parting. The stress pattern and caesuras retard movement. The dominant tone of the first five stanzas, produced by diction and imagery, is melancholic; the tone of the last stanza, produced by diction, imagery, and euphony, is joyous. Images of tides, suggesting anguish and ecstasy, contribute significantly to Meynell's success in this poem: "The running of the tides is her best symbol for the reach and withdrawal of the human spirit, pressing on to flood the shore and brim the inland pool, only to wane as surely with the ebb, returning 'with lessening

farewells' to the inassessible distance."¹

3. The theme of "Renouncement" is renunciation by day of a beloved and reunion in dreams with him. This Petrarchan sonnet² has an expository structure and a speaker, who is addressing her beloved.

Outline of structure: I must not think of you so, tired but strong, I shun the thought of you that hides in everything delightful, as heaven or a song. (renunciation, conceit, ll. 1-4). The thought of you waits, hidden yet bright, just beyond my fairest thoughts, but I must never let it become conscious. I must stop short of you. (conceit and renunciation restated, ll. 5-8). When sleep closes my day and night breaks my watch, I must loose my bonds and lay aside my will as I would raiment. As soon as I fall asleep, I dream of running and being gathered to you. (reunion in dreams, ll. 9-14).

Commentary on structure: The first quatrain states the speaker's resolution not to think of her beloved and the conceit that he epitomizes all delight. The second quatrain states the conceit again and her resolution to stop the ascent of her thoughts before they reach him, the pinnacle of goodness. The sestet states that she joins him in the dreams in

¹Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 28.

²As all of Meynell's sonnets are Petrarchan, "Petrarchan" will be omitted hereafter.

sleep and gives images of her--pausing in her watch, loosening her bonds, putting aside her will, and running to her beloved.

Diction: The main pattern of diction relates to the speaker's difficulty in repressing thoughts of her beloved. "Whole day long" and "each difficult day" indicate that her vigilance over her conscious thoughts is constant and uninterrupted; "all delight," "blue heaven's height," and "sweetest passage of a song," that all pleasing experiences, especially sublimely pleasing ones, recall him to her; "lurks," "hidden," "stop short of you," and "just beyond the fairest thoughts," that he is in ambush, hidden, and potentially present in all pleasant thought, because each leads to him and can quickly become a thought of him; "shun," "strong," "must" (five times), and "never" (twice), that she is determined at any cost to repress thoughts of him; and "tired" and "bonds," that repression causes fatigue and bondage. "Close," "sleep," "pause," "loose," "doff," and "laid away," all indicate her release from the struggle and bondage of renunciation at night in dreams. "I run" and "first" (both twice) express her excitement and delight in meeting her beloved in dreams.

Imagery: A tired but strong woman, continuously and resolutely excluding her beloved from her thoughts, and a sweet song, one of the delightful subjects which evokes him to her, suggest her tremendous self-discipline and the burden and sorrow of her renunciation. Images of her pausing in a long watch, laying away raiment, loosening bonds, and running to

and being gathered by her beloved, suggest the relief, freedom, and great joy, which she experiences in dreams.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

I must|nòt thínk|òf thèe;||and, /tìrèd yèt stròng, /
 I shùn|thě thòught|thát lùrks|ín àll|dèlìght-- /
 Thě thòught|òf thèe-||and ín|thě blùe|Hèavén's hèight, /
 And ín|thě swèetèst pàs|sàge òf|à sòng. //
 O júst|bèyònd|thě fairèst thòughts|thát thròng
 Thís brèast, /|thě thòught|òf thèe|waits, /hìddèn yèt brìght; //
 Bùt ít|mùst nèvèr, /nèvèr còmè|ín sìght; //
 I mùst|stòp shòrt|òf thèe|thě whòle|dày lòng. //
 Bùt whèn|slèep còmès|tổ clòse|èach díf|fícùlt dày, /
 Whèn nìght|gìves pàuse|tổ thě|lòng wàtch|I kèep, /
 And àll|mỹ bòn|ds|I nèeds|mùst lòose|àpàrt, /
 Mùst dỏff|mỹ wìll|às ràimènt làid|àwày, -- //
 Wìth thě|fìrst drèam|thát còmès|wìth thě|fìrst slèep /
 I rùn, /|I rùn, /|I àm gàthèred tồ|thỹ hèart. //

Non-iambic feet include one trochee, six spondees, and five anapests; there are three secondary accents and four caesuras. Spondees emphasize "waits," "stop short," "sleep," "long watch," "first dream," and "first sleep." A secondary accent emphasizes "Heaven's," and caesuras reinforce sense. The stress pattern and caesuras produce a slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abba/abba/cde/cde, contributes to unity within both octave and sestet and emphasizes the related words, "bright" and "sight." Assonance unifies four lines.

Alliteration unifies six and emphasizes "Heaven's height," "thoughts that throng," "stop short," and "difficult day."

Conclusion: The theme is renunciation by day of a beloved (in the octave) and reunion with him in dreams (in the sestet). Central to the poem is the conceit that the beloved epitomizes delight. A salient pattern of diction relates to the difficulty of the speaker's renunciation. The octave presents an image of her determination and self-control; the sestet, images of her joy and freedom. The stress pattern and caesuras slow movement. Alliteration, repetition, and rhythm emphasize many key words and phrases. Structure, diction and imagery co-operate to produce a melancholy tone in the octave and a joyous tone in the sestet.

One critic considers this an autobiographical poem and "an everlasting expression of the poignancy and yearning and mental conflict" in Meynell at one time.¹ Another praises the contrast of the speaker's discipline, sense of proportion, and obedience, by day with her ardour, impetuosity, and joy, in dreams:

Most perfect is the sonnet entitled 'Renouncement,' which is, perhaps, the best example of the poet's art as the exact representation of a woman's character; here we have ardour restrained by discipline, impetuosity held in check by the sense of proportion, austere obedience to the laws of duty and of art--there the joy of feeling that a world exists

¹M. Walsh, "The Poetry of Alice Meynell," The Irish Monthly, LIX (April 1931), 240.

where the soul is free to follow all its impulses
without breaking any human or divine law.¹

The speaker is determined to follow her conscience, which dictates that her passion be fettered for her greater good. To one critic this poem demonstrates the "plainness and simplicity of a common experience, the heavenly wildness of the common passion that breaks all fetters made by men for each other."² However, although strong passion is expressed, it can break the bonds of conscience only during dreams. A spirit of controlled intensity results from this restraint of strong feelings.

C. Nature

Poems chosen for this section are: "The Love of Narcissus," "The Garden," and "Spring on the Alban Hills."

1. The theme of "The Love of Narcissus"³ is nature's reflection of the poet. This sonnet has an expository structure and no speaker.⁴

¹"Mrs. Meynell: an Appreciation" (anon. rev.), Dublin Review, CLXXII (April 1923), 306.

²H. J. Newbolt, "Alice Meynell," Studies Green and Gray (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1926), p. 272.

³Narcissus was a beautiful youth of Greco-Roman mythology who fell in love with his own image, died of unrequited love, and was transformed into the narcissus flower.

⁴In one sense every poem has a speaker; however, in this study, when first person pronouns are neither stated nor implied, a poem is considered to have no speaker.

Outline of structure: Like Narcissus who saw his image in the river, the poet trembles when he continually sees himself throughout nature as time passes. (nature's reflection of poet, ll. 1-4). The waters of nature quiver with his fair image; the music of nature betrays his own heart; in an unanalyzable manner nature returns his wild thoughts to him; the silent hills reveal his dreams; winds off a dark plain at night resemble his voice; mountain rills echo his mirth, and the rain resembles his weary tears. This strange recognition pierces his lonely heart with love and pain. (illustrations of reflection, its effect on poet, ll. 4-14).

Commentary on structure: The structure is tripartite, including: a general statement that, like Narcissus, the poet sees his reflection in nature; a list of different aspects of nature which reflect different aspects of him; and the mixed feelings of pleasure and pain induced in him by this reflection.

Diction: Diction relates to the intense and complex feeling of delight and sorrow induced in the poet by his reflection in nature. "His fair image," "his own long gaze," "his own heart," and "his wild thoughts," indicate that he is convinced nature truly reflects him; "from out great Nature," "all her waters," "throughout the changing nights and days," and "for ever," that his reflection in and identity with nature are constant and not a function of time or place; and "thrills" and "trembles," that this reflection, through its

promise of fulfilment and of expanded horizons, develops great excitement and joy in him.

However, a discordant note is also struck: "betrays,"¹ "strange," "silent," "vague," "darkened," "night," "trackless," and "wild," suggest that nature's communication is inarticulated, shadowy, obscure, mysterious, and irrational. "Piercing love and pain" suggests the poet's deep frustration with the enigma of nature, which grants him an infallible intuition of a tremendous truth, but no cognitive knowledge by which to clarify and verify it.² "Lonely heart" and "weary tears" indicate his isolation and desolation due to frustration.

Imagery: Images of Narcissus, of nature, and of the poet, principally suggest the poet's frustration rising from his misapprehension regarding the significance of his reflection in nature. Narcissus' hope that his love would be reciprocated was unjustified, as he mistook an image for reality, and his subsequent frustration led to his death. Nature's revelation, through mountain rills, quivering waters, and music, is responsible for joy and excitement in the poet. On the other hand, images of silent hills and of the poet's

¹"Betrays" often means to deliver by treachery to an enemy, but its primary meaning in this context is to reveal.

²This frustration regarding dialogue with nature compares with Francis Thompson's: "For ah! we know not what each other says, / These things and I; in sound I speak-- / Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences." ("The Hound of Heaven," ll. 106-08).

own voice in the wind on a dark plain suggest that nature's revelation is also obscure, mysterious, and prelogical. The diction in "strange recognition thrills his lonely heart" produces the image of the lonely poet strongly moved by his reflection in nature; "piercing love and pain" suggests that he is filled with sorrow and excitement simultaneously; "weary tears" produces an image of his frustration due to nature's incomprehensibility.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Like him|whô mèt|hîs òwn|èyes ìn|thê rîvêr,/
 Thê pòet trêmbles át|hîs òwn|lòng gâze
 Thát mèets|hîm through|thê chàngîng nîghts|ãnd dâys
 Fróm òut|grêat Nàtûre;||ãll|hêr wàtêrs quîvêr
 With hîs|fàir ìmãge fàcîng hîm|fôr èvêr;||
 Thê mùsic thát|hê lìstêns tồ|bêtrâys
 Hîs òwn|hèart tồ|hîs èars;||bÿ tràcklêss wâys
 Hîs wîld|thòughts tênd|tồ hîm|ìn lòng|èndèavôur.//
 Hîs drêams|ãre fàr|ãmòng|thê sîllênt hîlls;||
 Hîs vâgue|vòice càlls|hîm fròm|thê dàrkêned plàin
 With wînds|ãt nîght;||strãnge rêcògnîtiòn thrîlls
 Hîs lònely|hèart|with pîerçîng lòve|ãnd pàin;||
 Hê knòws|ãgàin|hîs mîrth|ìn mòuntàin rîlls,/
 Hîs wèary|têars|thát tòuch|hîm with|thê ràin.//

Non-iambic feet include two trochees and five spondees; there are three caesuras and one secondary accent. Trochees emphasize "eyes" and "heart"; and spondees, "long gaze," "fair image," "voice," and "strange." The stress pattern and caesuras establish slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abbaabba/cdcdcd, interlinks related images, in "river" and "quiver," in

"hills" and "rills," and in "plain," "pain," and "rain," and assists unity in octave and sestet. Alliteration, assonance, feminine "a" rhymes, and the rhyme-scheme, develop euphony. Assonance unifies six lines. Alliteration unifies seven and emphasizes "vague voice," and "piercing" and "pain."

Conclusion: The theme is the reflection of the poet by nature. The exposition states that nature reflects the poet and illustrates this reflection and its impact on him. Diction relates to the reality, permanence, and excitement, of this reflection, and to nature's irrational communication. Images of Narcissus, nature, and the poet, suggest his complex and intense feeling of joy and sorrow. Alliteration and assonance assist unity in lines and, with the rhyme-scheme, develop euphony. The major tone of the octave, developed by exposition, diction, and euphony, is joyous; that of the sestet, developed by diction and imagery, is melancholic.

2. The theme of "The Garden" is the flitting of thoughts, which were given to the beloved, from him to another world. This sonnet has an expository structure and a speaker, who is addressing her beloved.

Outline of structure: My heart shall be your garden; come into it and have happy hours among my fairest thoughts which belong to you alone. (gift, comparison, ll. 1-4). The garden is yours, from the ground where seeds are sown, to the sky with its showers. But who shall build bowers to keep the birds yours? They have flown. (an incomplete gift, ll. 5-9). As the birds come and go, leave our pine to follow summer, or come and sing only one song from our alders, so my heart has thoughts which flit to the silent world and other summers,

with wings that dip beyond silver seas. (comparison of renegade thoughts to birds, ll. 9-14).

Commentary on structure: In the first quatrain the speaker states her total love of her beloved, comparing her heart to a garden which is his alone. In the second quatrain she amplifies, but qualifies, her statement: she cannot keep the birds in the garden. In the sestet she compares the escaping birds to thoughts which she cannot control and which fly from him.

Diction: The diction suggests that the human heart has a dual allegiance: to the conscious, and to the subconscious or unconscious, worlds. "My own" and "thine alone" indicate that the speaker gives her conscious heart completely to her beloved; "new-comers," "sweet season," "happy hours" and "enclosed" suggest that the conscious world, although attractive, is transient and limited by time and space. "Silent world" and "other summers" suggest either a past subconscious world or an unconscious primordial world.¹

Imagery: A garden with extremely beautiful flowers, pines and alders, earth in which seeds may be sown, and a sky from which rain falls to nourish them, suggests the physical or conscious world. Birds, flitting to a silent world, their wings dipping beyond silver seas, suggest a subconscious or

¹"Silent world," "other summers," and "silver seas," refer to the goal of the speaker's thoughts, which fly from her beloved. It is unclear whether they return to the past or seek a transcendent realm.

unconscious world. Some birds, newly arrived in the garden, sing only one song from its alders; others leave its pines to follow the season. These birds, which come to and leave the garden, and the speaker, whose eyes are held by her beloved's but whose thoughts are racing to another world, suggest the continual travel between the conscious and non-conscious worlds.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Mỹ hẻart|shẻall bẻ|thẻ gẻrdẻn.// Cẻme,/mẻ ẻwn,/
 ẻntẻ|thẻ gẻrdẻn;//thẻne|bẻ hẻppẻ hẻủrs
 ẻmẻng|mẻ fairẻst thoughts,/mẻ tẻllẻst flẻwẻrs,/
 Frẻm rẻot|tẻ crẻshẻng pẻtẻal thẻne|ẻlẻne.//
 Thẻne ẻs|thẻ plẻce|frẻm whẻre|thẻ sẻeds|ẻre sẻwn/
 ẻp tẻ|thẻ skẻ|ẻncẻlosed,/with ẻll|ẻts shẻwẻrs.//
 Bẻt ẻh,/|thẻ bẻrds,/|thẻ bẻrds!// Whẻ shẻall|bẻild bẻwẻrs
 Tẻ kẻep|thẻse thẻne?// ẻ friend,/|thẻ bẻrds|hẻve flẻwn.//
 Frẻ ẻs|thẻse cẻme|ẻnd gẻo,/ẻnd quẻt|ẻur pẻne
 Tẻ fẻllẻw thẻ|sẻweet sẻẻsẻn,/ẻr,/ẻnẻw-cẻmẻrs,/
 Sẻng ẻne|sẻng ẻnẻly frẻm|ẻur ẻlder-trẻes,/
 Mẻ hẻart|hẻs thẻughts,/whẻch,/thẻugh|thẻne ẻyes|hẻld mẻne,/
 Flẻt tẻ|thẻ sẻilẻnt wẻrld|ẻnd ẻthẻr sẻmmẻrs,/
 With wings|thẻt dẻp|ẻyẻnd|thẻ sẻilẻvẻ sẻas.//

Non-iambic feet include three spondees and four trochees; there are five secondary accents, and nine lines have caesuras. The heavy stress pattern and caesuras establish slow movement. Spondees emphasize "build bowers," "sweet season," and "hold mine"; and trochees, "sing," "song," and "flit." The rhyme-scheme, abba/abba/efg/efg, provides unity within octave and sestet and interlinks related images, in "hours," "flowers," "showers," and "bowers," and contrasting

images, in "trees" and "seas." Assonance unifies six lines. Alliteration unifies ten and emphasizes "seeds" and "sown," "build bowers," "sweet season," and "silver seas." Alliteration, assonance, the feminine "b" rhyme, and internal rhyme (1. 12), produce euphony.

Conclusion: The theme is the flitting of thoughts, given to a beloved, from him to another world. The speaker states she gives to her beloved her heart, which she likens to a garden, but that some thoughts escape from it, as birds escape from the garden. Diction suggests the beauty, but the limitation, of the garden, and the silence and indefiniteness of a non-conscious world, past or transcendent. The garden suggests the attractiveness of the conscious world; the birds' flight, the attractiveness of a non-conscious world. The heavy stress pattern and many caesuras produce slow movement. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme produce euphony. The major tone, established by diction, imagery, and euphony, is joyous.

3. The theme of "Spring on the Alban Hills" is the arrival and mystery of Spring. This sonnet has an expository structure and a speaker, who is addressing a friend.

Outline of structure: Over the Campagna¹ the weather is hazy and warm. Spring comes silently, filled with emotion and many thoughts. A scarcely perceptible glimpse of the sea

¹The Alban Hills are about fifteen miles southeast of Rome; they have fertile soil and receive abundant rain. The Campagna Di Roma is a volcanic grassy plain, with majestic ruins, on their northern boundary.

divides two mists. Because of the stillness, a feather falls vertically. With the enthusiastic intentions of spring, both hill and plain take on a faint luster, or they become suddenly suffused with the light olive brown of flowers. (near suspension of life as spring arrives, ll. 1-6). Rome of the ages, made indistinct with all her towers, drifts in the mist, a little tethered cloud. (Rome apparently floating, ll. 7-8). Joyfully I would put my hands about your face and draw you to me as I would a mournful child. With your thoughts you are another spring; you look at me from another world. I do not fathom the mystery of this day, nor what makes your gentle eyes so intense in the silence. (attractiveness and mystery of friend, ll. 9-14).

Commentary on structure: The first quatrain states that spring, a personal life-force with emotion and thought, is coming silently; descriptive details--perfect calm, very thick haze, warmth--support this statement. The second quatrain describes both vitality and inanimation, in the onset of color, although scarcely perceptible, of hill and plain, which signifies spring's enthusiastic intentions, and in the apparent drift in the mist of Rome, with its towers and long history, as if it were a tethered cloud. In the sestet the speaker tells a friend of her desire, but her inability, to bridge the chasm between their worlds.

Diction: Diction suggests that the dormancy of winter is being subtly and non-cataclysmically replaced by spring's

intense, but controlled, vitality. "Dim," "faint," "mist," "silence," and "silently," suggest the hazy atmosphere and deep quiet of the season. "Float" means to move leisurely; "grow pale," to take on a faint luster; "flush," to become suddenly suffused; "wild Spring meanings," intensely eager intentions or promises of Spring, and "secret," mystery or something hidden. This diction suggests that Spring, an intense vital mysterious force, advances subtly and imperceptibly.

Imagery: The octave presents images of Rome and adjacent countryside as Spring is arriving: the weather is dim and warm, so calm that a feather falls vertically, and so misty that the sea is seen only faintly at intervals; hill and plain are becoming either faintly lustrous or light brown; and ancient towered Rome is floating in the dense mist, as if it were a little tethered cloud. These images suggest that Spring, arriving gently and mysteriously, is subtly infusing life into dormant nature; they convey appreciation, compounded of delight, joy, astonishment, and reverence. The sestet presents images of the speaker and a friend: she is baffled both by Spring and by him and, with her hands about his face, is drawing him to her, as she would a mournful child, to express affection, consolation, and appreciation; he has wild soft eyes and seems as unworldly and mysterious as Spring. These images convey the speaker's complex feelings towards Spring and her friend: her attraction to and affection for their gently spontaneous vitality, and her frustration with their mystery.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

O'èr the|Càmpàgnà ìt|ìs dìm,|wàrm wèathěr; //
 Thè Sprìng|còmes wìth|à full|hèart sìllèntly, /
 And màny thoughts; //|à faint|flàsh óf|thè sèa
 Dìvides|twò mìsts; //|straìght fàlls|thè fàllìng fèathěr. //
 Wìth wìld|Sprìng meànlìngs hìll|and plàin|tògèthěr
 Gròw pàle, /|òr jùst|flùsh wìth|à dùst|óf flòwèrs. //
 Ròme ìn|thè àgès, /|dìmmed|wìth àll|hèr tòwèrs, /
 Flòats ìn|thè mìdst, /|à lìttlè clòud|àt tètthěr. //
 Ì fàin|wòuld pùt|my hànds|àbòut|thý fàce, /
 Thòu wìth|thý thòughts, /|whò àrt|ànòthèr Sprìng, /
 And dràw|thèe tò|mè lìke|à mòurnfùl chìld. //
 Thòu lòokèst òn|mè fròm|ànòthèr plàce; //
 Ì tòuch|nòt thìs|dày's sècrèt, /|nòr|thè thìng
 Thàt ìn|thè sìllènce màkes|thý sòft|èyes wìld. //

Non-iambic feet include five trochees and six spondees; there are five secondary accents, and seven lines have caesuras. The heavy stress pattern and caesuras produce slow movement. Trochees emphasize "flash," "flush," "Rome," and "floats"; and spondees, "warm weather," "Spring," and "grow pale." The rhyme-scheme, abba/acca/def/def, assists unity within octave and sestet, and interlinks related words, "weather" and "feather," and "child and "wild," and images in "flowers" and "towers." Alliteration in nine lines and

assonance in eight assist unity in these lines and, with internal rhyme (ll. 6, 9) and rhyme-scheme, produce euphony. Alliteration emphasizes "warm weather," "faint flash," and "falling feather."

Conclusion: The theme is the arrival and mystery of Spring. The octave describes the weather, the faint color of hill and plain, and Rome's spectral appearance in the mist, as Spring comes silently; the sestet states the speaker's wish to draw her friend to her and her inability to understand him and Spring. A highly suggestive pattern of diction relates to Spring's subdued and mysterious vitality. Images--the weather, hill and plain, Rome--suggest Spring's gentle awakening of life. The heavy stress pattern and many caesuras develop slow movement; and alliteration, assonance, and rhyme develop euphony. The major tone, established by exposition, diction, imagery, and euphony, is joyous and appreciative; a minor sad tone is associated with the speaker's frustration.

D. God

Poems chosen for this section are: "San Lorenzo's Mother," "The Young Neophyte," and "To a Daisy."

1. The theme of "San Lorenzo's¹ Mother" is the visit of a mendicant friar to San Lorenzo's mother. The poem has

¹There was an historical San Lorenzo, a prior of a convent and afterwards a well-known bishop of Castello. Meynell may be using a legend about him.

five five-line stanzas, an expository structure, and a speaker, San Lorenzo's mother.

Outline of structure: I had not seen my son, who entered the cloister, since he had become a man, so that I would not have recognized him. (son long cloistered, ll. 1-5). Tears veiled my eyes one day when a friar¹ came, whom I felt was my son. (feels mendicant is her son, ll. 6-10). If he were my son, his changed face and religious habit made me uncertain of his identity. I filled his wallet, kissed his beads, and heard his departing feet echo. I will not know until heaven if I gave alms to my son, as the friar pleaded not for himself, but for Christ, to whom I gave them. (mendicant's identity unknown until heaven, ll. 11-20). We are dreams, shadows, and strange visions, but God cannot change, and all I give is given to Him. I might mistake my son but never God's. (changeless God, ll. 21-25).

