Coventry Patmore's "Psyche's Discontent" and the Child's Purchase": An Explication

Kevin Edward Gallagher
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/1575

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1959 Kevin Edward Gallagher
COVENTRY PATMORE'S "PSYCHE'S DISCONTENT"
AND "THE CHILD'S PURCHASE":
AN EXPLICATION

by
Kevin Edward Gallagher, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

October 1959
Kevin E. Gallagher was born at Cincinnati, Ohio, August 4, 1929.

He was graduated from St. Xavier High School, Cincinnati, Ohio, in June, 1947 and from Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, February, 1951, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. From 1953 to 1955 he took philosophy courses and English courses at the West Baden College of Loyola University of Chicago, Illinois, entering the graduate school of Loyola University in 1954.

From the year 1955 to 1958 he taught English at St. Ignatius High School, Chicago, Illinois, and during the summers of these years took English courses in the graduate school at Loyola University, Chicago.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent interest in explication de texte-- Purpose of explication -- Procedure followed in this thesis -- Intention of present thesis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. COVENTRY PATMORE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents -- Education -- Marriage -- Life's work -- Interests -- Poetic ideal -- Reputation today.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE UNKNOWN EROS SEQUENCE</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing history -- Purpose -- Arrangement -- Choice of the two poems to be explicated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. &quot;PSYCHE'S DISCONTENT&quot;</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis: Theme of the Psyche poems -- Allusions -- Structure -- Paradox and contrast -- Syntactical difficulties -- Imagery -- Meter -- Rhyme -- Alliteration and assonance -- Phrasing -- Diction -- Emotion -- Synthesis: Comparison with Canticles -- Organic unity -- Qualities when considered as a whole -- Individuality of the theme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. &quot;THE CHILD'S PURCHASE&quot;</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restatement of purpose -- Notable qualities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The last twenty-five years have seen the appearance of a new type of literary study in America. An import from France, it is called explication de texte. As of this year, it is so productive of work that a magazine of explication which began in 1942 is still in publication.\(^1\) In 1950 an 188 page checklist of explication-centered writing was published.\(^2\) Significantly, this list starts from the year 1925, indicating the newness of literary evaluation. This newness can also be termed itself from standard books of reference. The earlier companion to English Literature, for instance, has no heading for explication de texte.\(