Commentary on structure: A series of statements state the background and details of the friar's visit and the woman's religious belief. Her reason for believing he is her son is not given. In the last stanza she explains her faith and renunciation: for her this life is a dream in comparison to heaven and her lack of contact with her beloved son is a

¹San Lorenzo had apparently become a contemplative cloistered monk who conventionally differed sharply from a wandering and teaching mendicant friar. However, this convention changed: friars held property and monks taught. The mother's feeling that the friar is her son, who had been cloistered, indicates that this change had recently occurred.

small price for meriting heaven by serving and pleasing God.

Diction: Diction relates to the convictions of San Lorenzo's mother which pertain to her renunciation. "One," "cannot change," and "God's grace," suggest one changeless God who created the cosmos and whose favor must be sought; and "Child divine," "cloister," "Order," "blessing," "holy weeds," and "alms," that the Church, which was founded by Christ to draw man to God, is holy and especially favored by God, and that its institutions, such as monastic societies, and those attached to them, such as monks, share in this holiness and favor. "Dreams," "shadows," and "visions," suggest that man and his world are only reflected and unsubstantial reality totally dependent on God; "veiled," "mists," "doubted," "hope and doubt," "know not," and "mistake," that man is ignorant, uncertain, and inclined to error.

Meynell uses "fold" to refer to something locked in or implied in a nature which will be manifested in time; in some cases the future is almost obvious to her:

In both flower and child it looks much as though
the process had been the reverse of what it was--
as though a finished and open thing had been folded
up into the bud--so plainly and certainly is the
future implied and the intention of compressing and
folding--close made manifest.¹

"Folded flower" suggests that San Lorenzo's future development was already determined before he left home for the cloister;

¹"The Child of Tumult," Ceres' Runaway and Other Essays, p. 127.

"perfect prime," "fulfilled," and "full flower-time," indicate that he has developed his potential and reached full maturity. This pattern indicates his mother's strong desire to verify her expectations of him; and the pattern--"dear face," "dearest son," and "thrilled"--her love of him and her excitement at meeting the friar. The diction, overall, shows that she experiences no struggle, tension, or balancing of interests, between the illusory material world and the real spiritual one, and that, although she loves her son dearly, she loves God infinitely more.

Imagery: There are images related to renunciation, respect for the Church, and the orderly development in nature. A cloister, and the mendicant friar, with habit and beads, who is begging alms for Christ, suggest renunciation of the world out of love of God. The woman, shedding tears of deep emotion, giving the friar alms, and kissing his beads, suggests respect and affection for the Church; and the folded flower which has fully developed, the progression throughout nature according to definite laws.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

I hād|nōt sēen|mý sòn's|dēar fàce /
 (Hē chōse|thē cloistēr bŷ|Gōd's gràce) /
 Since it|hād cōme|tō full|flōwēr-tìme. //
 I hārdly guessed|āt its pèrfèct prìme, /
 Thāt fōlphēd flōwēr ōf hīs|dēar fàce. //
 Mīne eyes|wēre veiled|bŷ mīsts|ōf tèars /
 Whēn òn|ā dāy|īn māny yēars
 One ōf|hīs Òrđēr cāme. // I thrilled, /
 Fācing, / I thōught, / thāt fàce|fūlfilled. //
 I dōubtēd, / fōr|mý mīsts|ōf tèars. //
 Hīs blēssing bē|with mē|fōr èvēr! //
 Mý hòpe|and dōubt|wēre hārd|tō sēvēr. //
 --Thāt àltēred fàce, / thōse hòlly wēeds. //
 I filled|hīs wāllēt and kīssed|hīs bēads, /
 And lòst|hīs èchōīng fēet|fōr èvēr. //
 If tō|mý sòn|mý àlms|wēre givēn
 I knòw|nōt, / and I wāit|fōr Hēavēn. //
 Hē dīd|nōt plēad|fōr chīld|ōf mīne, /
 Būt fōr|ānōthēr Chīld|dīvīne, /
 And ùntō Hīm|it wās sūrēly givēn. //
 Thēre īs Òne|ālōne|whō cānnot chānge; //
 Drēams āre|wē, / shādōws, / vīslōns strānge; //
 And àll|I gīve|īs gīvēn tō Onē. //

I might|místake|mý dèar|est son,/
 Bút nèv|er thè Sòn|whó cà|nòt chàn|ge.//

Rhythm is tetrameter; non-iambic feet include four trochees, one spondee, and nine anapests. There are three secondary accents and six lines have caesuras. Anapests and caesuras develop slow movement. The spondee emphasizes "God's grace"; and a secondary accent, "flower." Trochees emphasize "facing" and "dreams." The rhyme-scheme, aabba, produces unity within stanzas and interlinks "time" and "prime," and the related images in "weeds" and "beads." Alliteration in sixteen lines and assonance in twelve unify these lines and produce euphony. Alliteration emphasizes "God's grace," "full flower," "perfect prime," "folded flower," and "face fulfilled."

Conclusion: The theme is a friar's visit to San Lorenzo's mother. Her thoughts centre on her encounter with the friar and her belief in an unchanging God. Well-developed patterns of diction suggest that her renunciation results from her faith in God's ultimate reality, in contrast to the world's unsubstantiality. Images of the cloister and friar suggest renunciation; and those of the woman, her faith, charity, and piety. Anapests and caesuras develop slow movement; and alliteration and assonance, euphony. The tone, established by exposition, diction, imagery, and euphony, is reverent, confident, and serene.

To one critic the medievalism of the poem crushes natural affections: "Its unimpaired medievalism is supremely artistic; it sounds serenely and without affectation the note of a day which trampled natural affections under foot, and which lifted the will of a man above maternal jurisdiction."¹ However, the natural affections of the mother, who "thrilled" at the thought that her visitor was her "dearest son," are unsuppressed. Believing the earth only a shadow of God, she freely gives Him all she has, including her son: "She gives all she has to One, for she remembers that she is but a shadow, a dream, simply an instrument allowed to give her son to the greater glory of God."² Her tears, occasioned by the visit, relate to love of God and of her son; her faith precludes bitterness, resentment, and sorrow. She is happy because her son "chose the cloister by God's grace" and is co-operating with His will. "There is no loud wail, no piercing cry, no swooning of the frame, but a mist of tears."³ Her serenity, a product of faith, banishes sorrow. Although time has pierced her heart, victory comes from her dereliction through Christ.⁴

This poem reflects Meynell's reticence, mysticism,

¹A. Repplier, "Alice Meynell," The Catholic World, CXVI (March 1923), 726.

²Braybrooke, p. 48.

³Reville, 304.

⁴Edridge, 153.

and emotional control: "In that exquisite cameo, we have the abridgment of the poet's art, her mysticism, her disciplined control of emotions, under whose strain a less perfect artist would have burst into louder but less effective utterance."¹ This poem also aptly illustrates another critical comment: "Through all the world-wide movement of its [Meynell's poetry] seas and skies, there is the sense of the unchanging, of the One that remains . . .; of that unity in variety which . . . is the awakener of the mind and soul to the eternal Beauty."²

2. The theme of "The Young Neophyte"³ is a young neophyte's lifelong commitment to God. This sonnet has an expository structure and a speaker, a young neophyte.

Outline of structure: What future am I making myself responsible for today? I give the flower with the bud, bend a faded brow with my unfaded brow, and feeble knees with these knees. (unknown future committed with present, ll. 1-4). I predispose thoughts yet unformed in me, provide relief from future pain and restraint to future joy, and dedicate my fields when spring is grey. (implications of commitment, comparison, ll. 5-8). Is this pledge of my hidden wheat rash?

¹Reville, 305.

²Alfred Noyes, "Alice Meynell," Some Aspects of Modern Poetry (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), pp. 4-5.

³"Neophyte" has various definitions, including a new or early convert to Christianity, a newly ordained priest, and a novice in a convent; in this context, with no reference to priesthood or convent, it means a newly baptized Christian.

What labors will make to tremble these hands which I clasp together today? (doubtful wisdom of commitment, ll. 9-11). In the shelter of these hands I confirm irrevocably my future love, the creative power locked within me. I light candles at my head and feet and lay the crucifix on my silent heart. (expression of confidence, comparison, ll. 10-12).

Commentary on structure: The first eleven lines consider the implications and doubtful wisdom of committing an unknown future by baptismal vows: an old woman with faded brow and feeble knees is also pledged.¹ In the last three lines the speaker affirms the wisdom of the vows. She is committing her love, a power which will unfold and guarantee her fidelity, and preparing her soul for eternity. She compares her pledge to the preparation for Christian burial of a corpse.

Diction: Diction relates to the significance, implications, and future difficulties and honoring, of the neophyte's commitment. "Seal" means determine irrevocably or fix firmly; "pledge," assure performance of or bind; and "dedicate," devote exclusively to God. This diction indicates that her vows are serious promises to God, regarding future performance, which irrevocably bind for life. "Answer for," "bow," "bending," "altar," and "pray," indicate that she owes

¹The conceit is that baptismal vows, which commit a neophyte until death, commit two people: the speaker, a young unfaded woman; and her future self, a faded and feeble woman.

God submission, reverence, and an accounting for her actions; "who knows," "I know not now," "I guess not how," and "hidden," that she is quite ignorant of future circumstances which may make her fidelity very difficult; and "feeble," "pain," "grey," "trembling," "faded," and "silent heart," that from now until her death, time will fashion an indefinite number of new people from her, each physically weaker than the previous one, and she questions their capacity for constancy. Art is a power of creation or of performance. The speaker's terming her love in the future "folded art" suggests that her love and devotion in the future, which will ensure her fidelity to her vows, will develop out of her present love and devotion, which are signified by her hands closed in prayer; this suggestion is reinforced by "bud" and "flower."

Imagery: Images relate progression in time with the development or unfolding of a potential. The young neophyte, with unfaded brow and folded hands, who is kneeling and praying at an altar, and her visionary future self, with faded brow, feeble knees, and trembling hands, indicate bodily deterioration in time. A bud, which will develop into a flower, and a grey field of "hidden wheat" in spring, suggest that her future, although hidden, is folded within her and will unfold according to nature, and that her future constancy is implicit in her present dedication. The speaker, lighting tapers at her head and feet, and laying the crucifix on her silent heart, indicates that her baptism is a burial rite which signifies her being called to perpetual light with Christ.¹

¹The candles symbolize lux perpetua to which the deceased is called; the crucifix symbolizes her death with Christ. Because baptism is the initiation into the Christian life of grace which is a process of dying with Christ, it is also the rite of burial--The Catholic Encyclopaedia for School and Home, II, p. 419.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Whò knòws|whàt dàys|Ĭ ànswér fòr|tòdày? //
 Gìvìng|thè bùd|Ĭ gìve|thè flòwér.// Ĭ bòw
 Thìs yèt|ùnfàdèd ànd|ă fàdèd bròw; //
 Bèndìng|thèse knèes|ănd fèèblè knèes,/Ĭ prày.//
 Thòughts yèt|ùnrìpe|ìn mè|Ĭ bènd|òne wày,/ //
 Gìve òne|rèpòse|tò pàin|Ĭ knòw|nòt nòw, / //
 Òne chèck|tò jòy|thàt còmes,/Ĭ gùess|nòt hòw.//
 Ĭ dèd|càte|mý fièlds|whén Sprìng|ìs grèy.//
 Ò ràsh!/(Ĭ smìle)/tò plèdge|mý hìd|dèn whèat.//
 Ĭ fòld|tò-dày|àt àltàrs fàr|àpàrt
 Hànds trèmb|lìng wìth|whàt tòils?// Ĭn thèir|rètrèat
 Ĭ sèal|mý lòve|tò-bè,/mý fòldèd àrt.//
 Ĭ lìght|thè tàpèrs àt|mý hèad|ănd fèet, / //
 Ànd lày|thè crùcìfix|òn thìs sìlènt hèart.//

Non-iambic feet include four trochees, one spondee, and two anapests; there are eight secondary accents and six lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "giving," "bending," "thoughts," and "give," and the spondee emphasizes "hands trembling." The stress pattern and caesuras develop slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abba/abba/cdc/dcd, helps unity within octave and sestet and interlinks "bow" and "brow." Assonance unifies seven lines. Alliteration unifies five and emphasizes "know not now," and "trembling" and "toils."

Conclusion: The theme is a young neophyte's lifelong

commitment to God. The first eleven lines express the great importance and responsibilities of baptism; and the last three, its wisdom. Diction relates to the neophyte's commitment--its significance and implications and her future fidelity to it. Images of a young and an old person, a grey field in spring which is dedicated to God, a bud and flower, and a Christian wake, relate to the unfolding in time of that which is folded or implicit in something. The stress pattern and caesuras produce slow movement. The tone, produced by exposition, diction, and imagery, is reverent, somewhat sad, and unconfident, but it is serene and optimistic in the last three lines.

One critic remarks that a vow is eternal, but time is illusory, in this poem: "It transcends the illusion of time, seeing that the one vow was eternal, and that death could only seal it, for a warfare accomplished and a certain victory."¹ The neophyte represents spritual-minded youth, who realize triumph occurs in eternity, not on earth: "An earthly wisdom crowns our youth, and the triumph is all anticipatory rather than all but retrospective."² Her eternal happiness, assured by baptism, far outweighs future difficulties.

¹Some Aspects of Modern Poetry, p. 7.

²Edridge, 154.

3. The theme of "To a Daisy" is the chasm between God and man, which is symbolized by a daisy.¹ This sonnet has expository structure and a speaker, who is addressing a daisy.

Outline of structure: Although you are insignificant, like all created things you hide secrets from me and represent a barrier to eternity; in my present ignorance how can I properly praise you? (world frustrates speaker, ll. 1-5). You little veil of so great mystery, when shall I perceive the exact nature of all things and reflect on the past? (time of her illumination, ll. 7-8). For this I must wait patiently until my body is buried beneath you. Then I shall drink from the spring, and read from the source, of enlightenment. (illumination after death, ll. 8-12). My daisy, how will I feel when I can look from God's side of you? (speculation, ll. 13-14).

Commentary on structure: In the octave the speaker states that, because she has no knowledge of even the simplest created thing, she cannot praise it, and she asks when will she receive knowledge of creation. In the sestet she states death will bring it. Two metaphors describe her illumination: drinking from a spring, and reading

¹This thought is common in poetry; for example, it appears in A. L. Tennyson's "Flower in the Crannied Wall": "Little flower--but if I could understand / What you are, root and all, and all in all, / I should know what God and man is" (ll. 4-6); and in William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence": "To see a world in a grain of sand / And a heaven in a wild flower / Hold infinity in the palm of your hand / And eternity in an hour" (ll. 1-4).

in a poet's¹ book of creation. She wonders how she will feel after receiving this knowledge.

Diction: Patterns contrast man's ignorance of creation in this life with his intimate knowledge of it in eternity. "Great mystery" denotes that which is known only by revelation; "barrier," that which separates; "secrets," private truths; and "veil," a deceptive appearance or a concealment. These words, along with "hither side" and "created things," suggest the infinite gap between God and man, who in this life cannot even comprehend the simple daisy. "Book" denotes a source of enlightenment; "spring," a hidden ultimate source; "penetrate," perceive an exact nature or see through obscurity. These words, along with "God's side" and "poet's side," suggest the speaker's complete knowledge of creation, and her intimacy with God, in eternity.

Imagery: Images relate to cosmic order, and to human ignorance on earth, and knowledge in heaven, of it. Ignorance of creation is aptly illustrated by the daisy, a common weed, not usually appreciated and often despised, which is incomprehensible to the speaker. "Grow and fold and be unfurled," which indicates a procession of days on which the daisy's ray florets curve in to close its flower head in the evenings and open it again in the mornings, and the daisies over the speaker's buried body, which indicate life from death, suggest

¹Although referring to God, "poet's" is uncaptialized.

cosmic order and harmony.¹ Her ignorance on earth contrasts with her knowledge in heaven, received by drinking from a spring and reading from God's book of creation.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Slight ăs|thōu ărt,/|thōu ărt|ĕnough|tō hĭde
 Like ăll|crĕatĕd thĭngs,/|sĕcrĕts|frōm mĕ,/|
 And stănd|ă bărrĭĕr tō|ĕtĕrnĭtĕ.//

And ĭ,/|hōw căn|ĭ prăise|thĕe wĕll|and wĭde
 Frōm whĕre|ĭ dwĕll-Āpōn|thĕ hĭthĕr sĭde?//

Thōu lĭttlĕ vĕil|fōr sō|grĕat mĭstĕrĕy,/|
 Whĕn shăll|ĭ pĕnĕtrăte|ăll thĭngs|and thĕe,/|
 And thĕn|lōok băck?//|Fōr thĭs|ĭ mĭst|ăbĭde,/|
 Tĭll thōu|shălt grōw|and fōld|and bĕ|ĭnfurled
 Lĭtĕrăllĕ|bĕtwĕen|mĕ and|thĕ wōrld.//

Thĕn ĭ|shăll drĭnk|frōm ĭn|bĕnĕath|ă sprĭng,/|
 And frōm|ă pōĕt's sĭde|shăll rĕad|hĭs bōok.//

Ō dăi|sĭ mĭne,/|whăt wĭll|ĭt bĕ|tō lōok
 Frōm Gōd's|sĭde ĕvĕn ōf sŭch|ă sĭmplĕ thĭng?//

Non-iambic feet include three trochees, four spondees, and two anapests; there are five secondary accents, and six lines have caesuras. The stress pattern and caesuras produce slow movement. Trochees emphasize "slight," "secrets," and "literally"; and spondees, "great mystery" and "God's side." The rhyme-scheme, abba/abba/ccd/eed, helps unity in octave and sestet and interlinks related words, "hide" and "abide," and "eternity" and "mystery," and images in "book" and "look."

¹"Literally," which means exact or verbatim, specifies that daisies are physically between the speaker and the atmosphere; that is, she is buried in the ground.

Alliteration in seven lines and assonance in ten unify these lines and produce euphony. Alliteration emphasizes "well" and "wide," and "fold" and "unfurled."

Conclusion: The theme is the chasm between God and man which is symbolized by a daisy. The speaker states she has no knowledge of creation now but will receive full knowledge of it after death. Diction contrasts her earthly ignorance and heavenly knowledge. Daisies suggest the mystery, order, and harmony, of the cosmos. Images of the speaker in eternity indicate that her ignorance of creation will be dispelled there. Caesuras and the stress pattern create slow movement; and alliteration and assonance, euphony. The major tone, established by exposition and diction, is reverent; the tone of the last four lines, due to diction and imagery, is joyous.

This poem is "a neat rendering of the Bergsonian idea of the world as a cosmic compromise between matter and spirit, a *modus vivendi* the operation of which would seem totally different to us if we viewed it from the side of the *élan vital* rather than from the side of space and matter."¹ That is, the soul in this world has only a vague intuition of essences of creation, but illumination by God in eternity gives it complete perception of them. A critic remarks that in Meynell's poetry only a dead poet can win the trust of nature, and that her subjects are the lovely pity of decay, the tender cruelty of tears, the celestial compunction of the tomb, and

¹Jones, p. 192.

our wide and gentle kinship.¹ This poem indicates that death removes the barrier between man and nature and raises their kinship to a much higher level than that in life.

E. SUMMARY

Themes relate to the effects of time, of love, of nature, and of faith in God, on the speaker. Sorrows and consolations of mortality, transient physical beauty, and her immortality, suggest that the passage of time brings steady loss of physical beauty until final bodily dissolution but, after it, a new life associated with her feeling of immortality. Her beloved's subtle presence in her, her sorrow in leaving and joy at meeting him, and her thoughts of him, repressed by day but welcomed in dreams, suggest her profound love of him, her desolate separation from him, and her extreme difficulty in avoiding thoughts of him. Nature's reflection of the poet, the flitting of thoughts devoted to the beloved from him to another world, and the arrival and mystery of spring, indicate that nature's inscrutable non-rationality precludes the close satisfying relationship with the poet which its reflection of him promises, that another world distracts man's thoughts from this world, and that nature's mysterious vitality eludes him. A friar's visit to a woman, the lifelong commitment made by a young neophyte, and the chasm between God and man, indicate that man will not fathom God or even His creation until eternity, which is gained by renunciation of the world and commitment to God through His Church. All themes relate to man's duality: mortal body and immortal soul. Time corrupts the body but prepares the soul for

¹Thompson, p. 189.

eternity. Human love, although beautiful and profound, is suppressed if it conflicts with the soul's aspirations. Man's soul intuits, but his intellect cannot grasp, his unity with the cosmos. Man relates to a transcendent God through faith and prepares for eternity by renunciation of the world.

All twelve poems express thought and feeling in expository structures. Comparisons and conceits are the dominant modes of thought, and the main feelings associated with it are sorrow, perplexity, joy, and serenity. The conceit that the speaker's present and future selves are different people establishes a detached view of herself which mitigates the intense grief associated with time's destruction of youthful strength and enthusiasm. She feels affection for the woman, whose relationship to nature parallels her own and who is paradoxically both her mother and daughter, and nostalgia for the irrecoverable past, which should be forgotten. The conceit that time's destruction of the beloved's physical beauty can be prevented by its being given to the speaker introduces joy which contrasts with the melancholy associated with the destruction. Reflecting on her immortality, she feels joy when comparing herself to a stream and to a blossom, which have existed continuously from the long vanished past, and feels sorrow when considering the burden of immortality.

The speaker, comparing the conceit that silence is the soul of sound to her beloved's subtly vitalizing presence in her, expresses admiration, love, and keen delight; comparing

her parting from and returning to him to ebbing and flowing tides, desolating anguish and ecstatic love, respectively. The conceit that her beloved epitomizes goodness and beauty amplifies the melancholy associated with her suppression of thoughts of him, whereas her running to him in dreams conveys love and joy. The poet, seeing his reflection in nature, is compared to Narcissus who saw his image in water: their intense love and joy at the prospect of union give way to anguish and frustration when they realize such union is impossible. The speaker feels content, when comparing her heart to a garden which is given totally to her beloved, and wistful and sad, when comparing her thoughts which leave him for another world to birds escaping from the garden. The silent unobtrusive arrival of spring with its mysterious vitality generates excitement and joy; comparison of her friend to spring, sadness because his mysteriousness precludes knowledge of and union with him.

Sadness is conveyed by the thought that San Lorenzo, long absent from his mother, could visit her as an unrecognized mendicant friar; serenity, by her faith that God is beyond change and always recognizable. The neophyte's commitment to God of an unknown future expresses fear and perplexity; but her conviction that her action is preparing her for eternity, serenity. The speaker's inability to fathom creation suggests frustration and sadness; her receiving knowledge of it in eternity, joy and wonderment.

In each poem patterns of diction emphasize thought and feeling which develop themes. These patterns relate to such subjects as the loss and deterioration which accompany the passage of time, vitality and enthusiasm of youth versus ennui and sadness of old age, transiency and death, the characteristics of silence and its union with sound, parting of lovers, renunciation of love, mystery of nature, dormancy of nature before arrival of spring, subtle vitality of spring, human ignorance of the future and of the world, God's incorruptibility, and dedication and submission to Him.

Images form a pattern which suggests that life is a paradoxical journey: marked by transiency, corruption, weariness, and sorrow, but also by continuity, incorruption, serenity, and joy. Exuberant energy, associated with a young girl, morning, driven clouds, great hills storming the sky, powerful winds, and mountains having young flowers, gleams of light, and rain-bearing winds, gives way to the perplexity and weariness of a feeble grey woman, a fainting wanderer on a dark mournful plain in evening. But life stirs amidst apparent death: on a warm, calm, misty day in February definite, although almost imperceptible, evidence of life heralds the arrival of spring. Life is both transient and continuous: a river flows inexorably to the sea, but a stream flows from distant hills in "morning lands" up to the present; a bud develops into a flower, but a blossom, aroused into life in the young world by "long vanished sun and shower," still

survives. Transient sound, of "sweet words," "laughter," and "dear tones," is counterbalanced by the imperishable silence of "pauses," "hush," "rest," "solitude," and "trance." Sorrow related to the physical world, suggested by separated lovers, the doomed Narcissus, and a mournful child, contrasts with the spirituality suggested by a tired but strong woman who renounces profound love, by the cloister, by the renunciation of the friar and of San Lorenzo's mother, by the dedication of a field, and by a Christian wake. Ebbing and flowing tides, the daily opening and closing of daisies, and the image evoked by "seed and flower and seed and flower," indicate rhythms of nature which ensure continuity and renewal of life amidst corruption.

Six of the twelve poems are Petrarchan sonnets. All poems have iambic rhythm, with many non-iambic feet--trochees (especially in first feet), spondees, and anapests--and with many secondary accents and caesuras. The heavy stress pattern emphasizes diction and, with caesuras, establishes slow movement, in all poems. Four are in tetrameter. Excluding sonnets, only one rhyme-scheme occurs twice. Sestets of sonnets use three different rhyme-schemes. Alliteration and assonance, both frequently used, unify lines and, with rhyme-schemes, establish euphony in seven poems. Rhythm and sound, therefore, establish euphony and slow movement, and emphasize diction.

These poems usually have both melancholic and joyous

tones, one major and the other minor, and often an opposing tone is introduced in the final lines; reverent and serene tones are also found. A melancholy tone is established by slow movement; a joyous tone, by euphony; and both, by exposition, diction, and imagery. Contrasting patterns of diction and of imagery particularly create tone. Compound sadness-joy reflects tension related to the body-soul duality involved in themes: sadness is associated with physical corruption, renunciation of love and parting of lovers, and man's inability to comprehend his world; joy, with his sense of continuity, immortality, and ultimate meaning. Reverent and serene tones relate to belief in a transcendent God and in His Church.

CHAPTER III

MEYNELL'S LATE POETRY

The fifty-six "Later Poems" in the text include work published as early as 1890 but mostly published from 1895 to 1916.¹ This poetry is centred on God and especially on Christ's cosmic presence. Poems were chosen for analysis which best exemplify a coherent thematic pattern, bearing on man's going to God and Christ's action in the world. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and evaluate Meynell's later poetry, with respect to theme and its expression. The chapter is divided into four parts, each of three or four poems, pertaining to life as a pilgrimage, death, Christ's cosmic presence, and His concern for man. In each poem the theme is given, and the structure, diction, imagery, rhythm and sound, and tone, are discussed.

A. Life as a Pilgrimage

Poems chosen for this section are: "The Courts," "To the Body," and "The Lady Poverty."

1. The theme of "The Courts" is the contrast between the splendid, complex techniques, and simple divine goal, of

¹Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 210.

poetry. The poem has four four-line stanzas, expository structure, and no speaker.

Outline of Structure: Poetic techniques, means to a sacred goal--the discovery of divine truth--are noble, splendid, colorful, imposing in order, luxurious, beautiful, agreeable, captivating, and ostentatious; they use strong emotions and include effective comparisons. (characteristics, and religious goal, of poetic techniques, ll. 1-8). Ultimate poetry is plain, simple, perfect, divinely spontaneous, unoracular and unsymbolic; it is a small dewy area, open and raised to heaven, and a song achieved by some special poets, kings who have found the Christ Child. (simplicity and divinity of ultimate poetry, metaphor, ll. 9-16).

Commentary on structure: The extravagant worldly techniques, and simple divine goal, of poetry are sharply contrasted. The first two stanzas state the extravagance, ostentation, and worldliness, of poetic techniques. Two metaphors --the techniques are approaches to a shrine, and poets are pilgrim kings--indicate poetry's divine goal. The last two stanzas state the simplicity and divine spontaneity of ultimate poetry; a metaphor compares its creators to the kings that found Christ.¹

Diction: Diction contrasts the intricate splendid

¹The subtitle, "A Figure of the Epiphany," which is very appropriate for this theme, reinforces this concluding metaphor.

techniques, and deep intellectual and emotional input, of the poetic process with its goal, ultimate poetry, which grants to all men an easily understandable insight into God's kingdom. "Pilgrim kings" and "noble ways" indicate that poets use lofty and regal techniques to lead others in a dedicated quest for divine truth. "Splendours," "colours," "fair and flagrant things," "enamouring," "raptures," and "metaphors enhancing life," refer to captivating, sumptuous, sensuous, attractive and purposefully conspicuous images, rhetorical and stylistic embellishments, and implied comparisons, which convey complex thoughts and overwhelming emotions, thereby stimulating imaginations and expanding horizons. "Simple," "plain," "open" (twice), "behind oracles," and "past all symbols," indicate that ultimate poetry, however, is easily understandable, obvious, and direct, not complicated, decorated, or enigmatic; and "enskied," "heavenward plot," "shrine," "heavenly-wild," "some loaded poets reach at last," and "perfect," that as it is elevated to heaven, completely finished, and sublimely exuberant and unrestrained, it is an expression achieved, after prolonged effort, by some poets bursting with strong feelings, and a means for all people to know and honor God. Because an experiencer of ultimate poetry is aware only of its effect, and not of the process involved in it, the dichotomy of complex worldly process and simple divine artifact presents him with no problem.

Imagery: Images indicate that the poet's "imageries"

are magnificent and beautiful representations of the world which aim to achieve ultimate poetry--knowledge of and encounter with God. Avenues, arrays, beautiful smiles, golden doors, and courts that run with wine, suggest the grandeur, beauty, imposing order, opulence, and festivity, reflected by the poet. An open heavenward plot with dew, an open shrine, and pilgrim kings, suggest that ultimate poetry is a means, available to all, of questing for God; and a song created by poets bursting with feeling, and the finding of Christ by the three kings, that it expresses a discovery of God. These images convey joy, admiration, and reverence.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

The pòet's imàgèrìes àre nòblè wàys, /
 Àppròachès tò|à plòt, /|àn òpèn shrìne. //
 Their splèndòurs, /còlòurs, /àvènuès, /|àrràys, /
 Their còurts|thàt rùn|wìth wìne; //
 Bèautìfùl smìles, /|"fàir|ànd flàgrànt thìngs, " /
 Ënrìched, /|ènmòuring, /-ràptùres, /mèt|àphòrs
 Ènhàn|cìng lìfe, /|àre pàths|fòr pìlgrìm kìngs
 Màde frèe|òf gòldèn dòors. //
 Ànd yèt|thè òpèn hèavènward plòt, /|wìth dèw, /
 Ùltìmàte pòètry, /|ènclosed, /|ènskied /
 (Àlbèit sùch cèrèmoniès lèad|thèretò) /
 Stànds òn|thè yòndèr sìde. //
 Plàin, /bèhìnd òr|àclès, /|it is; /|ànd pàst
 Àll sýmbòls, /sìmplè; //pèrfèct, /hèavènlý-wìld, /
 Thè sòng|sòme lòadèd pòèts rèach|àt làst-- /
 Thè kìngs|thàt fòund|à Chìld. //

In each stanza the first three lines are pentameter and the last is trimeter. Non-iambic feet include four trochees which begin lines, two spondees, and five anapests; three lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "beautiful," "ultimate," "stands," and "plain"; and spondees, "made free" and "behind oracles." The stress pattern and caesuras develop slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Alliteration in nine lines and assonance in seven

assist unity within lines and, with the rhyme-scheme, develop euphony. Alliteration also emphasizes "fair and flagrant."

Conclusion: The theme is the contrast between the simplicity and divinity, and the extravagant worldly techniques, of ultimate poetry. Stanzas one and two state that the poetic process is noble, splendid, and magnificent, concretizes the abstract, and enriches and enhances life; stanzas three and four, that ultimate poetry, its goal, is plain, simple, perfect, unenigmatic, unsymbolic, and God-like. Diction contrasts the poet's complex and grandiose techniques with his simple divine goal. Imagery suggests the opulence, majesty, and order, he employs in a quest for God. The stress pattern emphasizes important words. Tone, developed by diction, imagery, and euphony, is reverent, appreciative, and quietly joyous.

2. The theme of "To the Body" is creation by the body, through its senses, of the world. The poem has four five-line stanzas, expository structure, and no speaker.

Outline of structure: You innermost final council of judgment, you palace of decrees where the mental powers, petitioned by representatives of the physical world, hold state spiritually, and approve and formulate laws, your faculties meet with the entreaties of the world. (body as council of judgment, ll. 1-7). In your place of quiet dignity, potential odors are actualized; from your tongue the peach

receives its taste, and from your nostrils the rose its fragrance. (creation through smell and taste, ll. 7-10). To you, who are in seclusion, eagerly travel the dark vibrations of the sightless skies, and the lovely implicit colours. The light searches blindly for your eyes, you majestic one; you command the sun. (creation through vision, ll. 11-15). Soundless music steps into your ear, the only means for its receiving sound. Fire and cold come for your approval to the place where you call forth the world and await the appeal of God. (creation through hearing and touch, ll. 16-20).

Commentary on structure: The first stanza compares the body to a high inner council of judgment: its high senses, petitioned by representatives of the earth, conceive, draft, and establish legislation for it. The next three stanzas illustrate the conceit that the body's external senses create the world by actualizing potential and inchoate reality. The final lines suggest the body's subjection to God's court.

Diction: Diction relates to the creating and ruling of the world by the body. "Call'st up the day" and "command the sun" indicate that the body brings the world into existence; "random," "dark," "sightless," "inexplicit," "gropes," and "dumb," that odours are unpatterned, light vibrations unformed, skies without light, colours unmanifested, light blind, and music soundless, respectively, before they interact with the body; and "gain thy nod," and "reach their

sweetness," that temperature is created by the skin, and odours and tastes by nose and tongue, respectively. Legal terminology, which includes "council of judgment," "decrees," "hold their spiritual state," "embassies," "pleas," "sued," and "sign, approve, accept, conceive, create," indicates that the body, a formal and spiritual assembly for passing and judging laws and making authoritative decisions, is petitioned by the world through its official representatives, and formulates, drafts, approves, and enacts, legislation binding on it. "High senses" indicate that the council is composed of the body's cognitive and affective powers, in contrast to its "low" physical senses; "inmost" and "secluded" suggest that it is located deep within the body and is insulated from distraction; and "palace," "august," "command," and "ultimate," that it is majestic and regal, and its decisions unappealable. Diction conveys feelings of respect and admiration.

Imagery: Metaphysical images¹ suggest the dependency of the physical world upon the body. These images include: odours, colours, and fire and cold, in potency approaching the body in order to be actualized, light groping for the eyes, and music treading into the ear; the peach receiving sweetness from the tongue, and the rose fragrance from the nostrils; the body calling up the day and commanding the sun; and its spiritual faculties functioning as a judicial-legislative

¹Metaphysical images are creations of imagination only, unlike mental reproductions of sense experience.

council, which is petitioned to by the world for judgments,
and which creates its legislation.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Thou inmost, / ultimate
Council of judgment, / palace of decrees, /
Where the high senses hold their spiritual state, /
Sued by earth's embassies, /
And sign, / approve, / accept, / conceive, / create; //
Create - / thy senses close
With the world's pleas. // The random odours reach
Their sweetness in the place of thy repose, /
Upon thy tongue the peach, /
And in thy nostrils breathes the breathing rose. //
To thee, / secluded one, /
The dark vibrations of the sightless skies, /
The lovely inexplicit colours run; //
The light gropes for those eyes /
O thou august! / thou dost command the sun. //
Music, / all dumb, / hath trod
Into thine ear her one effectual way; //
And fire and cold approach to gain thy nod, /
Where thou call'st up the day, /
Where thou awaitest the appeal of God. //

In each stanza the first and fourth lines are trimeter, and the second, third, and fifth are pentameter. Non-iambic feet include six trochees, of which three begin lines, four spondees, and one anapest; there are three secondary accents, and four lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize

"council," "sued," "gropes," and "call'st"; and spondees, "inmost," "high senses," "earth's embassies," and "world's pleas." The rhyme-scheme, ababa, assists stanzaic unity. Assonance unifies twelve lines; alliteration unifies seven and emphasizes "spiritual state" and "sightless skies."

Conclusion: The theme is the body's creation of the external world, the agency of the body's senses in causing phenomena.¹ The first stanza compares the body to a council of judgment which legislates to and rules a petitioning world; other stanzas illustrate that reality is only in potency until it contacts the body. Diction relates to the body's creation and ruling of the world. Metaphysical imagery suggests the non-existence of phenomena independent from the body. Trochees and spondees emphasize central words. Tone, developed by exposition, diction, and imagery, is respectful and appreciative.

3. The theme of "The Lady Poverty" is the degeneration of medieval spirituality into modern materialism. The poem has three six-line stanzas, expository structure, and no speaker.

Outline of structure: Lady Poverty was beautiful, but lately, because of changes in conditions, customs, and attitudes, she has lost her beauty. (degeneration of poverty, ll.

¹Armstrong, 14.

1-3). Now a "slattern" who neglects her hair, gown, and shoes, she lacks the graceful formal dignity she had when she kept herself unsullied by worldly concerns. (analogy, ll. 4-6). Furthermore, she scolds in parlours, dusts, trims, watches, and counts. (analogy continued, ll. 7-9). Is this the lady whom Francis¹ met, who joyfully sang hymns and walked freely with Obedience and Chastity in Umbria? (poverty was joyful and spiritual, ll. 9-12). Her ladyhood is not here among modern men, but in stony fields, where skies appear clear through thin trees, in easily worn lean soil and in marshes, and in barely adequate, austere country. (austerity of poverty, ll. 13-18).

Commentary on structure: An analogy illuminates the changed attitude towards poverty from medieval to modern times: medieval men, like St. Francis, renounced the world and embraced poverty, a dignified and attractive lady, for their souls' welfare; modern men are preoccupied with the world and regard poverty as a neglected slovenly woman. The free and cheerful profession of vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience--traditional in the Church--reflects a philosophy of life which prizes soul more than body. The last stanza states that true poverty co-exists with asceticism and not materialism.

¹Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscans, an Order of mendicants, rejected material wealth and lived in poverty and simplicity.

Diction: Diction contrasts the order and beauty of spirituality with the chaos and unsightliness of materialism. "Obedience" and "Chastity," linked with medieval poverty, indicate that it was grounded in spirituality and renunciation; "delicate," "spare," "thin," "slender," "austere," and "bare," that poverty was characterized by austerity, simplicity, disregard for bodily comforts and pleasures, and very restricted use of material resources; and "pure," "clear," "free," "carolled," "fair," "ladyhood," and "Lady Poverty," that it was accompanied by purity and harmony of purpose, freedom, joy, beauty, and dignity. "Scolds," "watches," and "counts," on the other hand, suggest an anxious preoccupation with the superficial and with acquisition of material wealth; and "lost her looks," "keeps no state," "slattern," and "neglects," that such worldliness has resulted in ugliness, disorder, apathy, and lack of dignity.

Imagery: Images of the middle ages--a lady and countryside--and of modern times--a slattern--contrast the two periods. A lady, fair and with an unrestrained step, carolling hymns with Obedience, and walking with Chastity¹ in Umbria, suggests the renunciation, beauty, and joy, of spirituality; and stony fields, thin trees, lean soil, a fen, slender austere landscape, and clear skies, suggest the asceticism, frugality, and clarity, which underlie the lady's beauty and

¹Personifications of obedience and chastity create metaphysical images.

joy. A slattern, whose hair, gown, and shoes are neglected, and who has generally lost her pleasing appearance and dignity, suggests the disorder, ugliness, purposelessness, insensitivity, and querulousness of the modern age which have resulted from its neglect of spiritual values and emphasis on material ones.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Thě Lădý Pòvĕrtý|wăs fàir: //
 Bùt|shě lòst|hěr lòoks|ǒf làte,/
 Wĭth chànge|ǒf tĭmes|ănd chànge|ǒf àir.//
 Ăh slăt|tĕrn! shè|něglĕcts|hěr hàir,/
 Hěr gòwn;||hěr shòes;||shě kĕeps|nǒ stàte
 Ăs ònce|whĕn hĕr|pùre fĕet|wĕre bàre.//
 Őr-~~al~~mòst wòrse,||if wòrse|căn bè--/
 Shě scòlds|ĭn pàrlǒurs, dùsts|ănd trĭms,/
 Wàtchĕs|ănd còunts.//|Ő ìs|thĭs shè
 Whòm Frăncĭs mĕt,||whòse stĕp|wăs frĕe,/
 Whò wĭth|Őbĕdiĕnce cārǒlled hÿmns,/
 ĭn Ûmbriă wălked|wĭth Chàstĭtý?
 Whĕre ĭs|hěr lădýhòod?||Nòt hĕre,/
 Nòt ămòng mòdĕrn kĭnds|ǒf mèn; //
 Bùt ĭn|thĕ stǒnŷ fiĕlds,||whĕre clĕar
 Thróugh thĕ|thĭn trĕes|thĕ skĭes|ăppĕar,/
 ĭn dĕlĭcàte|spàre sòil|ănd fèn,/
 Ănd slĕndĕr lăndscàpe ănd|ăustĕre.//

Rhythm is tetrameter; there are four trochees, four spondees, two anapests, and four secondary accents; seven lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "watches" and "landscape"; and spondees, "pure feet," "thin trees," and "spare soil." Caesuras and the stress pattern create slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abaaba, contributes to stanzaic unity. Assonance unifies eight lines; alliteration unifies thirteen and emphasizes "lost her looks of late" and "spare soil."

Conclusion: The theme is the degeneration of spirituality into materialism from the middle to present ages. This is compared to the degeneration of a fair lady into a slattern. Diction contrasts the beauty, simplicity, austerity, joy, and discipline of medieval spirituality, with the disorder, ugliness, and superficiality of modern materialism. Images of a lady and of countryside suggest the beauty and joy which sprang from asceticism; and images of a slattern, preoccupation with worldly interests. Trochees and spondees emphasize key words and phrases. The major tone, developed by exposition, diction, and imagery, is rueful and critical; a minor tone is joyous. To one critic the critical tone demonstrates unfranciscan intolerance;¹ however, this tone reflects not intolerance, but regret that "Holy Poverty" no longer exists and the conviction that modern poverty is not holy because it lacks the dimension of the eternal.²

¹A. MacDonell, "Mrs. Meynell's Poems," The Bookman, XXI (February 1902), 168.

²Braybrooke, 65.

B. Death, End of the Pilgrimage

Poems chosen for this section are: "The Treasure," "The Launch," and "The Crucifixion."

1. The theme of "The Treasure" is the instinctive dread of death in nature. The poem has six four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: Three times I have seen fear appear suddenly in a baby's face and take his breath, a fear like that of old times that knew death and the value of life. (instinctive fear, ll. 1-4). What justifies this dread, this silent fright, this terror in the eyes which have not wept yet, of one too young to speak? What is cherished, and shut in so well, by fear? What fortress is kept in this manner? Of what is ignorant terror a sentinel? (questions on fear's origin, ll. 5-12). What is warned or protected by the strange disproportionate pain in the poor child, the dumb pain in the poor beast, and the wild pain in the old decorous man, who is caught and overcome? (fear in old, young, and animals, ll. 13-18). What occasions that feeling of danger, the baby's flying feet, and its imploring hands? (origin of fear, ll. 19-20). This feeling and this behavior are inspired by life alone which, although little prized by man, is prized by nature's design, and which, although weak, sad, and brief, is divine. (fear of death, ll. 21-24).

Commentary on structure: The first stanza mentions the irrational fear which suddenly appears in a baby's face. The next four stanzas speculate about the origin of extraordinary fear in infants, children, animals, and old men, and about what is sheltered in the fortress, of which fear is the custodian and terror the sentinel. The final stanza states that the instinct for self-preservation causes this fear.

Diction: Diction relates to the non-rationality and great magnitude of the fear. "The price of life, the name of death," "monstrously disproportionate," and "caught, overcome," indicate that it is an overwhelming irresistible fear, bearing on survival itself, that is far greater than the situation justifies. "Leap," "has no tongue," "dumb," "imploring," "poor," "ignorant," and "wild" (contrasting with "decorous"), that it is a biological, and instinctive, not rational, fear that appears suddenly and automatically, is inarticulated, and drives those who are affected by and powerless against it into uncontrolled frenzy. Key words emphasized by repetition include "this," "poor," "life," "prized," "low," and "divine."

Imagery: Images demonstrate instinctive dread of, and nature's defence against, death in man and beast. A baby, eyes showing sudden and inexplicable terror, feet thrashing, hands imploring assistance, and breath taken away; a child, whose pain is completely unproportional to circumstances; a beast, unable to articulate its suffering; and an old man,

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Thrèe tìmes|hàve I|bèhèld
Fèar lèap|ín á|bàbe's fàce,/|ànd tàke|hìs brèath, //
Fèar,/lìke|thè fèar|òf èld
Thát knòws|thè prìce|òf life,/|thè nàme|òf dèath. //
Whàt ís|ít jústífiès
Thís thìng,/|thís drèad,/|thís frìght|thát hàs|nò tòngue, /
Thè tèr|ròr ín|thòse èyes
Whén ònly èyes|càn spèak-|thèy àre|sò yòung? //
Nòt yèt|thòse èyes|hàve wèpt. //
Whàt dòes|fèar chérísh thát|ít lòcks|sò wèll? //
Whàt fòrtress ís|thùs kèpt? //
Óf whàt|ís ìgnorànt tèr|ròr sèntinèl? //
Ànd pàin|ín thè|pòor child, /
Mònstróusly díspròportionàte,/|ànd dùmb
Ín thè|pòor bèast,/|ànd wìld
Ín thè|òld dècóròus mán,/|càught,/òvèrcòme? //
Óf whàt|thè outpòsts thèse? //
Óf whàt|thè fìghtíng guàrdiàns? // Whàt|dèmands
Thát sènsè|òf mènàcès, /
Ànd thèn|sùch flyíng fèet,/|ìmplòríng hànds? //
Life: // Thèrè's|nòught èlse|tò sèek; //

Life ònly,/lìttle prized;||bùt by|dèsign
 Òf nàture prized.||Hòw wèak,/||
 Hòw sàd,/hòw brìef:||Ò hòw|dìvine,/dìvine:||

Rhythm is alternating trimeter and pentameter; there are four trochees, twelve spondees, three anapests, and four secondary accents; and thirteen lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "fear," "monstrously," and "life"; and spondees, "three times," "fear leap," "babe's face," "fear cherish," "poor child," "poor beast," "caught, overcome," and "life only." Caesuras, especially in the last stanza, and the stress pattern, create slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, emphasizes the related words, "design" and "divine," and assists stanzaic unity. Assonance unifies thirteen lines; alliteration unifies ten and emphasizes "flying feet."

Conclusion: The theme is the instinctive dread of death in men and brutes. The origin of sudden unrestrained fear is questioned and is explained as nature's design to preserve life. Diction focuses on this powerful and irrational fear. Images illustrate instinctive fear and nature's defence against danger to life. The heavy stress pattern emphasizes many central words and phrases and, with caesuras, creates slow movement. Tone, developed by exposition, diction, imagery, and rhythm, is perplexed and somewhat sad.

2. The theme of "The Launch" is the preparation of a dying person for eternity. The poem has three five-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: We who build on earth by the laws of the land entrust this creature of ours to the laws of

the alien sea on which it is designed to live. (launching a ship, ll. 1-5). We cling, securely attached, to the shore, move slowly and cautiously, prepare our ship to ride the waves lightly, equip it to survive the strange conditions of the sea, a new weight, a new force, a new world. (ship well prepared, ll. 6-10). In a semi-comparable fashion, the dying person is kissed, cherished, exhorted, purged of sins, and dismissed. We who are warm eagerly prepare him, by all available means, for the cold unpredictable tryst. (a soul prepared for eternity, ll. 11-15).

Commentary on structure: The first two stanzas speak of preparing to launch a ship on the ocean; the third compares this preparation with that of a dying person for eternity. The two are similar, as both ship and person are prepared by men, using all their resources, for a strange world, but also dissimilar, because men know something about the ocean's laws but nothing about death, "the incalculable tryst."

Diction: Diction relates the similarities of and differences between death and launching a ship on the ocean. "Alien gravity," "strange conditions," and "new weight, new force, new world," indicate that the ocean, because of winds, tides, relative unavailability of food and water, and gravity, which can pull a ship to its destruction through permeable water, is a strange and often inhospitable environment for man; "laws of land," "laws of ocean," "builders," and "creature of our hand," that land and ocean, both material

substances, have laws similar enough for man to construct a ship to survive on the ocean; and "entrust," and "fast bound to shore," that men, although creatures of land, can commit a ship to the ocean with confidence. "We, warm, prepare him for the cold" and "all the eager means" indicate that men, who feel secure and familiar with this life, but not with eternity, do all possible to prepare the dying for it; and "kissed, cherished, exhorted, shriven, dismissed" indicates that their preparation includes demonstration of affection, encouragement to reconciliation with the world and God, confession and pardon of sins, and prayers, blessings, and rites. "Ah thus--not thus" suggests that death and the launching are both similar and different. They are similar because both soul and ship enter a new world with new laws. "Calculated sea" and "incalculable tryst" indicate the significant difference: the life the ship will encounter on the ocean can be predicted; but that which the soul will encounter in eternity can not be predicted.

Imagery: Images suggest that a dying person can be prepared for eternity with the same confidence with which a ship is prepared for the ocean. The ship, ocean, and ship-builders correspond to the soul, eternity, and the dying person's associates, respectively. The contrast between people, creeping over and clinging to land as they build the ship, and the launched ship, lightly breasting ocean waves, and a dying person, being kissed, shown tenderness and love, exhorted to

make his final peace, forgiven of sin, and dismissed from life with religious rites and blessings, suggest that the dying person is prepared for an unknown mysterious world with confidence based on religious faith, and that his soul will experience there a happiness unencumbered by earthly restraints.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Fòrth,/tǒ|thě àllĭēn grāvĭtĭy,/
 Fòrth,/tǒ|thě lāws|ǒf òcēan,/wè
 Bùildĕrs|ǒn èarth|bŷ lāws|ǒf lānd
 Ėntrùst|thĭs crēatŭre ǒf|ǒur hānd
 Ūpǒn|thě càlcŭlātĕd sēa.//
 Fāst bǒund|tǒ shǒre|wě clĭng,/wě crēep,/
 Ānd mākē|ǒur shĭp|rēadŷ|tǒ lēap
 Lĭght tǒ|thě flōod,/ēquĭppēd|tǒ rĭde
 Thě strānge|cǒndĭtĭōns ǒf|thě tĭde-- /
 Nĕw wēight,/nĕw fǒrce,/nĕw wǒrld://|thě Dēep.//
 Āh thŭs-Ānǒt thŭs-Āthě Dŷĭng,/kĭssēd,/
 Chĕrĭshēd,/ēxhòrtēd,/shrĭvĕn,/dĭsmĭssēd;//
 Bŷ àll|thě èāgĕr mēans|wě hǒld /
 Wè,/wārm,/prēpāre|hĭm fǒr|thě cǒld,
 Tǒ kēep|thě ĭncàlcŭlāblĕ trŷt.//

Rhythm is tetrameter; there are five trochees, two spondees, three anapests, and three secondary accents; six lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "forth" (twice), "builders," "light," and "cherished"; spondees, "fast bound" and "we, warm"; and secondary accents, "new" (thrice). Caesuras and the stress pattern establish slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, aabba, assists stanzaic unity and interrelates

"ride" and "tide," and images in "creep" and "leap" and in "kissed" and "dismissed." Assonance unifies eight lines; alliteration unifies four and emphasizes "laws of land," and "cling" and "creep."

Conclusion: The theme is the preparation of a dying person for eternity. The exposition states that a soul can be prepared for death as confidently as a ship launched. Diction focuses on the similarities and differences of the two preparations. Imagery suggests that a dying person can be confidently prepared for the mysterious world of eternity. The stress pattern and caesuras slow the movement. Tone, established by exposition, diction, imagery, and rhythm, is restrained, serene, and optimistic. This poem is "quick with universal wistfulness, quiet with the universal patience, which has submitted past bitterness to the universal mystery;"¹ it reflects no anger or bitterness towards death, but the conviction that faith ensures eternal happiness.

3. The theme of "The Crucifixion" is Christ's suffering at His crucifixion. The poem has four four-line stanzas, expository structure, and no speaker.

Outline of structure: Who has reached with a long heavy sounding chain the bottom of the sea of man's capacity for spiritual and physical suffering? (maximum human suffering, ll. 1-4). That melancholy lead plummet, allowed to descend gradually by the guilty, innocent, and even children,

¹Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 220.

leaves the isolated and solitary floor of this sea unreached and undiscovered. (maximum never reached, ll. 5-8). Only one, Christ, has touched this bottom, which is not infinitely deep, but He did not die then. (limit reached by Christ, ll. 9-12). Over the unknown bottomless gulf of God's capacity for suffering He hovered, for one mysterious hour of indecision, before He descended, feeling forsaken and afraid. (Christ's incalculable suffering, ll. 13-16).

Commentary on structure: In the first two stanzas maximum human suffering is described as the bottom of a sea, which sufferers plumb with a weighted sounding chain, all stopping far short of bottom. The last two stanzas concern the Crucifixion, in which Christ as man reached, and as God mysteriously and incalculably exceeded, this human limit.

Diction: Diction relates to human suffering--universal and great, but finite--and to Christ's suffering--mysterious and immeasurable--at the Crucifixion. "Floor," "deepest," "extreme," and "not infinite," indicate that human suffering has a definite limit; "sequestered," "unreached," and "untold," that human suffering always stops far short of this theoretical limit; and "guilty," "innocent," and "childish," that no one is excluded from suffering, regardless of circumstances, such as age and moral conduct. "Man's capacity," associated with a sea, and "God's capacity," associated with an abyss, contrast man's finite, and God's infinite, capacities for suffering. "Explored the deepest," "touched the

extreme," and "not yet," indicate that Christ suffered maximum human suffering without dying from it; and "what gulf was this?", "forsaken," "afraid," and "hesitating hour," that He experienced human desolation, indecision, fear, and uncertainty, at the prospect of mysterious and incalculable suffering. "Not yet" and "deepest" (more emphatic than "deepest") are stressed by repetition.

Imagery: Images contrast men's suffering with Christ's at the Crucifixion. People of every sort--innocent, guilty, young--lowering into a sea an extremely long sounding chain, with heavy links and a lead plummet which always stops far short of sea-bottom, suggest the universality, profundity, and finiteness, of human suffering. Christ, lowering the chain completely to the bottom, and hovering in hesitation for an hour over an infinitely deep abyss before He descended, forsaken and afraid, into it, suggests His mysterious and incalculable suffering at the Crucifixion.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Oh, /màn's |càpà|cìtý
 Fòr spìr|itùàl|sòrròw, /|còrpòr|àl pàin: //
 Whò hàs|èxp|lòred|thè dèèp|most of|thàt sèa, /
 With hèav|y lìnks|of à fàr-|fàth|òm|ing chain? //
 Thàt mèl|ànch|ol|ý lèad, /
 Lèt dów|n|in guìl|tý ànd|in ìnn|òcènt hòld, /
 Yèa ìnt|o chìl|d|ish hànds|dèl|iv|èrèd, /
 Lèaves thè|sè|què|stèrèd flòor|ùn|rèachèd, /ùntòld. //
 Òne òn|l|ý hàs|èxp|lòred
 Thè dèèp|most; //bùt|Hè díd|nòt diè|of ìt. /
 Nòt yèt, /nòt yèt|Hè dièd. //Màn's hù|màn Lòrd
 Tòuchèd thè|è|xtrème; //it ìs|nòt ìnf|ìn|ìte. //
 Bùt òvèr thè|àb|yss
 Of Gòd's|càpà|cìtý|fòr wòe|Hè stàyed
 Onè hès|it|at|ing hòur; //whàt gùlf|wàs thìs? //
 Fòrsà|kèn Hè|wènt dów|n, /ànd wàs|àfràid. //

In each stanza the first line is trimeter and following lines pentameter. Non-iambic feet include eight trochees, of which four begin lines, four spondees, and two anapests; there are two secondary accents, and six lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "sorrow," "corporal," "deepmost," "fathom-ing," and "leaves"; and spondees, "one only," "man's human," and "went down." Caesuras and the stress pattern develop a slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists unity within

stanzas. Assonance unifies nine lines; alliteration unifies six and emphasizes "spiritual sorrow" and "far-fathoming."

Conclusion: The theme is Christ's incalculable suffering at the Crucifixion. Exposition contrasts His suffering with that of other men. Diction relates to the suffering of all men and of Christ. Images suggest that man's suffering, although great, is never the maximum, but that Christ reached and incomparably surpassed it. Trochees and spondees stress central words. Tone, developed by exposition, diction, imagery, and rhythm, is dignified and reverent; despite the sorrow of Christ's suffering, the tone is not sorrowful, because the Crucifixion led to Easter and to hope.¹

C. Christ in the Cosmos

Poems chosen for this section are: "In Portugal, 1912," "Christ in the Universe," "A General Communion," and "The Unknown God."

1. The theme of "In Portugal, 1912" is Christ's continuous presence throughout the world. The poem has three four-line stanzas, expository structure, and no speaker.

Outline of structure: Will they cast the altars to the ground, scatter the wine in the chalice, and crush the bread? Christ hides unseen in field, village, and town.

¹Braybrooke, p. 55.

(Christ's irremovable presence, ll. 1-4). He waits in corn-lands everywhere. His sun brings brightness and His frost darkness. He is present in a vineyard's sweet grapes, and in ripe ears of corn, as a lonely unconsecrated Host. (His presence in nature, ll. 5-8). As a victim He lies unsacrificed and hidden in ambush at the merry table. The mill hides the Lord of the harvest, and the wine-press holds Christ, present in it without invitation. (hidden Christ, ll. 9-12).

Commentary on structure: The first stanza speculates whether "they"¹ will blaspheme against the Eucharist and states that Christ is present unseen everywhere. The second stanza states He is present throughout nature--in corn, sun, frost, and grapes--as a lonely unconsecrated victim; and the third, that He is present at any festive table, in ground wheat, and in crushed grapes, although He is hidden, unsacrificed, and uninvited.

Diction: Diction refers to Christ's presence in the world as being hidden, independent, and found everywhere, in all things, and at all times. "Unregarded," "unconsecrated," "unsacrificed," and "unbidden,"² indicate that Christ is

¹"They" refers to the Republicans of Portugal. After the republic was established there in 1910, the Church was persecuted, religious Orders were expelled and their property confiscated, teaching of religion in primary schools was abolished, the Church was dis-established, and many Catholics were imprisoned.

²This pattern suggests Christ's Eucharistic presence, which is "regarded," "consecrated," "sacrificed," and "bidden." In the Mass, the unbloody commemoration of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, species (i.e., bread and wine) consecrated by the priest are transformed into Christ's body

present, not through a consecration, sacrifice, or invitation, of man, and that He is ignored by man; "waits," "lonely," "ambush," "lurks," "conceals," and "hides," that He is hidden, that His presence is unsuspected by men, and that He waits patiently to encounter them, but very few seek Him. "Far and near," "bright" and "dark," "sweet," "ripe," "merry board," "harvest's Lord," "His sun," and "His frost," indicate that Christ is present in all places, times, and circumstances, and that, as Lord of the world, He is especially present in the means for man's sustenance, such as wheat and wine, and in his happiness.

Imagery: Images of blasphemy against the Eucharist, and of Christ's Incarnational presence in the world, suggest the futility of men's efforts to remove Him from it. Casting down of altars, spilling of wine from chalices, and crushing of bread, illustrate attempts by men, out of hatred, to remove Christ from the world. Metaphysical images of Christ, hiding His head in field, village, and town, waiting in corn-lands everywhere, present in bright sun, dark frost, sweet grapes and ripe corn, in wheat ground by a mill and in grapes crushed by a wine-press, and in ambush at a festive table, suggest that His presence permeates the world at all times, is the hidden, unrecognized source of man's spiritual and physical nourishment, and that anyone who wishes may encounter Him in the world.

and blood. Christ's presence is invited and recognized by all present.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

And will|thě c`ast|thě `alt`ars d`own,/
 Sc`atter|thě ch`al`ice,/cr`ush|thě br`ead?//
 In fi`eld,/In vil`lage,/`and|In t`own
 H`e h`ides|`an `unr`eg`ard`ed h`ead; //
 Waits in|thě c`orn-`lands f`ar|`and n`ear,/
 Br`ight in|H`is s`un,/d`ark in|H`is fr`ost,/
 S`weet in|thě v`ine,/r`ipe in|thě `ear--/
 L`onely |`un`c`on`s`ecr`at`ed H`ost.//
 In `amb`ush `at thě m`er`try b`oard
 Thě V`ict`im l`urks|`un`s`acr`if`iced; //
 Thě m`ill|c`onc`eals|thě h`ar`v`est's L`ord,/
 Thě w`ine-`press h`olds|thě `unb`id`den Ch`rist.//

Rhythm is tetrameter; non-iambic feet include two spondees, five trochees, and one anapest; two lines have caesuras. Spondees emphasize "corn-lands" and "wine-press"; and trochees, "scatter," "waits," "bright," "sweet," and "lonely." The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity and interlinks the related words, "unsacrificed" and "Christ." Assonance unifies four lines, and alliteration unifies four.

Conclusion: The theme is Christ's continuous and pervasive, but hidden, presence in the world. The first stanza states that blasphemy against the Eucharist will not remove Christ from the world. The second and third stanzas present images of His Incarnational presence. Diction refers to this

presence as hidden, independent of man's activity, and found always and everywhere. Images suggest the futility of man's attempt to eliminate Christ from the world. Spondees and trochees emphasize central words. Tone, developed by structure, diction, and imagery, is reverent, serene, and joyous. This poem indicates Meynell's deep faith in the Mass as a fact, not an image or symbol, and in the Incarnation. "To her the God driven by human ordinance from human altars, is present wherever grows and comes to harvest the wheat and grape, already in mystery the bread and wine . . . awaiting the privilege of sacrifice."¹ The serene tone reflects faith that Christ waits patiently in the world, despite man's apathy and hostility.²

2. The theme of "Christ in the Universe" is Christ's cosmic activity. The poem has seven four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: We know of Christ's intercourse with this ambiguous earth, including the signal to a maiden, the human birth, and the teaching and crucifixion of the young man. (Christ on earth, ll. 1-4). But not one of the countless number of stars has heard how He has dealt with this earth, as men have kept His message to themselves. No star

¹Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 247.

²H. M. Toole, "The Charm of Alice Meynell's Poetry," America, XLI, 19 (August 10, 1929), 451.

knows the secret, cherished and dreadful, of Christ's visit to our earth, or the terrible, modest, frightened, whispered, sweet, heartbreaking, secret of His way with us. (earth's secret of Christ, ll. 5-12). No other planet knows that our wayside planet, with its land and sea, its love and life which have increased and spread, and its pain and bliss, has a deserted grave as its chief treasure. (Christ's grave treasured, ll. 13-16). His projects with the heavens may not be guessed, nor His journey through, and His bestowals upon, the Milky Way manifested to us today. (unknown cosmic Christ, ll. 17-20). But no doubt in eternity planets shall compare knowledge of Christ, and we shall hear a million strange accounts of Him, including those of His contact with the Pleiades, the Lyre, and the Bear. (cosmic Christ revealed, ll. 21-24). My soul, be prepared to grasp what is now inconceivable and to examine the million forms of God revealed by those stars when earth tells them about Christ. (knowledge of Christ shared in eternity, ll. 25-28).

Commentary on structure: In the first five stanzas the speaker states that, although we know of Christ's coming here, other planets do not, and we in turn are ignorant of His relationship with them. In the last two stanzas she states that ignorance of cosmic Christ will be dispelled in eternity. The poem concludes in joy with the prospect of a new, magnificent, and inconceivable, knowledge of Christ.

Diction: Diction suggests that because the

insignificant earth, which has not deserved Christ, has had much to do with Him, other parts of the cosmos must have had, or will have, incalculably many dealings with Him also.

"Whispered," "frightened," and "shamefast," suggest the timidity, fear, and shame, of the earth's witness to Christ; "cherished," "sweet," and "perilous," Christ's endangered life on earth, and tender, compassionate love for man; and "terrible" and "shattering," His overwhelmingly tragic and anguished death. "Little day" and "wayside planet" refer to the shortness of human life, and the earth's cosmic insignificance; and "in the eternities," "innumerable host of stars," "million alien Gospels," "million forms of God," and "inconceivable," to the incomprehensible extent of time and of the universe and Christ's activity in it.

Imagery: Images of Christ's terrestrial activity and of His indefinitely great activity elsewhere in the cosmos illustrate the cosmic Christ. The Annunciation, Christ's birth, teaching, and earth-visiting feet, the young Man crucified, and the forsaken grave, all relate to His earthly life. Metaphysical images of Christ, threading and gift-giving on the Milky Way and treading constellations (Pleiades, Lyre, and Bear), of an innumerable host of stars, of a million Gospels, and of stars revealing a million forms of God in eternity, indicate Christ's activity off the earth.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

With this|ambiguous èarth
 His deal|ings hàve|bèen told|ùs. // Thèse|àbide: //
 Thè sign|al tò|à maid,/|thè hù|màn birth,/ //
 Thè lès|sòn,/and|thè yòung|Màn crù|cified. //
 Bùt nòt|à stàr|of àll
 Thè innu|mérablè hòst|of stàrs|hàs heard
 Hòw Hè|admin|istèred|this tèrrè|striàl bàll. //
 Òur ràce|hàve kèpt|thèir Lòrd's|èntrù|stèd Wòrd. //
 Òf His|èarth-vi|siting fèet
 Nòne knòws|thè sè|crèt,/chèr|ished,/pèr|ilous,/ //
 Thè tèn|riblè,/shàmè|fast,/frigh|tèned,/whis|pèred,/swèet,/ //
 Hèart-shat|tèring sè|crèt òf|His wày|wìth ùs. //
 Nò plànèt|knòws|thàt this
 Òur wày|side plànèt,/càrry|ing lánd|and wàve,/ //
 Lòve and|life mùlti|plied,/lánd pàin|and bliss,/ //
 Bèars,/às|chief trèas|ure,/onè|fòrsàkèn gràve. //
 Nòr,/in|òur lìttlè dày,/ //
 Mày His|dèvil|ces wìth|thè heà|vèns bè guèssed,/ //
 His pil|grimage|tò thrèad|thè Mìl|kỳ Wày,/ //
 Òr His|bèstòw|als thèrè|bè mán|ifest. //
 Bùt,/in|thè ètèr|nities,/ //
 Doubt|lèss|wè shàll|còmpà|re|tògèthèr,/hèar //
 À mìll|ion àl|lièd Gòspèls,/in|whàt guìse //
 Hè tròd|thè Plei|adès,/thè Lỳ|rè,/thè Bèar. //

Ō, bē|prēpàred,/mý sòul!//
 Tō rēad|thē ìncōncēivàblè,/tō scàn
 Thē mīllīon fòrms|ōf Gòd|thōse stàrs|ŭnròll
 Whèn,/ìn|ōur tūrñ,/wē shòw|tō thēm|ă Mân.//

In each stanza the first line is trimeter and the next three pentameter. Non-iambic feet include five trochees, seven spondees, and nine anapests; there are four secondary accents, and twelve lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "love," "bears," and "doubtless"; and spondees, "Man crucified," "earth-visiting," "none knows," "heart-shattering," and "chief treasure"; a secondary accent emphasizes "wayside." Caesuras and stress pattern produce slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity and emphasizes the related words, "heard" and "word," and "guessed" and "manifest." Assonance unifies eleven lines; alliteration unifies thirteen and emphasizes "none knows," "shattering secret," and "love and life."

Conclusion: The theme is Christ's cosmic activity. The exposition states that, as His activity on earth is unknown beyond it, His activity in the cosmos is unknown, but will be revealed, to man in eternity. Diction suggests that, in view of the earth's many dealings with Christ, He must be extremely active throughout the cosmos. Images illustrate His terrestrial and non-terrestrial activity. The stress pattern emphasizes key words and, with caesuras, produces slow movement.

Tone, developed by exposition, diction, and imagery, is reverent and serene.

In this poem Meynell "saw mankind and our planet as citizens and a city in the immeasurable kingdom of the universe";¹ that is, the earth is only a minute part of God's creation. The poem is free of tension between joy and sadness, exhibits her large and free imagination, and has great vitality and splendour.² Lack of sadness is a consequence of a focusing on Christ's power, and not on man's infirmity.

3. The theme of "A General Communion" is the mutual isolation of communicants of the Eucharist. The poem has four four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: I saw the crowd of devout people, stirred to deep feeling, intense, inspired, each one very much separate, fed with the devoted Lord at one holy table. (devout communicants, ll. 1-4). Each person was isolated, in soul not in body, and each absorbed the multiplied, but always unparted, Christ.³ (mutual isolation, ll. 5-8). I saw these people as a field of daisies, each grown at such cost that all unimaginable powers were required to contribute

¹J. C. Squire, "Alice Meynell," London Mercury, VII (January 1923), 288.

²Burdett, p. 134.

³Christ is both unparted and multiplied because He is totally present in each molecule of Eucharistic species.

to it. (comparison, ll. 9-12). They were a thousand single central daisies, a thousand of the one species; each had entire and exclusive possession of the day and of the devoted sun. (mystery of the Eucharist, ll. 13-16).

Commentary on structure: Stanza one refers to the deep spiritual isolation of individuals in a crowd of communicants. Stanza two states that the Eucharist separates them, as each, deeply preoccupied with Christ, temporarily shuts himself in a private world. The last two stanzas compare the crowd to a field of daisies; each is so valuable that world and sun would exist for it alone; similarly, each person is so valuable that Christ would have died for him alone.

Diction: Diction relates to the mystery of the Eucharist and its effect on the communicants. "The multiplied, the ever unparted, whole," "entire monopoly of day," "the whole of the devoted sun," "central," "holy board," and "sum of unimaginable powers," suggest that each individual receives all of Christ, as each daisy enjoys the entire day and entire sun, that He would have instituted the Eucharist, the food of man's soul, for him alone, as the day and sun would exist for one daisy, and that the cost of man's salvation was so unimaginably great that only He could have paid it. "Devout," "moved," "intent," and "elate," indicate that the communicants' deep faith and preoccupation with Christ generate in them intense feelings of ecstasy; and "struck apart," "deeply separate," "asunder," and "single," that these feelings isolate an individual from others and from his environment.

Imagery: The throng, after receiving the Eucharist,

each one so absorbed in Christ that he seems enclosed in a private world, suggests deep religious belief in and devotion to the Eucharist; and the metaphysical image of a field of a thousand daisies, each one having the entire day and entire sun to itself, the mystery of Christ's total presence in any number of people simultaneously.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

I sàw|thě thròng,/|sò dèeplŷ sèparàte,/
 Fèd àt|òne hòlŷ bòard--//
 Thě dè|vòut pèoplě,/mòved,/|intènt,/|èlète,/
 Ànd thě|dè|vòtèd Lòrd.//
 Ò strùck|àpart!|nòt sìde|fròm hù|màn sìde,/
 Bùt sòul|fròm hù|màn sòul,/
 Às èach|às|ùndèr àbsòrbed|thě mùlti|plìed,/
 Thě èvèr ùnpàrtèd,/whòle.//
 I sàw|thìs pèoplě às|à fièld|òf flòwèrs,/
 Èach gròwn|àt sùch|à prìce/
 Thě sùm|òf ùn|ìmaginàblè pòwèrs
 Dìd nò|mòre thàn|suffìce.//
 À thòusànd sìnglè cèntràl dàisies thèy,/
 À thòusànd òf|thě òne;//
 Fòr èach,/|thě èntirè mònòpòlŷ|òf dáy;//
 Fòr èach,/|thě whòle|òf thě|dè|vòtèd sùn.

Rhythm is pentameter alternating with trimeter. Non-iambic feet include two trochees, two spondees, and four anapests; two lines have caesuras. The last line is pentameter instead of trimeter. A trochee emphasizes "fed"; spondees emphasize "devout people" and "each grown." Anapests slow

movement, and the long last line reinforces sense. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Assonance unifies six lines; alliteration unifies four and emphasizes "field of flowers." Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme develop euphony.

Conclusion: The theme is the mutual isolation of individuals in a crowd of communicants. The exposition states that the Eucharist causes this separation,¹ and it compares the crowd to a field of daisies: as each totally and exclusively possesses the day and sun--a conceit--each person has an exclusive and total union with Christ. Diction relates to the mystery, and effect on communicants, of the Eucharist. Images suggest deep religious faith and Christ's complete and concurrent presence in many individuals. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme develop euphony. Tone, produced by exposition, diction, imagery, and euphony, is reverent and joyous.

To one critic this poem indicates that man more easily achieves union with God than with other men: "Man may not find union with man; the mystery of the secret soul must abide. But the incalculable mystery, union with God, is by her creed an act more easily compassed."² However, this conclusion is not valid, as the poem considers the Eucharist, not interpersonal union. To another critic the daisies have both secular and religious significance: "The last two stanzas . . . apply equally to the secular and evolutionary

¹Toole, 451.

²Mrs. Meynell and Her Literary Generation, p. 246.

view of man's destiny and salvation as they do to the ecclesiastical."¹ Presumably, the image suggests to him that the evolution, past and future, of man's biological and rational nature was and will be achieved through nature's respect for the individual. Thus, Meynell effectively interrelates the secular and religious in this poem.

4. The theme of "The Unknown God" is the mystery of Christ's presence in a stranger. The poem has five four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker, who is addressing Christ.

Outline of structure: One of the crowd went up to the Communion rail, knelt, received the Lord, returned in peace, and prayed close to me. (setting, ll. 1-4). To myself I said: "Christ, I confess your presence in this stranger who is yours, in his strife, happiness, goodness, badness, and the attacked fortress of his will. I know You are within his lonely conscience and closed away within his solitary world. (Christ in the stranger, ll. 5-12). Christ in his unknown heart, unknown intellect, love, art, battle, peace, and destiny that I shall never know, look upon me. Christ, in his numbered breath, beating heart, death, and mystery, from that secret place and separate dwelling, give me grace. (prayer to Christ in the stranger, ll. 13-20).

Commentary on structure: The first stanza states that

¹Jones, p. 191.

a stranger close to the speaker has received the Eucharist. This incident occasions her reflection on and prayer to Christ in him in the other stanzas. She considers Him unknown in the sense that He is continuously present in a total stranger. Her prayer concludes with a petition for grace.

Diction: Diction describes a man as autonomous, individual, and completely unknown to the speaker, and relates to her belief in and prayer to Christ continuously present in him. "Lonely conscience," "solitary day," and "separate dwelling," indicate his autonomous conscience and separate, independent life; "mystery," "unknown heart," "intellect unknown," "stranger," and "destiny I shall never know," the speaker's total ignorance of his future, feelings, thoughts, and spiritual condition; "who is Thine," "alive within this life," "closed away," "good and ill," "felicity," "love," "peace," "strife," and "battle," Christ's continuous, but hidden, presence in him regardless of the morality of his acts, his peace or turmoil, and other circumstances; and "I do confess," "look upon me," "give me grace," and "Christ," her fervent belief that Christ is in him and her desire for His favor and assistance. Repetition emphasizes "Christ" (begins five lines), "within" (thrice), "in" (eight times), and "this" (five times).

Imagery: Images contrast the man's peace, after his receiving the Eucharist, with his constant struggle to preserve the life of his body and soul. The man, kneeling before the Paten and Cup to receive the Eucharist, returning to his seat in peace, and praying, suggests the Eucharist has given him peace compounded of consolation, strength, and joy; an

assaulted stronghold, that he is besieged by enemies--worldliness, carnality, the devil--bent on perverting his will and destroying his soul; and breath that is numbered, and a beating heart, suggest his short tenuous existence and inexorable end.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

One of the crowd went up, /
 And knelt before the Pàtèn and the Cùp, /
 Received the Lòrd, / returned in pèace, / and prayed
 Clòse tǒ my sǐde. // Thèn in my hèart I sàid: //
 "O Chrìst, / in this mán's lǐfe-- /
 This strànger whò is Thine- / in all his strìfe, /
 All his fèlǐcǐtý, / his gòod and ìll, /
 In the assàultèd strònghòld of his wìll, /
 "I dò cǒnfèss Thèe hère, /
 Alive within this lǐfe; // I knòw Thèe nèar
 Within this lǒnely cǒnscǐence, / clòsed àway
 Within this bròthèr's sòlǐtary dáy. //
 "Chrìst in his ùnknòwn hèart, /
 His ìntèllèct ùnknòwn- / this lòve, / this àrt, /
 This bàttlè and this pèace, / this dèstǐny
 Thát I shàll nèvèr knòw, / lòok ùpǒn mè: //
 Chrìst in his nùmbèred brèath, /
 Chrìst in his bèatǐng hèart / and in his dèath, /
 Chrìst in his mýstèry: // Fròm thát sècrèt plàce
 And fròm thát sèpàràte dwèllǐng, / gǐve mè gràce!" //

In each stanza the first line is trimeter and the other three pentameter. Non-iambic feet include ten trochees,

three spondees, and two anapests; there are four secondary accents, and eight lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "stronghold," "within" (thrice) and "Christ" (four times); and spondees, "man's life" and "look upon." Caesuras and the stress pattern produce slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, aabb, emphasizes the related words, "breath" and "death," and pairs lines. Assonance unifies eight lines; alliteration unifies ten and emphasizes "give" and "grave."

Conclusion: The theme is the mystery of Christ's presence in a stranger. The first stanza tells of a peaceful communicant, and the others form the speaker's prayer to Christ in him. Diction relates to the man's autonomy and individuality, the speaker's ignorance of him, and her belief in and prayer to Christ in him. Images contrast his peace after Communion with his moral and physical struggles. Trochees and spondees emphasize important words. Tone, produced by exposition, diction, and imagery, is reverent and serene.

Feeling builds up throughout and peaks in the final stanza with the petition to Christ for grace: "This devout prayer increases in intensity and fervent ardor. Christ in His numbered breath, His beating heart, His death and mystery is asked to give her grace from His separate dwelling and secret place."¹ Repetition of "Christ" intensifies feeling in this petition. The theme relates to the mystery of the Incarnation by which Christ is present in man's mind and will in both his "good and ill."²

¹Toole, 451.

²Tuell, "Mrs. Meynell: a Study," 238.

D. Christ in Man

Poems chosen for this section are: "In Manchester Square," "Saint Catherine of Siena," "In Sleep," and "Messina, 1908."

1. The theme of "In Manchester Square"¹ is the unseen beauty and might of a paralytic. The poem has three four-line stanzas, descriptive structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: In death the paralytic has dropped the crossing-sweeper's brush to which he clung in life. He was one-handed, distorted, unusually small, and short of breath although his hair was young. (paralytic in life, ll. 1-4). This year I saw the winter vines of France, dwarfish, distorted, ugly and grotesque, sprites in the frosty dryness. Their knotty, crippled, blackened little stems grew sideways on long hills to the south. (vines in winter, ll. 5-8). Great green and golden bunches of large leaves shall present grapes growing closely together in that wide vineyard before long; and O! the man's power, attractiveness, fruit, memory, and prestige, since he died. (vines at harvest, paralytic after death, ll. 9-12).

Commentary on structure: The first stanza describes the sweeper's wretched appearance before death; the second stanza, grotesque and apparently dead winter vines in France.

¹The sub-title, "In Memoriam T. H.," refers to a deceased crossing-sweeper whom Meynell had admired.

The third stanza presents contrasts with both: healthy vines after winter with great bunches of large leaves enclosing grapes, and the paralytic after death with his quality recognized, by heaven if not by earth.

Diction: Diction suggests the revelation of beauty, health, and wholesomeness, which were concealed by ugliness and deformity. "His hair was young" suggests that the paralytic's infirmity deprived him of physical attributes, such as health and strength, normal to a young man. "Might," "sweet," and "stature," indicate that after death ample restitution was made to him for this deprivation: his strength, attractiveness, and achievement, hidden and ignored in life, were fully revealed. "Goblins" and "green and golden" contrast the obscuring of the vines' latent worth--their wholesomeness and beauty--in winter with the revelation of it after winter.

Imagery: Contrasting images of the paralytic, in and after life, and of vines, in and after winter, suggest the co-existence of unrealized inner excellence with external ugliness, deformity, and weakness. The crossing-sweeper, paralytic, one-handed, contorted, dwarfish, short of breath, clinging to his brush in life, and dropping it as he collapsed in death, suggests the constant courage he needed for survival, due to his physical weakness and to the attitudes--pity, apathy, hostility--of others; in contrast, wine and song suggest his festivity and pleasure after death. Vines in winter, on long hills in France facing the South and the sun, forced into a state akin to hibernation by drought and frost--dwarfed, distorted, knotty, crippled, blackened puny stems,

resembling ugly and grotesque sprites--and the same vines after winter, when great green and golden bunches of large leaves are presenting clusters of grapes, suggest that beauty and wholesomeness will lie dormant and be obscured until suitable circumstances permit their emergence.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Thě pàrālýtíc mán|hàs dròpped|ĩn dèàth
 Thě cròssĩng-swèepèr's brùsh|tò whìch|hě clùng, //
 Òne-hàndèd,/twìstèd,/dwarfed,/scàntèd|òf brèath, //
 Àlthòugh|hĩs hàir|wàs yòung. //
 Ĩ sàw|thĩs yèar|thě wìntèr vìnès|òf Frànce, //
 Dwarfed,/twìstèd,/gòblĩns ìn|thě fròstȳ dròuth-- //
 Gnàrled,/crìpplèd,/blàckèned lìttlè stèms|àskànce
 Òn lònghìlls tò|thě Sòuth. //
 Grèat grèen|ànd gòldèn hànds|òf lèaves|èrè lòngh
 Shàll pròffer clùstèrs ìn|thàt vìnèyard wìde. //
 Ànd Ò|hĩs mìght,/hĩs swèet,/hĩs wìne,/hĩs sòng, //
 Hĩs stàtùre,/sìnce|hě dìed! //

In each stanza the first three lines are pentameter and the last trimeter. Non-iambic feet include four spondees and two trochees; there are no caesuras. Spondees emphasize "one-handed," "dwarfed, twisted," "gnarled, crippled," and "great green"; and trochees, "scanted" and "hills." The secondary accent emphasizes "vineyard." The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Assonance unifies seven lines; alliteration unifies seven and emphasizes "dropped in death" and "great green and golden."

Conclusion: The theme is a paralytic's unseen beauty and might. The first stanza describes his pathetic condition in life; the second stanza, blackened stunted vines in winter; and the third, fruitful vines after winter and the paralytic's glory after death. Diction suggests the revelation of inner beauty and health which were concealed by outer grotesqueness. Contrasting images of the paralytic and of vines suggest co-existence of unseen excellence with external deformity. Spon-dees and trochees emphasize central words. Tone, established by diction and imagery, is melancholic and grave in the first two stanzas and joyous in the third.

2. The theme of "Saint Catherine of Siena"¹ is a man's regeneration through his faith in Christ. The poem has seven four-line stanzas, narrative structure, and no speaker.

Outline of structure: The frivolous young man condemned to die, stopped in his play by the state, in shock watched time pass, but Catherine² came to his dungeon. (back-ground, ll. 1-4). She found his former unrestrained, melodic courage dumb, his adolescent beauty destroyed, and his fashionable bravery overcome; his masculinity availed him little. (youth's despair, ll. 5-8). For the first time and for ever, he was on an old woman's level. But man alone must not fear the mystery, pang, the going forth into the unknown, of death.

¹The sub-title, "Written for Strephon, who said that a woman must lean, or she should not have his chivalry," refers to the shepherd, Strephon, in Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia.

²Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-80) was an illiterate Italian mystic who greatly influenced popes Gregory XI and Urban VI. Although referred to as a nun, a woman under vows in a convent, she was actually a lay Dominican.

(fear of death, ll. 9-12). In his cell, dark amid the Tuscan sun, fearing death he fell weeping at the feet of the young unsophisticated consecrated nun. (youth's tears, ll. 13-16). Her prayers and preaching effected his union with Christ. He leant on her courageous breast, in which Christ's heart beat. (conversion to Christ, ll. 17-20). He left her and emitted cries of victory at the block as his breath was ended. She clasped his bloody head, the splendour of his death blinding her from the world. (his glorious death, ll. 21-24). Will modern man, who sternly excludes women from voting, withhold homage from you, Catherine, erect and in tears, a support and a cross? (Catherine's strength and sympathy, ll. 25-28).

Commentary on structure: A condemned young man is rescued from despondency and dread of death, and converted to Christ, by Catherine, so that death becomes victory, and tragedy glory, for him. The last stanza asks for her recognition by modern man, who refuses the vote to women.

Diction: Diction contrasts the youth before and after his condemnation and relates to his conversion by Catherine. "Light," "frolic," "lyric," "modish," and "stripling beauties," suggest that the youth's attractive vitality (before his condemnation)--frivolity, playfulness, gay mischievousness, bravado, adolescent graces--was superficial and transient, not based on enduring values and beliefs; "mystery," "pang," "passage," and "unknown," that he dreaded death as an entry into a strange incomprehensible world; "aghast," "dumb,"

"strewn in wrecks," "overcome," and "on any old wife's level," that ominous dread caused his despair and physical and emotional collapse when he was confined in a dungeon to await death; "gave him to the Sacrificed," "innocent," and "splendour of his death," that his conversion to Christ, whose sacrifice banished dread of death, purified his heart and enabled him to accept death joyously as the beginning of new life with Christ; and "sacred," "young," "provincial," and "courageous," that Catherine's unsophistication, courage, and consecration, effected his conversion.

Imagery: Images suggest that Catherine is an instrument that Christ uses to save a despondent youth. A young man, normally frivolous, mischievous, enthusiastically and fashionably brave, and graceful, in a dark dungeon cell, awaiting death in dread and shock, his courage vanquished and his beauty devastated, who weeps and falls at Catherine's feet, leans on her breast, converts to Christ, and emits cries of victory before being beheaded, indicates that when union with Christ becomes the object of a formerly purposeless man, his dread of death gives way to great joy at the prospect of this union. Catherine, praying for, preaching to, and converting, the youth, and clasping his bloodied head after his death, suggests her zeal, commitment, and belief that death is an illusion and the body negligible in comparison with the soul. The Tuscan sun suggests the youth's former bright and sensuous life; and modern man refusing woman the vote, injustice.

Catherine, as a prop and cross, indicates that as an instrument of Christ she supports man.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

The light|yòung mán|whò wàs|tò dîe,/
 Stòpped ín|hîs fròllic bÿ|thê Stàte,/
 'Aghàst,/|bèhèld|thê wòrld|gò bÿ;||
 Bût Càthérine cròssed|hîs dùngéon gàte.||
 Shê fòund|hîs lýric còuràge dùmb,/
 Hîs stríplíng bèauties strèwn|ín wrècks,/
 Hîs mòdîsh bràvèry òvèrcome;||
 Smàll pròffit hād|hê òf|hîs sèx.||
 'On `any òld|wîfe's lèvèl hê,/
 Fòr ònce-~~for~~ `all.|| Bût hê|`àlone--/
 Mán-~~must~~|nòt fèar|thê mystèry,/
 Thê pàng, thê pàssàge, thê ùnkñown:
 Dèath.|| Hê|dîd fèar|ít,/ín|hîs cèll,/
 Dàrkling|`amìd|thê Tùscán sùn;||
 'And,/wèepíng,/`at|hêr fèet|hê fèll,/
 Thê sàcréd,/yòung,|pròvìnciàl nùn.||
 Shê pràyed,/|shê prèached|hîm ìnnòcènt;||
 Shê gàve|hîm tò|thê Sàcríficed;||
 'On hêr|còuràgeous brèast|hê lèant,/
 Thê brèast|whêre bèat|thê hèart|`of Chrìst.||
 Hê lèft|ít fòr|thê blòck,/wìth crîes
 'Of víctòry `on|hîs sèvèred brèath.||
 Thát crímson hèad|shê clàsped,/hêr èyes
 Blínd wìth|thê splèndour òf|hîs dèath.||

And will the man of modern years /
 -- Stern on the Vote ~~with~~hold from thee, /
 Thou prop, / thou cross, / erect, / in tears, /
 Catherine, / the service of his knee? //

Rhythm is tetrameter; there are three spondees, two trochees, and one secondary accent; three lines have caesuras. Spondees emphasize "small profit," "wife's level," and "man--must"; and trochees, "stopped" and "death." The secondary accent emphasizes "young." The rhyme-scheme, abab, provides stanzaic unity and relates "Sacrificed" and "Christ." Alliteration in sixteen lines and assonance in twelve assist unity in lines and, with the rhyme-scheme, produce euphony. Alliteration also emphasizes "Catherine crossed."

Conclusion: The theme is a youth's regeneration through his faith in Christ. The narrative recounts Catherine's bringing him to Christ and to joyous acceptance of death. Diction contrasts his states before and after his condemnation and relates to his conversion. Images suggest that she is used as an instrument by Christ to save him. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme produce euphony. Tone, developed by diction and imagery, is melancholic and grave in the first four stanzas but serene in the last three. The last stanza, which relates to Meynell's interest in women's rights, is extraneous to the narrative.

3. The theme of "In Sleep" is God's compassion, often unrecognized, for the unfortunate. The poem has four four-line stanzas, narrative structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: I dreamt that an angry man's oratory in a park on behalf of paupers and cripples, in which he accused God of failure to love and assist man, was interrupted by a tear. (denial of Providence, ll. 1-8). Then the author of compassion and of pity walked, as though called, into the park from the murmuring city, passed through the crowd, trod the brown grass, bent closely over the man, saw his tear, and saw Himself in his impassioned eyes, as though He looked at a mirror. (Christ's appearance to the man, ll. 9-16).

Commentary on structure: Events described occurred in the speaker's dream. A man who feels deep compassion for others is angry at God for failing to relieve their distress. Christ comes to and sees Himself in the man. Christ's understanding of a man's denial of Providence out of ignorance and compassion, and His identifying with his compassion, are illustrated.

Diction: Diction contrasts two impressions of God: that He is utterly without compassion, and that He exemplifies it. "There are no Higher Powers," "leave us in the dark," and "no heart in God, no love," suggest that the existence of human suffering and needs points to the lack of Providence, as God could, but does not, satisfy man's needs and relieve his

distress. In contrast, "One who did create compassion, who alone invented pity" indicates that Christ is the sole author, and the exemplification, of pity and compassion.

Imagery: Images of unrelieved human suffering, and of anger, contrast with images of a compassionate Christ. People in the dark, paupers, cripples, the muttering city, and brown grass, suggest human suffering and unhappiness--poverty, deformity, darkness, ignorance, dissatisfaction, anger, frustration, and devitalization. The man in the park, wrathful and impassioned, stating that pressing human needs indicate God's unconcern for man, and shedding a tear for the unfortunate, which interrupts his oration, suggests deep sympathy for men and intense anger against God for permitting such misery. Christ, walking through the park's northeast gate, stepping on the brown grass, weaving carefully and delicately through the small crowd, bending closely over the man, and seeing his tear and Himself in his impassioned eyes, suggests His identification with those who, like Him, are intimately involved, and lovingly concerned, with man and his world.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Ī drēamt|(nō "drēam"|āwāke-~~ā~~ drēam|īndēed)/
 Ā wrāthfūl mān|wās tālking ĩn|thē pārk://
 "Whēre āre|thē Hīghēr Pōwērs,/whō knōw|ōur nēed
 Ānd lēave|ūs ĩn|thē dārkh?//
 "Thēre āre|nō Hīghēr Pōwērs;//thēre ĩs|nō hēart
 Īn Gōd,/nō lōve"-~~h~~hīs ōrātōrĭy hēre,/
 Tākĭng|thē pāupērs' ānd|thē crĭpplē's' pārt,/
 Wās brōkēn bȳ|ā tēar.//
 Ānd thēn|ĭt sēemed|thāt Ōne|whō dīd|crēate
 Cōmpāssĭon,/whō|ālōne|īnvēntēd pītȳ,/
 Wālkēd,/ās|thōugh cāllēd,/īn āt|thāt nōrth-ēast gātē,/
 Īut frōm|thē muttēring cītȳ;//
 Thrēadēd|thē lĭttlē crōwd,/trōd thē|brōwn grāss,/
 Bēnt ō'er|thē spēākēr clōse,/sāw thē|tēar rĭse,/
 Ānd sāv|Hĭmsēlf,/ās ōne|lōoks ĩn|ā glāss,/
 Īn thōse|īmpāssĭōnēd ēyes.//

In each stanza the first three lines are pentameter and the fourth trimeter. There are eight trochees, one spondee, three anapests, and five secondary accents; nine lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "taking," "walked," "threaded," "trod," and "bent"; and secondary accents, "brown" and "Himself." The spondee emphasizes "tear." Caesuras and the stress pattern slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists unity within stanzas. Alliteration in nine lines and

assonance in nine assist unity within lines.

Conclusion: The theme is God's compassion, often unrecognized, for the unfortunate. The speaker dreams of Christ's appearance to a man, who is in anguish because he believes God has no solicitude for the wretched. Diction contrasts the impression that God has no compassion with the impression that He exemplifies it. Images of suffering and anger contrast with those of a compassionate Christ. Rhythm emphasizes central words. The major tone of the first two stanzas, developed by narrative, diction, and imagery, is melancholic and pessimistic; that of the last two stanzas, developed by narrative and imagery, is optimistic and joyous.

4. The theme of "Messina,¹ 1908" is God's compassion for those in distress. The poem has two six-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker, who is addressing God.

Outline of structure: Lord, You have crushed Your tender ones, overthrown Your strong and worthy ones, taken from man his courage and strength, nullified Your diligent work, undone Your deeds, and ruined Your keenly sensible and lovely plan for man. (God the destroyer, ll. 1-4). Destroyer, we have cringed beneath Your direct, instantaneous, and incomprehensible power. (man's fear of God, ll. 5-6). Lord, You

¹Messina is a city in southern Italy. One of the most disastrous earthquakes ever recorded struck the area of the city in 1908, destroyed most of it, and killed tens of thousands of its inhabitants.

have hurried to rescue, heal, feed, favor, and clothe, man; to bind up his wounds, strengthen his resistance, extinguish the firebrand, and shore up the ruins. You have sped Your ships by sea and your trains by land to help us, and have wept for and commiserated with us. (God the preserver, ll. 7-11). Our broken fingers feel Your instrumental, comprehensible, benign power. (Providence, ll. 11-12).

Commentary on structure: The first stanza depicts God as a heartless destroyer, an insensitive and arbitrary tyrant who crushes man without mercy or compunction; and the second, as a loving, solicitous preserver, who rushes to relieve man's distress and sheds tears of compassion over it. This poem advocates the second view of God; that is, He is not an evil trickster who uses nature to crush man, but a non-apocalyptic God who does not interfere with nature's laws, even when they cause great hardship for man, and out of compassion He inspires men to assist victims of catastrophes.

Diction: Diction contrasts two views of God: one that contradicts His nature and is absurd and incomprehensible, and one which is readily understandable because it is harmonious with His nature. "Crushed," "o'erthrown," and "destroyer," suggest that God uses tremendous and irresistible power to effect irreparable damage and destruction; "unmanned,"

"unwrought," "undone," and "unplanned," that He nullifies His own plans for and handiwork of the cosmos, including man; "elaborate works," and "lovely sentiment human plan,"

that His creation is beautiful, carefully and painstakingly achieved, and especially adapted to the needs, happiness, and perfection, of man; and "tender," "strong," and "fair," that no one--the defenceless, worthy, courageous--is excluded from destruction. "Immediate" suggests that God destroys directly without employing agents; and "unintelligible," that this direct, ruthless, and arbitrary destruction of His own carefully and beautifully contrived work, and of men, even the weak and righteous, is incomprehensible to man. "Hastened", and "hast sped," suggest that God does not delay succour to the distressed; "retrieve," "heal," "bless," "anneal," and "shed pity," that out of compassion for man, He restores the world after catastrophe, and strengthens and blesses men so that they may survive its effects. "Mediate" suggests that God, in assisting men, uses people as His instruments; and "intelligible," that His quick employment of men to assist their brothers stricken by disaster is readily comprehensible.

Imagery: Images of destruction suggest God's ruthless, incomprehensible power; and those of men working to relieve human distress, His tender comprehensible concern for people which is displayed through human agents. The crushing of the weak and helpless, overthrowing of the strong and righteous, destruction, men in abject fear beneath a giant destroying hand, suggest that man lives in terror of a tyrannous, arbitrary, irresistible, and incomprehensible God. Healing, restoring, feeding, nursing, clothing, blessing,

strengthening, extinguishing of fires and propping of ruins, ships speeding by sea and trains by land to assist victims of disasters, and people who consider God responsible for this charity, suggest that He is a loving Father who motivates people to help those in need.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Lòrd,/Thòu|hăst crùshed|thỹ tẻndẻr ònes,/|ỏ'erthrẻn
 Thỹ strẻng,/|thỹ fairs;||Thỹ mẻn|thỏu hẻst|ủmẻnẻd,/|
 Thỹ ẻlẻbẻrẻte wẻrks|ủnrẻught,/|Thỹ dẻeds|ủndẻne,/|
 Thỹ lẻvelỹ sẻntẻmẻnt hủmẻn plẻn|ủnplẻnẻd;||
 Dẻstrẻyẻr,/wẻ|hẻvẻ cẻwẻrẻd bẻnẻath|Thẻnẻ òwn
 ủmẻdẻẻte, ủnẻntẻllẻgẻbẻlẻ hẻnd.//
 Lòrd,/Thòu|hăst hẻstẻnẻd tẻ|rẻtrẻieve,/|tẻ hẻal,/|
 Tẻ fẻed,/|tẻ bẻnd,/|tẻ clẻthe,/|tẻ quẻnch|thẻ brẻnd,/|
 Tẻ prẻp|thẻ rẻuẻn,/|tẻ blẻss,/|ẻnd tẻ|ẻnnẻal;||
 Hẻst spẻd|Thỹ shẻps|bỹ sẻa,/|Thỹ trẻins|bỹ lẻnd,/|
 Shẻd pẻtẻỹ ẻnd tẻars:-|ẻour shẻttẻrẻd fẻngẻrs fẻẻl
 Thỹ mẻdẻẻte ẻnd|ẻntẻllẻgẻbẻlẻ hẻnd.//

Rhythm is pentameter; there are three trochees, one spondee, five anapests, and four secondary accents; three lines have caesuras; and line three has an extrametrical foot. Trochees emphasize "Lord" (twice) and "destroyer"; the spondee emphasizes "shed pity." The stress pattern and caesuras produce slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, ababab, assists unity and emphasizes the related words "o'erthrown" and "undone," "unmanned" and "unplanned," and "heal" and "anneal." Assonance unifies seven lines; alliteration unifies seven and emphasizes "fingers feel."

Conclusion: The theme is God's compassion for those in distress. Stanza one states that God has inexplicably crushed the world and man; and stanza two, that acting through men He has hastened to relieve distress. Diction contrasts the incomprehensible view of God as a destroyer with the comprehensible view of Him as a protector and healer. Images of destruction suggest His incomprehensible tyranny; and images of men relieving human misery, His comprehensible compassion. Alliteration and assonance contribute to unity and emphasis. Tone, established by exposition, diction, and imagery, is angry, bitter, and perplexed in stanza one, and grateful, reverent, and serene in stanza two.

One critic considers that this poem transcends immediate knowledge, the basis of poetry, through speculation, reflects a doctrinally limited and parochial view not found elsewhere in Meynell's canon, and attributes to God inexplicable conduct--first impulsive and then retractatory--whereas He must be humanly explicable to be a fit subject for poetry.¹ This comment indicates a misreading, as two different human views of God are presented in the poem. The first--God as a destroyer--is totally rejected because of its absurdity; but the second--God as a preserver who acts through man--is quite reconcilable with His compassionate but non-apocalyptic nature.

¹Jones, p. 194.

E. SUMMARY

Themes relate to the soul's relationship to the body and to God. The contrast between the splendid complex techniques and simple divine goal of poetry, the body's creation of its external world, and the degeneration of medieval spirituality into modern materialism, suggest that God, the soul's simple goal, is attained through the use by the "high senses" of the complex material world, and that modern man has lost the medieval appreciation of this goal. The instinctive dread of death in nature, the preparation of a dying person for eternity, and Christ's infinite suffering at the Crucifixion, suggest that Christ, by dying for man, has gained infinite grace which banishes man's dread of death. Christ's continuous presence throughout the world, His cosmic activity, His mysterious presence in a stranger, and the isolating effect of the Eucharist, refer to Christ's immanence in creation since the Incarnation and to His Eucharistic presence in man. The unseen beauty and might of a paralytic, regeneration of a despondent youth through his faith in Christ, and His compassion for the man in the park and for devastated Messina, indicate His deep concern for individuals and His beneficent influence in the world.

Eleven of the fourteen poems express thought and feeling through expository structures. Feelings of joy, reverence, optimism, sorrow, admiration, and gratitude, are

associated with thought which is mainly presented through comparisons and contrasts. Comparisons of poets to pilgrim kings and of poets who write ultimate poetry to the kings who found Christ, of earth's ignorance of Christ's cosmic activity to ignorance in the cosmos of His activity here, and of a crowd of devout communicants to a field of flowers, each of which enjoys the sun totally and exclusively, convey reverence and joy; those of the body to a council of judgment which actualizes external reality through use of physical senses, and of nature's protection of life by instinctive fear and terror to the protection of a fortress by sentinels, convey admiration. Comparison of the replacement of spirituality by materialism since the middle ages to the degeneration of a lady into a slattern, and contrasts between views of God as destroyer and as preserver of man, and between an orator's belief that God ignores cripples and paupers and Christ's compassionate visit to him, express both sorrow and joy. Comparison of preparing a ship for the sea and preparing a soul for eternity, and contrasts between states of a paralytic (in and after life), of vines (in and after winter), and of a youth (before and after conversion to Christ), express joy and optimism. Contrasts between man's finite and Christ's infinite suffering, and between His Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic presences in the world, and recognition of and prayer to Him, continuously present in a stranger, convey reverence and gratitude.

Contrasting patterns of diction in several poems

express themes. These patterns contrast the beautiful, splendid, ordered process of poetry with its simple divine goal; the beauty, simplicity, joy, and innocence, of a past age with the disorder, ugliness, and acquisitiveness of the present age; the finiteness of man's suffering with the infinity of Christ's suffering; Christ's cosmic with His Eucharistic presence; the paralytic's pathetic physical condition in life with his power and beauty after death; the youth's despair in the dungeon with his triumphant death; and God as a destroyer of man with God as his loving father. Patterns, closely associated with themes, relate to the body's actualizing of phenomena, to the powerful irrational dread of death, to Christ's way with man and His countless cosmic activities, to the mystery of the Eucharist and the fervent isolated state of the communicants, to Christ's continuous and mysterious presence in the stranger, to the speaker's prayer to Him, to the alien mysterious natures of the sea and of eternity, and to Christ's compassion for men.

Themes embodying contrasts are developed by contrasting images. The contrast between the splendid process and the simple divine goal of poetry is illustrated by avenues, arrays, and festive courts, versus an open shrine and the finding of Christ by the kings; that between man's finite and Christ's infinite suffering, by a sounding line which stops far short of sea-bottom, versus Christ's descent into an abyss; and that between a paralytic in and after his life, by

vines seemingly dead in winter which later yield abundant fruit. Images contrast the imprisoned youth's despair before, with his triumph after, his conversion; God as a destroyer, with God as a preserver, of man; and God's apparent neglect of man, with Christ's compassion. Images compare the development of an unspiritual attitude towards poverty since the middle ages to the degeneration of a lady into a slattern; nature's protection of life by terror, to a fortress guarded by sentinels and outposts; the preparation of a dying person for eternity, to a ship being built on land; devout and mutually isolated communicants, to a field of daisies; and the body's power over the external world, to a council of judgment which rules the world. Images of the struggle and transiency of a stranger's life, of Christ's activity on the earth and elsewhere in the cosmos, of blasphemy against the Eucharist, and of Christ's concealed presence in the world, also develop themes.

In all poems the rhythm is iambic with many substituted feet--trochees, spondees, and anapests--and it is characterized by many secondary accents and pauses. A mixture of trimeter and pentameter provides rhythmic variation in nine poems; tetrameter, smooth uniform movement in four; and pentameter, an impassioned tone in one. Diction is emphasized by trochees, especially those which begin lines, by spondees, and by secondary accents. In nine poems pauses and stress pattern establish a slow movement which reinforces logical sense. All

poems have regular rhyme-schemes; the most popular, abab, occurs in nine. These schemes unify stanzas and contribute to euphony. Alliteration and assonance, which are much employed, primarily unify lines.

The elements of these poems co-operate closely in establishing tone. Although the initial stanzas of "The Treasure," "Saint Catherine of Siena," and "In Manchester Square," have strong melancholy tones, and those of "In Sleep" and "Messina, 1908" strong angry tones, the overall tone in all poems is serene, and their sub-tones are reverent, joyous, and optimistic. This poetry indicates an awareness of a conflict within man, springing from his duality, between principles of life and of death, and its serenity reflects deep religious faith that through Christ life will triumph. Its affirmative tone celebrates a world marked by Christ's presence in which man can relate to Him and live meaningfully aware of ultimate meaning, and not blinded by passion and consumed by despair and sin. The absence of significant negative emotions, such as anger, fear, frustration, bitterness, and hatred, in this poetry is its strength rather than a weakness.

CHAPTER IV

MEYNELL'S LAST POETRY

The group of thirty-one poems entitled "Last Poems" in the text corresponds to The Last Poems of Alice Meynell,¹ written in the last years of Meynell's life. These poems are concerned with nature, God, and man. The most salient pattern in them concerns man's freedom to grow spiritually and to express his spirit in art. Poems most directly related to this theme, especially those employing conceits, have been chosen. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and evaluate Meynell's last poetry, with respect to theme and its exposition. The chapter is divided into two parts, each of four poems, pertaining to man's self-determination and self-expression. In each poem the theme is given, and the structure, diction, imagery, rhythm and sound, and tone, are discussed.

A. Man's Self-Determination

Poems chosen for this section are: "To Silence," "Winter Trees on the Horizon," "The Wind Is Blind," and "Reflections."

¹London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1923.

1. The theme of "To Silence"¹ is the shaping of sound into melody by silence. The poem has three five-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker, who is addressing Silence.²

Outline of structure: Silence, I lift up my singing, which you bound, to praise not your idleness, but your lordly ways, such as your moulding of my Mozart's tunes, and your control over the bird that sings to the moon.³ (praise of silence, ll. 1-5). Man's lovely, definite melodic forms are proposed, supervised and restrained in development, finished, and divinized, by you. Also I detect your subtle intrusion--afterthoughts, wandering, and grace--in poetry. (melodies formed, and poetry enriched, by silence, ll. 6-10). The future song is your secret. Music receives significance from you, sculptor, who are as powerful as the sculptor Space⁴ whose hand commanded the Discobolus⁵ to be motionless. Man,

¹The subtitle--"Space, the Bound of a Solid": Silence, Then, the Form of a Melody--expresses a conceit, an analogy basic to the poem: silence controls a melodic form or outline as space controls the outline or form of a solid.

²By being capitalized, Silence is personified and associated with a spiritual force.

³Probably a reference to the nightingale, famous for its singing on moonlit nights.

⁴By being capitalized, Space is also associated with a spiritual force.

⁵The Discobolus is a famous statue of a discus-thrower by the Greek sculptor Myron of the fifth century B.C.

on his way to Silence, stops to hear and see. (analogy, artist's use of senses, ll. 11-15).

Commentary on structure: Stanza one states the conceit that Silence controls melodic forms, including Mozart's tunes and a bird's song; stanza two, elaborating on the conceit, that Silence controls the entire process of creation of melodies and enriches poetry in various ways; and stanza three, the analogy that Silence is a sculptor that gives music its significance, as Space is a sculptor that keeps the Discobolus within its boundaries, and the truth that man uses sense-knowledge "on his way to Silence" (i.e., in developing spiritual insight).

Diction: Diction relates to the control--authoritative, total, and effective--exerted over melodic composition, and to the enrichment of poetry, by Silence. "Urged," "bade," "silence-bounded," "moulding," "hold," and "magisterial ways," suggest that Silence dominates, and is responsible for, the creation of melodies; "outlined," "controlled," "compressed," and "complete," that Silence conceives, guides the development of, and perfects, the shapes of melodies; "lovely," "definite," and "divine," that these shapes are beautiful, easily recognizable, and of sublime excellence; and "fine intrusions," "afterthoughts," "wandering," and "grace," that Silence generates the subtle insights, rich associations, and attractive charm, of poetry.

Imagery: Images suggest that a spiritual power,

which utilizes sense-knowledge, informs art. Metaphysical images of Silence, outlining, controlling, compressing, completing, and deifying, melodic forms, moulding Mozart's tunes, and holding the bird that sings to the moon; and of Space, whose hand is forcing the Discobolus to keep immobile and within its boundaries; suggest the spiritual power that is involved in the creation of art. The speaker, praising Silence in song, indicates that she recognizes the power of Silence; and man, stopping to hear and see, on his way to Silence, that man's senses participate in the creation of melody.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Nòt,/Sìlénce,/fòr|thìne idlénèss|I raìse
 Mý sìlénce—bòundèd sìn|gìng in|thý pràise,/
 Bùt fòr|thý mò|ldìng òf|mý Mòz|art's tùne,/
 Thý hòld|ùpòn|thè b|ìrd|thát s|ìngs|thè mòon,/
 Thý mà|gìstèr|ìal wàys.//
 Mán's lòvèlly dèf|ìn|íte mèl|òdý—shàpes|àre thìne,/
 Oùtl|ìned,/cò|ntròlled,/còm|prèssed,/còm|plète,/d|ìv|ìne.//
 Àlso|thý f|ìne|ìn|trùs|ìons dò|I tràce,/
 Thý àftèr|thòughts,/|thý wà|ndèr|ìng,/|thý gràce,/
 Wìth|ìn|thè pò|et's l|ìne.//
 Thý sè|crèt is|thè sòng|thát is|tò bè.//
 Mùs|ic|hàd nèvèr stà|tùre bùt|fòr thèe,/
 Scul|ptòr!//stròng às|thè scul|ptòr Spàce|whòse hànd
 Urgèd thè|D|iscò|p|lùs|ànd bàde|h|ìm stànd.//
 Mán,/òn|h|ìs wày|tò Sìlénce,/stòps|tò hèar|ànd sèe.//

The first four lines of each stanza are pentameter; the final line is trimeter in stanzas one and two and hexameter in stanza three. This construction segregates stanzas and emphasizes the sense of the final line. Non-iambic feet include one spondee, seven trochees, six of which begin lines, and three anapests. There are three secondary accents, and two lines have caesuras. The spondee emphasizes "man's lovely," and a secondary accent, "outlined"; trochees emphasize "music," "sculptor," "strong," and "man." Alliteration in

nine lines and assonance in thirteen assist unity within lines and, with the rhyme-scheme, aabba, produce euphony. Alliteration emphasizes "whose hand," "controlled, compressed, complete," and "strong as the sculptor Space."

Conclusion: The theme is the shaping of sound into melody by Silence. The first stanza states and illustrates the conceit that Silence forms and controls melodies. Stanza two elaborates on this conceit and states that Silence also enriches poetry. Stanza three compares Silence and Space as sculptors, and states that the spiritual world is reached through the senses. Diction relates to Silence's control over melodic composition and to its enrichment of poetry. Images suggest that a spiritual power informs art. Trochees emphasize key words. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme, produce euphony. Tone, produced by exposition, diction, imagery, and euphony, is respectful and reverent. In this poem Silence is "the presence of a mysterious force, an essential accompaniment of great achievement whether in life or art";¹ this mysterious divine Silence is a pre-requisite for the transcendence of the material world by art.

2. The theme of "Winter Trees on the Horizon" is man's determining of his own horizon. The poem has four

¹T. Connolly, "Alice Meynell--Centennial Tribute," America, LXXVIII (Oct. 18, 1947), 73.

four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: O delightful! Trees show the limit of my world, my own horizon, even in wooded lands; little groups of twigs reveal that pearly border. (horizon through trees, ll. 1-4). And what is more personal than this limit, which is level with my eyes? Expressly for me the rounded earth and the rounding skies kiss. That sharp line depends upon my height (let mathematics provide proof). Horizons of the lark, his nestlings, and the child, are not mine. (personal horizon, ll. 5-13). When I ascend hills, I lift my horizon; when I return to the plain, I restore my horizon to its normal state. (horizon determined by elevation, ll. 13-16).

Commentary on structure: Stanza one states that the speaker's horizon is always present; stanzas two and three, that it is particular and personal to her; and stanza four, that she can elevate or lower it. These statements suggest that an individual's spiritual vision or insight is always limited, is unique to him, and can be extended or contracted by him.

Diction: Diction indicates that the speaker's horizon is unique, exactly defined, and dependent upon and responsive to her. "Margin of my world," "has my stature," "my own horizon," "mine own," and "my limit, level with mine eyes," indicate that her horizon is personal and unique; "precisely," "delicate," and "keen line," that it is sharply and precisely

defined; and "gain," "lift," "rise erect," and "soothe," that it can be extended through her efforts.

Imagery: Images relate to the beauty, continuous presence, temporal development, and flexibility, of a horizon. The horizon, round, white, and lustrous, as a pearl, and seen through little bands of twigs in wooded lands, suggests beauty and permanence. The earth and skies, in contact along an arc, suggest the intimate union of heaven and earth; the different horizons of a lark, its nestlings, and a child, the development in time of the horizons of animals and of men. The speaker's horizon, which extends as she climbs hills and contracts as she returns to the plain, suggests that it changes in response to her efforts.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

O dèl|icàte:// Èvèn in wòod|èd lánds
 Thèy shòw|thè màrg|in `of|mý wòrld,/
 Mý òwn|hòr|izòn;||littlè bànds
 Of twigs|únvèil|thàt èd|ge|ìmpèarled.//
 And whàt|is mòre|mìne òwn|thàn th|is,/
 Mý lìmit,|lèvèl w|ith|mìne èyes? //
 For mè|prèc|isely d|o|thèy k|iss--/
 Thè ròund|èd èàrth,|thè ròund|ing sk|ies.//
 It hàs|mý stàt|ure,|thàt|kèen lìne
 (Lèt màth|emàt|ics vòuch|fòr it).
 Thè làrk's|hòr|izòn is|nòt mìne,/
 Nò,/nòr|h|is nèst|lings' whèrè|thèy s|it; //
 Nò,/nòr|thè ch|ild's.//|And,/whèn|I g|ain
 Thè h|ills,/I lìft|it às|I r|ise
 Èrèct;||àn|òn,/bàck t|o|thè plàin/
 I soothe|it w|ith|mìne è|qual èyes.//

Rhythm is tetrameter: there are three spondees, one trochee, two anapests, and one secondary accent; five lines have caesuras. Spondees emphasize "mine own," "mine eyes," and "keen line." The light stress pattern contributes to flowing movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Alliteration in five lines and assonance in seven assist unity within lines and co-operate with the rhyme-scheme to develop euphony.

Conclusion: The theme is an individual's determining of her own horizon. The exposition states that one's horizon, although obscured at times, never disappears, depends on her height and elevation, and is created by herself. Diction indicates that her horizon is unique, exactly defined, and sensitive to her efforts to change it. Images relate to the beauty, permanence, development in time, and flexibility, of a horizon. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme, develop euphony. Exposition and diction produce an optimistic tone; and imagery and euphony, a joyous tone. Exposition, diction, and imagery, suggest that man's spiritual condition, the extent of his spiritual vision, is unique to and ascertainable by him, and that it develops, with time and through his own efforts.

3. The theme of "The Wind Is Blind"¹ is the contrast between the wind's blindness and the vision elsewhere in nature. The poem has four five-line stanzas, expository structure, and no speaker.

Outline of structure: The wind is blind. The earth receives light from sun and moon; the dawn uses heights as observation points; the summer receives light from the plain; drops of rain reflect visible light. The wind is blind, but

¹The subtitle--"Eyeless, in Gaza, at the Mill, with Slaves"--taken from John Milton's "Samson Agonistes," refers to Samson who, after being captured by his enemies, was blinded and forced with other slaves to turn a mill in Gaza.

the flashing billows have sight, the cities see with open eyes, and the homing bird and bee navigate everywhere by their sensitivity to light vibrations in the ether.¹ (wind alone in nature is blind, ll. 1-10). The wind alone is blind. Unseeing, he has hurled his unknowing lash, his aimless dart, and his sightless attack, against the world, breaking his own unknown heart. (wind's self-destructiveness, ll. 11-15). The wind is blind, and he is enslaved by sail and mill; he cannot preserve his swiftness and his despairing will from these blind enslavements. (wind's imprisonment, ll. 16-20).

Commentary on structure: Stanzas one and two give many examples to show that natural elements, such as rain, waves, and birds, either possess or are sensitive to light; and they state the conceit that the wind alone is blind. Stanza three states that the wind's purposeless and undirected energy is futile and self-destructive; and stanza four, that it is commandeered by other elements, such as sail and mill, and the wind cannot prevent this enslavement. "The wind is blind," a refrain which begins each stanza, intensifies the contrast between the wind and the rest of nature, and also intensifies the desolation of the wind's aimlessness

¹The navigation of birds and insects is unexplained, as evidence of senses or organs involved in it is presently lacking. The undulatory (wave) theory of light postulates that the ether, a medium of unusual qualities, permeates space and transmits waves of light, and some authorities believe that birds have an electromagnetic sense by which they respond to these waves.

and imprisonment.

Diction: Diction contrasts nature's effective utilization of light energy with the blindness, purposelessness, anguish, and slavery, of the wind. "Open eyes," "sees," "see," "watch-tower," "dawn," "visible light," "aware," "shines," and "know," indicate that nature does not waste light energy, but utilizes it to perform useful work, such as illumination, navigation, and creation of beauty. "Eyeless," "blind," and "unseeing," referring to the wind, indicate that it utilizes neither light energy nor its own energy. "Ignorant," "aimless," and "unknown," indicate that the wind's blindness precludes its having knowledge, purpose, or direction; and "break his unknown heart," "desperate will," and "blind uses of the slave," that the wind's expenditure of energy brings it anguish and enslavement, not the fulfilment it desperately desires. "Blind," which occurs six times, is much emphasized by repetition.

Imagery: Metaphysical images, produced by personification, contrast nature's utilization of light energy with the wind's blind wastage of his energy. Earth using sun and moon, the plain shining to the summer, raindrops dispersing white sunlight into its components to form a display of colors, rushing and splashing water reflecting light brilliantly and intermittently, and the homing bird and bee, navigating by use of light waves in the ether, indicate that nature uses sunlight for definite purposes, such as

illumination, navigation, and the creation of beauty. Cities seeing with open eyes, and the dawn using a height as a watch-tower, suggest that man uses natural and artificial light for illumination, and uses heights from which to beam lights. The wind--swift, desperate, and blind--hurling an ignorant lash, an aimless dart, and an eyeless rush, against the world, breaking his own heart, and also being enslaved by sail and mill, suggests that his blind undirected energy is harnessed by other forces which effectively have him in bondage. Samson, with slaves at a mill in Gaza, reinforces this image of bondage.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

The wind|is blind.//
 The eàrth|sèes sùn|ànd mòon;||thè height
 Is wàtch-|tòwèr|tò thè dàwn;||thè plàin
 Shìnes tò|thè sùn|mer;||vis|ible light
 Is scàttèred in|thè dròps|òf ràin.//
 The wind|is blind.//
 The flàsh|ing bìllòws àre|àwàre;||
 With òpèn èyes|thè cìt|ies sèe;||
 Lìght lèaves|thè è|thèr,/èv|erywèrè
 Knòwn tò|thè hòm|ing bìrd|ànd bèe.//
 The wind|is blind,/
 Is blind|àlòne.//|Hòw hàs|hè hùrled
 Hìs ìgnòrànt làsh,/hìs àim|less dàrt,/
 Hìs èyè|less rùsh|ùpòn|thè wòrld,/
 Unsèe|ing,/tò brèak|hìs un|known hèàrt: //
 The wind|is blind.//
 And thè|sàil tràps|hìm,/ànd|thè mìll
 Càptùres|hìm;||ànd|hè cànnòt sàve
 Hìs swìft|ness ànd|hìs dèsp|èrâte wìll
 Fròm thòse|blind ùs|és òf|thè slàve.//

Except for dimeter in the refrain, rhythm is tetrameter. There are six spondees, four trochees, five anapests, and two secondary accents; eight lines have caesuras. Spondees emphasize "sees sun," "light leaves," "unknown heart,"

"sail traps," and "blind uses"; and trochees, "tower," "shines," "known," and "captures." The stress pattern and caesuras develop slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, x abab, assists stanzaic unity. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme develop euphony. Assonance unifies sixteen lines; alliteration unifies eight and emphasizes "sees sun," "shines" and "summer," "cities see," "light leaves," "bird" and "bee," and "how has he hurled."

Conclusion: The theme is the contrast between the wind's blindness and the vision elsewhere in nature. Stanzas one and two state that nature, excluding the wind, has vision and purpose; and stanzas three and four, that the wind's blind use of energy brings him anguish, and also bondage, when other forces harness this energy. Diction and imagery contrast the controlled, purposeful use of light energy in nature with the wastage, anguish, and enslavement, associated with the wind's energy. Spondees, trochees, and alliteration, emphasize central words. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme, develop euphony. The joyous tone of stanzas one and two is produced by exposition, imagery, and euphony; and the melancholic tone of stanzas three and four, by imagery and diction.

4. The theme of "Reflections" is the complex series of reflections resulting from human interaction. The poem has three parts: "In Ireland," "In 'Othello'," and "In Two Poets"; each has two four-line stanzas and begins with "A mirror faced a

mirror." The structure is expository, and only "In Two Poets" has a speaker.

Outline of structure: "In Ireland": A mirror faced a mirror: two groups faced each other in mutual anger and hate which, as they were exchanged, escalated to become complex, involved, and perplexing. (ire and hate multiplied, ll. 1-4). The denunciation of one group's suspected plot, crime, or treachery, by the other group was reflected back and forth between the two; by this exchange a single flame of suspicion ignited thousands of other flames. (simple beginning, analogy, ll. 5-8).

"In 'Othello'": A mirror faced a mirror: Desdemona felt sweet pain, and responded with pity, as Othello told her of dangers he had survived. Her pity elicited his love for her, and this union of love and pity was reflected between them. (pity and love multiplied, ll. 1-4). This reflection between them was an affectionate game which demonstrated the infinity of love. (unlimited growth of tenderness, ll. 5-8).

"In Two Poets": A mirror faced a mirror: your utterance, master of images, which settled in me and fastened itself to my heart, is like a carrier bird which is returning home to you. (reaction to other poet, analogy, ll. 1-4). Your wandering greatness returns to you far greater, because of its journey to me. The thoughts traveling between us grow sublime and supremely good through this endless magnification. (interaction of two poets, ll. 5-8).

Commentary on structure: The conceit that the images exchanged by two opposing mirrors become infinitely complex is employed. These mirror images are compared to the mutual anger and hatred of two groups of people, to the exchange between Othello and Desdemona, involving his love and her pity, and to the exchange of inspiration between two poets, in the first stanzas of "In Ireland," "In 'Othello'," and "In Two Poets," respectively. The second stanzas state that the exchange of anger and hate builds up from a single incident, as one flame lights a thousand others, that escalation of love and sympathy attests to love's infinite capacity for growth, and that poetic inspiration is endlessly magnified by this continuing exchange, in "In Ireland," "In 'Othello'," and "In Two Poets," respectively.

Diction: Diction suggests the tremendous growth, from a small seed, of anger and hatred, compassion and love, and poetic insights, due to their being reflected between two people or two groups. "One plot, one crime, one treachery, nay, one name" indicates that a single note, actually or apparently hostile, is prelude to and initiator of a discordant symphony, involving the exchange of anger and hatred by two groups. "Doubt," "sullen," "denounced," and "rejected," indicate that this development was caused by suspicion, obstinacy, resentment, public verbal assaults, and refusal to attempt reconciliation and resolution; and "multiplied," "complex," "intricate," "echoes of replies," and "thousands of one,"

that anger and hatred have grown tremendously in magnitude, complexity, and intricacy, as a result of this exchange. "Sweet pain," "wafted back," "bandied," "tender sport," and "no rest had love's infinity," suggest that Othello and Desdemona are playing a continuous joyous affectionate game resembling shuttlecock, in which the missile is compounded of her compassion and his love, which are becoming infinite, and that the game was initiated by her pain in his past dangers and her pleasure in his narration of them. "Lord of images," "lodge in me," "locked to my heart," "homing from home," "migratory greatness," and "grow divine by endlessness," indicate that the speaker so much admired and found congenial an insight of the other poet that it became hers as well as his, and that the endless reflection between the two of them is increasing it to the extent that it is becoming divine.

Imagery: The metaphysical image of an infinite series of reflections produced by two opposing mirrors is compared with the almost infinitely complicated exchange of emotions and thoughts between people. Anger and hatred, growing greatly as they are being exchanged by two groups, and a thousand flames in the eyes of those involved, which were enkindled by one spark--a plot, crime, treachery, or verbal abuse--suggest that uncontrolled passions generate indefinitely great escalation of antagonism and hostility from a single incident. Desdemona, responding to Othello's narration of his past dangers with pity, receiving her pity, reflected back to her,

along with his love, and wafting both back to him, and the two lovers, endlessly batting back and forth in a tender game his love and her compassion, suggest the immeasurably great development of mutual love and compassion from a small seed. The word of another poet, lodging in the speaker, fastened to her heart, and generating their endless exchange of thoughts, ever growing greater, and a homing bird, equally at home with either poet and flying back and forth between them, suggest the extremely significant cross-fertilization of two poets which has grown from a single reaction.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

In Ireland

À mîr|rôr fâced|à mîr|rôr:// îre|ând hâte
 `Oppô|site îre|ând hâte;//thê mûltîplîed,/ /
 Thê cômplêx chârge|rêjêctêd,/înrîcâte,/ /
 Frôm sîde|tô sùllên sîde;//
 Ône plôt,/ône crîme,/ône trêachêry,/nây,/ône nâme,/ /
 `Assûmed,/dênôunced,/înrêchôes ôf|rêplîes.//
 Thê dôubt,/êxchânged,/lît thòusânds ôf|ône flâme
 Wîthînr|thôse mûtuâl êyes.//

In "Othello"

À mîr|rôr fâced|à mîr|rôr:// înr|swêet pâin
 Hîs dângêrs wîth|hêr pîtý dîd|shê tràck,/ /
 Rêcêived|hêr pîtý wîth|hîs lòve|âgâin,/ /
 `And thêse|shê wâftêd bàck.//
 Thât mâscûlîne pâssîon înr|hêr lîttlê brêast
 Shê bândîed wîth|hîm;//hêr|cômpassîon hê
 Bândîed|wîth hêr.//Whât têndêr spòrt!//Nô rêst
 Hâd lòve's|înfînîty.

In Two Poets

À mîr|rôr fâced|à mîr|rôr:// Ô|thý wòrd,/ /
 Thòu lòrd|ôf îmâgès,/dîd lòdge|înr mè,/ /
 Lòcked tô|mý hêart,/hômîng|frôm hòme,/à bîrd,/ /
 `À càrrîer,/bòund|fôr thêe.//
 Thý mîgrâtorý grêatnêss,/grêatêr fâr
 Fôr thât|rêturn,/rêturns;//nòw gròw|dîvîne

By ènd|lèssnèss|mý vîsî|tîng thòughts,/|thàt `àre
Thòse vîsî|tîng thòughts|òf thîne.//

In every stanza the first three lines are pentameter and the fourth trimeter. There are four trochees (all of which begin lines), three spondees, five anapests, and one secondary accent; nine lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "opposite," "bandied," and "locked"; and spondees, "complex charge," "lit thousands," and "sweet pain." Caesuras and the stress pattern slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme develop euphony. Assonance unifies seventeen lines; alliteration unifies ten and emphasizes "complex charge" and "sullen side."

Conclusion: The theme is the complex series of reflections resulting from human interaction. The infinite series of reflections of two opposing mirrors--a conceit--is compared to the mutual anger and hatred of two groups, to the mutual love and compassion of Othello and Desdemona, and to the mutual influence of two poets.¹ Diction and imagery suggest the almost infinite development, in magnitude and complexity, of thoughts and feelings which are reflected between people.² Trochees and spondees emphasize diction.

¹"Last Poems" (anon. rev.), 304.

²In nature a small vibration may escalate to such magnitude that great damage results. Marchers often break step

Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme, create euphony. The major tone of "In Ireland," developed by exposition and diction, is melancholic; that of "In 'Othello'," developed chiefly by diction, is joyous; and that of "In Two Poets," developed by exposition, diction, and imagery, is respectful and serene.

Although Meynell wrote this poem late in life, it indicates no decline; she considers its thought and emotion without parallel in her work: "It has succeeded in singing the highest thought of intellectual passion and emotion of which I am capable."¹ A series of complex ideas grows out of a single conceit which is the best example of a metaphysical metaphor in Meynell's poetry.² Facing mirrors suggest growing internal dissension in Ireland, the relationship between Othello and Desdemona, and that between two writers.³

when crossing a bridge to avoid inducing a harmful oscillation in it.

¹Alice Meynell: a Memoir, p. 317.

²Duncan, p. 112.

³One critic believes that this poem refers to Meynell herself and to Coventry Patmore, that she sees inner meaning in his work of an image which adds inner meaning to her unconscious use of it, and that, therefore, she is a mirror facing his mirror--"Last Poems" (anon. rev.), 304.

B. Man's Self-Expression

Poems chosen for this section are: "The Voice of a Bird," "The Poet to the Birds," "To Antiquity," and "The English Meters."

1. The theme of "The Voice of a Bird"¹ is the arousal of man's awareness of his soul by a bird. The poem has four four-line stanzas, expository structure, and no speaker.

Outline of structure: Who will rise at a bird's voice? The great genius of Dante, Keats, Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley, was awakened in them by the little and unvoiced, but stirring and imperious, call of a bird. They rose at the voice of a bird--lark or nightingale--which inspired them to win control over the world's melodies. (great poets inspired by bird, ll. 1-8). Not only significant poets awoke: in every man, woman, and child, who listens to the bird, an unrecognized poet stirs, and this has occurred since the world began. (all who listen are poets, ll. 9-12). St. Peter heard

¹The note accompanying the title--"He shall rise up at the voice of a bird" (Ecclesiastes 12:4)--may refer either to the early rising of people or to the thin high voice of the aged--Holy Bible: New Scofield Reference Edition, ed. C. I. Scofield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 704. This poem presents an interpretation differing from these two, however.

the prophetic rooster crow twice,¹ the saddest cock-crow since man has existed. He rose and shed tears of repentance. (St. Peter aroused to contrition, ll. 13-16).

Commentary on structure: Stanzas one and two equate "he" with any great poet who rose at and was inspired by a bird's call. Stanza three states that a poet stirs in everyone who listens to the bird; and stanza four, that St. Peter was moved to repentance by a crowing cock. The implication is that man's awareness of his soul, which gives rise both to poetry and to conscience, is effected by a bird's call.

Diction: Diction relates to the appeal to and effect on man of the bird's call. "Little rousing unvoiced call" and "shrill decree," which paradoxically describe it as low and unvoiced but also authoritative, piercing, and stirring, suggest that it appeals to the soul and not to the body, that it can easily be ignored by man, and that it moves authoritatively and deeply those who heed it; "rose in their greatness," "stood up," and "signal poets woke," that some people who listened to and were given self-awareness by the bird became outstanding and significant poets; and "poet stirs unknown," "listening," and "throughout the Mays," that in the course of human existence anyone who has responded to the bird has developed an awareness of soul similar to, but less than,

¹The reference is: "This day, even in this night, before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice (Mark 14:30).

that of the poet.

Imagery: Images depict people attaining to or recovering knowledge of their souls by listening to a bird. Great poets, including Dante, Keats, Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley, drinking poems from the throat of a bird, such as a lark or nightingale, and thereby mastering the sounds of all the world, suggest that they receive from a bird the spiritual awareness indispensable for poetry. A poet stirring in all men, women, and children, who are listening to the bird, suggests that it imparts to them the poet's faculty of communing with his soul; and St. Peter, hearing the cock crow twice, wakening to knowledge of soul which had been obscured by his instinct to preserve physical life, and shedding tears of repentance for his denial of Christ, that the crowing effected restoration of the self-awareness and conscience he had temporarily lost.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Whò thén|is "hè"? //
 Dàntè,/Kèats,/ Shàkè|spèare,/ Mìltòn,/ Shèllèy; //àll
 Ròse in|thèir grèatnèss àt|thè shrill|dècrèe,/ //
 Thè littlè rousing in|artìculàtè call.//
 Fòr thèy|stood ùp
 At thè|bird-voicè,/|òf lark,/|òf nìght|íngàlè,/ //
 Drànk pòèms fròm|thàt thròat|às fròm|à cùp.//
 Òvèr|thè grèat|wòrld's nòtè|dìd thèse|prèvài.//
 Ànd nòt|àlòne
 Thè sìgnàl pòèts wòkè.// |In lìstè|níng mán,/ //
 Wòmàn,/|ànd chìld|à pòèt stìrs|unknòwn,/ //
 Throug|hòut|thè Màys|òf bìrds|sìnce Màys|bègàn.//
 Hè ròse,/|hè heàrd--/
 Òur fàthèr,/òur|St. Pètèr,/in|hìs tèars--/
 Thè cròw|íng,/twìce,/|òf thè|pròphèt|ic bìrd,/ //
 Thè sàd|dèst còck|cròw òf|òur hù|màn yèars.//

In each stanza the first line is dimeter and the next three pentameter; this rhythm accentuates introductions to the stanzas. Non-iambic feet include seven trochees (of which six begin lines), five spondees, and two anapests; three lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "who," "rose," "woman," and "crow"; and spondees, "stood up," "bird-voice," "drank poems," and "world's notes". The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Alliteration in six lines and assonance in

nine assist unity within lines and, with rhyme-scheme, establish euphony.

Conclusion: The theme is the awakening of man's awareness of his soul by a bird. Stanzas one and two state that the bird has aroused and inspired all great poets. Stanza three states that all who listen to it are similarly stirred in lesser degree; and stanza four, that the cock's crowing awoke St. Peter to his guilt. Diction relates to the appeal to and effect on man of the bird's call. Images show people obtaining or recovering spiritual insight by listening to a bird. Trochees and spondees emphasize central words. Alliteration, assonance, and rhyme-scheme, develop euphony. Tone, developed by exposition, imagery, and euphony, is serene and optimistic.

2. The theme of "The Poet to the Birds" is the contrast between man's thought and bird-song. The poem has five four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker, who is addressing the birds.

Outline of structure: You beseech me, or I think you do, you birds, to keep silent. You will not tolerate my song, which kills your joy and makes your wild song silent or unheard by me. The thrush over there stopped amidst his short musical thought just at my footfall. The blackbird's longer note quickly disappeared, returning into its throat. (birds' song stopped if man present, ll. 1-8). Illyrian lark and

Paduan nightingale, you do not die, because your song is hereditary and unchanged over long ages; Assyria heard it. However, as a solitary individual, I am different from others although, like them, I occupy only one place, came into being recently, and will die. My boundaries of time and space foreshadow my death. (birds' song immortal but man's mortal, ll. 9-16). My human song must be my human thought. Be patient until it is done. I shall not keep my silence, as for me there is only one silence. (human song is thought, ll. 17-20).

Commentary on structure: Stanza one states that birds consider their natural spontaneous song incompatible with human song. Stanza two gives examples of two birds--the thrush and blackbird--which stop their song at man's approach. Stanzas three and four contrast birds' immortality, given them by song unchanged in time, and man's mortality. Stanza five states that man's essential song is thought, which will cease only at death.

Diction: Diction contrasts the spontaneous song of birds with conscious human thought. "Wild," "hereditary," and "unchangeable," indicate that birds' song is spontaneous, received by inheritance, and unchanged throughout the ages; "took wing and fled afield" and "cease, silent or fugitive," that birds, considering their song incompatible with man, immediately stop it at his arrival; "single," "lonely," "new," "local," and "mortal," that man's thought makes him a unique

individual, who is restricted to one particular location and to one particular period of time; and "kill-joy song," "human song," "no peace but one," and "little peace," that man necessarily expresses himself by thought, as birds express themselves by song, that his life is short, that he stops thinking only at death, and that his conscious thought is antipathetic to birds' spontaneous song.

Imagery: Contrasting images of birds' song and of man suggest a significant difference between nature, represented by birds, and man: he is limited in time and place due to his conscious thought; nature is not similarly limited because its laws transcend time and place. The thrush, stopping its song in mid-phrase, and the blackbird's song flying back into its throat, at man's arrival, suggest that man's rationality is irreconcilable with the spontaneous song of birds; the Illyrian lark and Paduan nightingale, whose song is unchangeable through the ages and was heard in Assyria,¹ that birds' song is unchanged by time or location. The general image of man, single and limited to one place and one time, suggests his individuality, mortality, and insignificant size.

¹Assyria was an ancient empire of western Asia; and Illyria, an ancient country on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, was the setting of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

You bid | me hold | my peace, /
 Or so | I think, / you birds; // you'll not | forgive
 My kill - joy song | that makes | the wild | song cease, /
 Silent | or fugitive. //
 You thrush | stopt in | mid-phrase
 At my | mere foot fall; // and | a longer note
 Took wing | and fled | a field, / and went | its ways
 Within | the black bird's threat. //
 Hereditary song, /
 Illyrian lark | and Paduan nightlingale, /
 Is yours, / unchangeable | the ages long; //
 Assyria heard | your tale; //
 Therefore | you do | not die. //
 But single, / local, / lonely, / mortal, / new, /
 Unlike, / and thus | like all | my race, / am I, /
 Preluding my | adieu. //
 My human song | must be
 My human thought. // Be patient till | 'tis done. //
 I shall | not hold | my little peace; // for me
 There is | no peace | but one. //

In each stanza the first and last lines are trimeter, and the second and third are pentameter. This rhythm helps to emphasize key statements and phrases. There are five spondees, five trochees, three anapests, and four secondary

accents; five lines have caesuras. Spondees emphasize "kill-joy song," "song cease," "mid-phrase," "took wing," and "blackbird's throat"; and trochees, "silent," "stopt," and "therefore." The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Assonance unifies eleven lines; alliteration unifies nine and emphasizes "song cease" and "Illyrian lark."

Conclusion: The theme is the contrast between human thought and birds' song. The exposition states that birds, such as the thrush and blackbird, stop singing when man arrives, that the lark and nightingale are immortal due to their changeless song, that man's uniqueness preludes his death, and that his song, which he must sing until death, is his thought. Diction and imagery contrast birds' spontaneous song and man's conscious thought. Spondees and trochees emphasize central words. Assonance, alliteration, and rhyme-scheme, assist unity within lines and within stanzas. Tone, developed by exposition, diction, and imagery, reflects a change of attitude from flippancy to pathos.

3. The theme of "To Antiquity" is the contrast between the freshness and order of antiquity and the weariness and chaos of today. The poem has four four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker, who is addressing antiquity.¹

¹The subtitle--". . . Reverence for Our Fathers, with Their Stores of Experiences"--an Author Whose Name I Did Not Note."

Outline of structure: Our young ancestor, our boy of literature, we walk wearily, burdened with what we undergo, but you in olden times flew lightly and were highly favored. (antiquity's buoyancy, today's oppression, ll. 1-4). Youth, you had a new town, as neat and orderly as a box of toys; that town is now our broken uncovered ruin, with its illustrious past. (analogy, ll. 5-8). You had words of a morning fresh from night. Your moon was uncelebrated in poetry, and your passion was fervent, undiscouraged, and as unstudied as a bird's unlearned tune. (antiquity's freshness, ll. 9-12). Why is this true, youth? Your poems are not exhausted or dead yet. Must I bow low, before old age, or in envy kiss and put you, a child, to bed? (analogy, ll. 13-16).

Commentary on structure: Antiquity is addressed as a youth. Stanza one states that he moved effortlessly and buoyantly, but modern man plods tiresomely under burdens; stanza two, that man's environment, new and orderly in antiquity, is now fragmented and chaotic; and stanza three, that antiquity had fresh words, unexploited subjects for poetry, and unrepressed but calm fervor. In stanza four the speaker asks antiquity why his poems are still fresh, and how he should be treated--as an old man or a child.

Diction: Diction relates to the significant diminution of vitality, enthusiasm, and order, from antiquity to the present. "Unsonneted moon," "ignorant tune," "undismayed passion," "not wearied," and "not dead," suggest that in

antiquity spontaneity, strong emotions, energy, and vitality, abounded, and everything was a fresh subject for poetry, and that, in contrast, the present age is wearied, dead, and artificial, and its emotions and subjects for poetry are exhausted. "Flew light, and blessed" and "trudge oppressed with our experiences," contrast the buoyancy, blessedness, and joy, of antiquity with today's oppression, weariness, and unhappiness. "Young ancestor," "boy," and "youngling," indicate the youth of antiquity; and "new town," "morning words," "fresh," and "tight," its newness, freshness, and orderliness.

Imagery: Contrasting images of antiquity and modern man point to the loss of optimism, spontaneity, and energy, since antiquity. A young poet, buoyant in spirit, with fresh words and with passion undismayed and as imperturbable as a bird's uncultivated song, who is living in a new town, as neat and orderly as a box of toys, suggests the enthusiasm, freshness, buoyancy, and order, of antiquity; and modern man, trudging, oppressed by burdens, and living in the fragmented, uncovered ruin of an illustrious past, the weariness and chaos of today. The speaker, bowing low to respect age, and putting a young child to bed with an envious kiss, suggests her complex attitude towards antiquity: reverence for its age, and envy and affection for its youth.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

Ò òur|yòung àncēstòr,/
 Òur bòy|īn Lētters,/hòw|wē trudge|ōpprēssed
 With òur|"ēxpēriēncēs,"/ānd yòu|ōf yòre
 Flēw līght,/ānd blēssed://
 Yòunglīng,/īn yòur|nēw tòwn,/
 Tīght,/līke|ā bōx|ōf tòys-|thē tòwn|thāt īs
 Òur shātterēd, òpēn rūn,/with|īts crōwn
 Ōf hīstōries;//
 Yòu with|yòur mōrning wōrds,/
 Frēsh frōm|thē nīght,|yòur yēt|un-sōmnetēd mōon,/
 Yòur pās-siōn undīsmāyed,/cōol ās|ā bīrd's
 Ignōrānt tūne;//
 Ò yòunglīng!/hòw|īs thīs?//
 Yòur pōēms āre|nòt wēarlēd yēt,/nòt dēād,/
 Mùst ī|bōw lōw?//ōr,/with|ān ēnvīōus kīss,/
 Pùt yòu|tō bēd? //

In each stanza the first line is trimeter, the second and third are pentameter, and the fourth is dimeter. This rhythm reinforces sense and separates stanzas more. There are four spondees, six trochees (of which five begin lines), two anapests, and two secondary accents; six lines have caesuras. Spondees emphasize "young ancestor," "flew light," "new town," and "bow low"; and trochees, "youngling," "tight," "fresh," "cool," "ignorant," and "put." Many pauses and the heavy

stress pattern produce slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity and emphasizes the contrasting words, "oppressed" and "blessed," and the allied words, "ancestor" and "yore." Assonance in twelve lines and alliteration in seven assist unity within lines and, with rhyme-scheme, develop euphony.

Conclusion: The theme is the contrast between the freshness and order of antiquity and the chaos and weariness of today. The exposition contrasts antiquity's lightness and good fortune with today's heaviness and tribulation, and antiquity's new orderly environment with today's chaotic devastated one; admires antiquity for its fresh words, its fresh subjects for poetry, its lack of disillusion, and its spontaneity; and states that antiquity's innocence and freshness belie its venerable age. Diction and imagery indicate the loss of vitality, freshness, and order, from antiquity to the present age. Spondees and trochees emphasize central words. The major tone, related to the contrast between antiquity and the present, is developed by exposition, diction, and imagery, and is nostalgic and whimsical.

4. The theme of "The English Metres" is the combination of freedom and restraint in English meters. The poem has six four-line stanzas, expository structure, and a speaker.

Outline of structure: English meters have the firmly attached freedom of flowers in a breeze. By national good

fortune they are impulsive, smoothly elegant and brief, anchored so as to pivot on a fixed point, and independent. Their rules, strengthened by time, are adhered to flexibly. (flexible but definite rules, ll. 1-4). Our meters, like our seasons, permit bending but not fracture. Autumn has hoarfrost; winter, gentle days; summer, superfluous rain resembling extrametrical syllables; and spring, weather belonging to other seasons, like the non-standard feet of our meters. Nevertheless, our year has four firmly established seasons. Clouds above a gusty plain resemble solemn spondees; and birds on the wing, easily moving dactyls. (analogy, ll. 5-12). Our meters are ruled by Equity, not Common Law; that is, they follow settled and formal rules. They have liveliness, agility, and pairs of lines, unknown in neoclassical French and in Italian poetry, in which last words of lines, possibly separated by other lines, rhyme with and emphasize each other. Yes, Latins, count and critically compare, with your eye anticipating the duration of the meter, and with your counting fingers coming to a rhyme occurring at a fore-ordained time. (formal rules, ll. 13-20). No, magnificently our serious rhythmic structures are authoritatively set. They may be calculated, studied, and conventional--as the Alexandrine with its halt¹--or they may be as impulsive as the man who in

¹An Alexandrine is a line of six iambic feet, with a caesura after the third.

haste outran Peter at daybreak.¹ (meters deliberate or impulsive, ll. 21-24).

Commentary on structure: Stanza one gives some characteristics of English meters, compares them to flowers in a breeze, and states that they follow flexible rules. Stanzas two and three mention variations in England's meters, like unseasonable weather in her definite seasons, give examples of such weather, and compare heavy clouds to spondees and flying birds to dactyls. Stanzas four and five state that English meters abide by Equity, not Common Law, and have liveliness, agility, rhyming pairs, and definite rules which are obvious to any scanner. Stanza six states that the meters may be calculated or impulsive, but are always authoritative.

Diction: Diction indicates the regularity, flexibility, and vitality, of English meters. "Steadfast," "not Common Law, but Equity, is theirs," "approaching fate," "grave," "authentic," and "decreed," indicate that they have firmly established, formal and authoritative procedural rules, which enable the location of stresses to be reliably predicted; "tethered," "obeyed 'at ease'," "inflexion, not infraction," "rooted liberty," "agile," and "askance," that their rules are flexible enough to be bent without being broken, and are analogous to anchors which permit considerable drifting, to

¹The reference is: "So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre" (John 20:4). The other disciple is St. John.

firm grips on long leashes, and to fixed pivots of movement; and "impulsive," "uncaptured," "on the wing," "gusty," "redundant," "displaced," and "play," that this latitude allows their movement to be easy, light, free, vigorous, playful, and energetic. "National luck," "terse," "time-strengthened," and "classic France," suggest that this vitality and flexibility is promoted by the succinct informal character of English, developed over the years, in contrast to the comparative formality of standard French.

Imagery: Images relate to the flexibility, strength, and regularity, of English meters. Rooted flowers, swaying in a breeze, hoarfrost in autumn, gentle days in winter, downpours (like redundant syllables) in summer, misplaced weather (like substituted metrical feet) in spring, heavy clouds (like spondees) above a gusty plain, light smooth winds (like dactyls); and an agile foot askance, suggest the flexibility and adaptability, which permit departures from regularity, in English meters. Pairs of rhyme-words, each happily calling to its mate, separated from it by a line or lines; scanners, their fingers numbering and collecting syllables, and their eyes watching for definite rhythm and for rhyme-words at definite places; and impressive, authoritative meters, as deliberate as the Alexandrine used in Restoration England or as impulsive as St. John outrunning St. Peter at daybreak, suggest the great authority and regularity in English meters.

Rhythm and sound: Scansion may be as follows:

The ròotèd lìbèrtý|òf flòwèrs ìn brèeze
 Ìs theìrs,/bý nàtìonàl lùck|ìmpulsìve,/tèrse,/ /
 Tèthèred,/|ùncàptùred,/rùles|òbèyed|"àt èase," /
 Tìme-strèngthèned làws|òf vèrse.//
 Òr they|àre lìke|òur sèasòns thàt|àdmit
 Ìnflexìon,/nòt|ìnfraction: // Àutùmn hoàr, /
 Wìntèr|mòre tènèdèr thàn|òur thoughts|òf ìt, /
 Bùt à|yèar's stèadfàst fòur; //
 Rèdùndànt sýllàblès|òf Sùmmèr ràin, /
 Ànd dísplàced àccènts òf|àuthèntíc Sprìng; //
 Spòndàcìc clòuds|àbòve|à gùstý plàin
 Wìth dàctýls òn|thè wìng.//
 Nòt Còmmòn Làu,/bùt Èquìtý,/hìs theìrs-- /
 Òur mètrès; //plày|ànd àgìle fòot|àskànce, /
 Ànd dístànt,/bèckòníng,/blìthely rhýmíng pàirs, /
 Ùnkòwn|tò clàssíc Frànce; //
 Ùnkòwn|tò Itàlý. // Ày,/còunt,/còllàte, /
 Làtìns: //|wìth èye|fòresèeing òn|thè tìme, /
 Ànd nùmbèred fìngèrs,/ànd|àppròachíng fàte
 Òn thè|àppròpríate rhýme.//
 Này,/nòblý òur|gràve mèàsúres àre dècrèed: /
 Hèròíc,/Àlèxàndrìne wìth|thè stày, /
 Dèlìbèràte; //òr èlse|líke hìm|whòse spèed
 Dìd òutrùn Pètèr,/urgènt ìn|thè brèak|òf dáy. //

In each stanza the first three lines are pentameter and the fourth trimeter. In the last stanza, however, the last line is hexameter. This pattern helps to separate stanzas and stresses their final lines. There are five trochees (all begin lines), five spondees, four anapests, and two secondary accents; five lines have caesuras. Trochees emphasize "tethered," "winter," "spondaic," "Latins," and "heroic"; spondees, "time-strengthened," "year's steadfast four," "grave measures," and "outrun Peter"; and secondary accents, "displaced" and "nay." Pauses and the stress pattern produce slow movement. The rhyme-scheme, abab, assists stanzaic unity. Assonance, alliteration, and rhyme-scheme, produce euphony. Assonance unifies eighteen lines; alliteration unifies nine and emphasizes "beckoning, blithely," "count, collate," and "nay, nobly."

Conclusion: The theme is the combination of freedom and restraint in English meters. The exposition compares them to flowers in a breeze, and to the English seasons, with respect to flexibility, and states that their rule by Equity--definite established rules--can be verified by scansion, and that they are authoritative, when either calculated or impulsive. Diction and imagery relate to the flexibility, regularity, vitality, and strength, of English meters. Trochees and spondees emphasize central diction. Assonance, alliteration, and rhyme-scheme, produce euphony. Tone, developed by exposition, diction, imagery, rhythm, and euphony, is dignified and serene.

C. SUMMARY

Themes suggest various aspects of man's soul: its shaping of matter into art, its freedom to develop, its anguish and bondage when without insight, its expression in human interaction, its arousal by nature, its diminished opportunity for creativity since antiquity, its uniqueness in nature, and its need for restrained freedom. The shaping of sound into melody by silence, man's determination of his horizon, the contrast between the wind's blindness and vision elsewhere in nature, and the complex reflection resulting from human interaction, relate to man's freedom to create art, by virtue of his spiritual self, associated with silence; to expand his horizon by spiritual growth; to use energy with purpose, not in blindness; and to contribute positive feelings, such as love and compassion, when interacting with others.

Arousal of man's soul by a bird, contrast between the freshness and order of antiquity and the weariness and chaos of today, and between man's thought and bird-song, and the combination of freedom and restraint in English meters, suggest that the soul is stimulated by nature, represented by a bird; that it was buoyant and inspired in the orderly world of antiquity, but is depressed by today's chaos; that it causes man's uniqueness and progress, in contrast to subhuman uniformity and stagnation; and that its vitality springs from the restraint on intuition by reason.

All eight poems express thought and feeling through expository structures. Subtle feelings of admiration, joy, sorrow, and optimism, which are scarcely distinguishable from thought, are conveyed through conceits, comparisons, and contrasts. The conceits that silence forms melodies, as space bounds a solid, and that a bird inspires man's soul, the source of poetry; the contrast between changeless bird-song and the transient individual thought of man; and the comparison of English meters with flowers in a breeze, with the English seasons, and with Equity, develop a general feeling of admiration. The conceits that the wind's blindness results in its anguish and bondage, and that highly complex exchanges of fundamental emotions resemble the infinite series of reflections produced by two opposing mirrors, and the contrast between the fresh unvitiated passion and order of antiquity and the oppression and disorder of today, convey feelings of both joy and sorrow. The thought that one's horizon is ever-present, personal, and dependent on himself, conveys optimism.

Patterns of diction develop themes by referring to: the roles of silence in creating melodies and enriching poetry; the individuality, exactitude, and sensitivity to change, of one's horizon; the vision, order, and purpose, in nature generally, versus the blindness, frustration, and indirection of the wind; the origin, nature, and complexity, of three different human interactions; the characteristics of

the voice of a bird that arouses man's spiritual self; contrasting qualities of bird-song and man, and of antiquity and today; and the controlled freedom, formal rules, latitude and energy, of English meters.

Images of birds suggest that behavior in nature is involitional and in accordance with overall design. These include the wild songs of the nightingale and lark, a bird's cool ignorant tune, the spontaneous songs of the thrush and blackbird which cease at man's arrival, a shrill rousing inarticulate bird-call, and the navigating of the homing bird. Images of reflected light--a shining plain, raindrops scattering visible light, and flashing billows, of the horizon--an impearled edge, and rounded earth and rounding skies, and of unseasonal weather which occurs within definite seasons, suggest natural order and beauty. Images of man, of his world, and of art, suggest that man creates his own order and beauty. Those of man include people exchanging love and compassion, hatred and anger, and poetic insights; St. Peter's repentance; great poets--Dante, Keats, Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley--standing up and drinking poetry from a bird; a person gaining hills and returning to the plain; ancient man flying light, and blessed with fresh words and undismayed passion, and today's man trudging oppressed; and man, woman, and child, listening to the bird. Those of man's world include cities seeing with open eyes, a sail and a mill capturing wind, an orderly new town, and toys neatly boxed. Those of art

include Mozart's tunes, Myron's Discobolus, poetic meters and rhyme, and a dancer.

All poems are iambic, with many non-iambic feet. Spondees, trochees (mostly in initial feet), and secondary accents, emphasize key words. The heavy stress pattern, anapests, and caesuras, develop slow movement in five poems. In all but one poem line-lengths, the number of feet in a line, vary within a stanza. Four poems combine pentameter and trimeter. Seven of them use the abab rhyme-scheme. Frequent alliteration and assonance achieve unity within lines and, with the rhyme-scheme, contribute to euphony in six poems.

Although one poem has a nostalgic tone, related to the contrast between the order of antiquity and the chaos of the present, the major tone is serene and quietly joyous, reflecting belief in an orderly beautiful world, and in man's freedom and capacity to develop his potential and to express himself through art. Melancholy tones in two poems, related to wasted self-destructive energy and to exchanged anger and hatred, are over-shadowed by affirmative tones. In this poetry belief in man and his world, and careful attention to style in expression, achieve a sense of harmony and of repose.

CONCLUSION

The survey of critics of Meynell indicates they consider her early poetry centred on nature, marked by integration of thought and feeling, and melancholic in tone; her late and last poetry centred on God, marked by the smothering of feeling by thought, and serene in tone; and all her poetry characterized by fine workmanship. This study, which establishes that her poetry, from early to last periods, changes in theme, in relationship of thought and feeling, in imagery, and in tone, but not in diction or in rhythm and sound, generally supports this verdict.

Themes, although always preoccupied with cosmic order and ultimate meaning, indicate a development in attitude and emphasis. The themes of the early poetry--mystery, renunciation, transiency, death, and commitment to God through His Church--reflect tension between the domains of body and soul. Time brings corruption to the speaker's body but not to her soul; her excitement and joy due to her reflection in nature yield to frustration with nature's mystery and enigma; her profound love must be repressed for her soul's welfare; and she relates to a transcendent God by renouncing the world. This tension is absent in subsequent poetry. In the late poetry, which is Christocentric, the pilgrim soul's destiny is

certain because of Christ's crucifixion and His immanence in the cosmos. In the last poetry emphasis is on man's freedom to express and develop his soul.

Almost all of Meynell's poems use expository structures, comparison, and contrast. Thought and feeling become increasingly subtle from her early to last poetry. In the early poetry intense fundamental emotions,¹ especially love and sorrow, are easily discernible and not subordinate to thought. In the late poetry, although thought is more subtle and dominant, feelings of joy, sorrow, confidence, gratitude, and reverence, are easily recognized. In the last poetry elusive feelings of admiration, joy, sorrow, and optimism, are often almost immersed in and inseparable from thought, which is very much in control. The self-revelation of a speaker becomes much less: eleven of the twelve early poems have speakers who openly reveal strong emotions; only three of the fourteen late poems have speakers, and only one reveals feelings; five of the last poems have speakers, but again only one reveals feelings.

Contrasting images are found throughout Meynell's poetry. In the early poetry, images from nature are by far most important, and there is no metaphysical, and little

¹In this discussion feelings and emotions are inner movements differing in degree but not in kind. Primordial, distinct, and intense movements--love, hate, awe--are emotions; secondary, less intense movements--confidence, respect, serenity--are feelings.

specifically Christian, imagery; in the late poetry, Christian and metaphysical, but not natural, images are prominent; and in the last poetry, human, natural, and metaphysical, imagery share prominence. The tone of the early poetry, reflecting thematic tension, is both melancholic and joyous; usually one tone is major and the other minor. The late poetry, reflecting confidence in the cosmic Christ, has reverent, joyous, optimistic, and serene tones; melancholic and angry tones never dominate. The last poetry, reflecting confidence in cosmic order and joy in man's self-determination, has serene and quietly joyous tones.

Throughout Meynell's poetry, there is no significant development in the function of diction and no evidence of apprenticeship in versification, which is always accomplished and polished, and marked by fixed stanzaic forms, fixed rhyme-schemes and iambic rhythm, with many trochees and spondees, which emphasize diction, and which contribute, along with caesuras, to establishing slow movement. Almost no early, but the majority of late, and almost all last, poems have mixtures of line-lengths (number of feet in a line) in a stanza. Excluding sonnets, only three poems have stanzas not of four or five lines. Again, excluding sonnets, in the early poetry no rhyme-scheme is predominant, but abab becomes increasingly prominent, occurring in nine of fourteen late, and in seven of eight last, poems. Considerable alliteration and assonance create unity, emphasis, and euphony, throughout Meynell's poetry.

These changes in rhythm and rhyme produce variety, but they are insignificant departures from conventions.

Serious themes, original thought, logical structures, profound emotions and subtle feelings, appropriate diction, functional imagery, smooth versification, and complex tones, establish the high intrinsic worth of Meynell's poetry. Its fervently religious themes relate to cosmic order and ultimate meaning; many are profoundly but not aggressively or sentimentally Catholic. It is marked by carefully constructed logical relationships, paradox, ingenuity, and subtle, often profound, insights which are suggested through conceits, comparisons, and contrasts, rather than defined by syllogisms and dialectics. The charge that it lacks color and passion, is excessively conscious, preoccupied with craft, inhibited, and thoroughly literary and remote, is quite unfounded: the early poetry emphatically expresses emotion, especially love and sorrow; the late and last poetry, feelings, often strong, always subtle, although sometimes almost indefinable. "As a poet . . . her genius lay in her perfect control of language and her ability to make words do her bidding."¹ In Meynell's poetry diction is selected for precision of connotation and denotation, simple unadorned vocabulary indicates utmost concern for exactitude, and patterns of words have significant

¹J. G. Hopkins, "Alice Meynell," Commonweal, XXXIV (July 4, 1941), 259.

cumulative effects; in it, simple unobtrusive imagery and careful versification are always functional aspects of theme. Firm belief in ultimate meaning generates a serene and quietly joyous tone, which is counterbalanced by a melancholic tone in the early poetry, but which dominates the late and last poetry.

Meynell's poetry reflects the Age of Transition in general, and its chief literary movements--the Catholic Literary Revival, Aestheticism, and the Metaphysical Revival--in particular. Keenly related to currents and problems, although deeply opposed to the zeitgeist of the age, certain poems, such as "The Lady Poverty," "To Antiquity," and "In Portugal, 1912," specifically, and all her poetry generally, reflect modern fragmentation, incipient chaos, and neglect of spiritual and religious values. If in one sense her poetry is untopical, being neither Edwardian nor Victorian, it is always in another sense highly topical, by virtue both of its reflection and its universal themes, such as ultimate meaning, God-man relationship, and man's self-determination.

Meynell's poetry, through its high intrinsic worth, suffusion with religion, otherworldliness, and serene, joyous, optimistic tone, which makes it very representative of the Catholic Revival, is one of the chief treasures of the Catholic Literary Revival. Its meticulous attention to craft and its romanticism relate it closely to Aestheticism. Its conventional practices and lack of experimentation in

versification is not un-aesthetic: aesthetes, hoping to free poetry from non-poetical restraining influences, experimented with versification to find and express meaning; they were not primarily concerned with form in itself. Meynell, who felt no need to search for meaning, employed her competence with conventional techniques to illuminate absolutes through subtle insights. Her poetry is in the tradition of religious metaphysical poetry in England. Its metaphysicality is related indeterminately to the Metaphysical Revival, which was "in the air," but also related to personal qualities: preoccupation with religion and order, emphasis on reason, and great affinity for seventeenth century poetry.

The modern age, paradoxically denying the absolutes which would satisfy its anxious chaotic quest for meaning, stands to profit greatly from experiencing the insights into these absolutes, and the consequent hope, joy, and serenity, in Meynell's poetry, which has been recently neglected, not due to its lack of intrinsic merit, but due in large part to the atrophied discrimination of an unspiritual age.

Other literature of the Catholic Literary Revival has also been neglected. Therefore, intensive studies, similar to this one, of other writers of the Catholic Literary Revival will serve to establish the significance of its literature in the Age of Transition and in the modern period.

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ABSTRACT OF
THE POETRY OF ALICE MEYNELL

The poetry of Alice Meynell (1847-1922), written over a long period, prior to and spanning the Age of Transition and ending with her death, was highly rated for many years, but has never received analytic attention, and has been generally neglected since about 1950. This thesis presents a close analysis of selected poems of Meynell in order to establish the high intrinsic worth, and thereby promote the revival, of her poetry. The main criterion for the selection of poems was their contribution to a coherent view of theme in Meynell.

Chapter One presents a brief biography of Meynell, including comments on her salient personality traits, relates her personally to the Age of Transition, and surveys impressionistic criticism of her poetry. Critics find that all of her poetry is characterized by accomplished versification and precise diction, that the early poetry centers on nature, has a strong melancholy tone, and a balance of emotion and thought, and that the late and last poetry is about God and man more than nature, is serene and joyous, and is dominated by intellect. Critics unanimously agree that intellectuality and religion are central to her poetry, but they differ sharply with respect to the expression of emotion. Some say that her

poetry expresses very little emotion; others, that it expresses strong emotions and feelings which, however, are often so subtle that they are missed by indiscriminating readers.

Chapters Two to Four present close analysis of Meynell's early, late, and last poetry, respectively. This analysis generally substantiates impressionistic criticism and indicates that emotions and feelings, although often very subtle and dominated by intellect in the later and last poetry, are nonetheless strongly expressed throughout her poetry. The early poetry displays tension related to the co-existence of transiency and deterioration, and of abiding spiritual reality, in the world; most poems consequently have both melancholic and joyous tones. In the late Christocentric poetry and in the last poetry, which centers on both man and God, this tension is almost totally absent, as melancholy is obscured by serenity and joy. This analysis of Meynell's poetry indicates that it deserves serious attention.

This thesis, submitted in 1975 to the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, of the University of Ottawa, as a pre-requisite of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, contains two hundred and twenty-three pages.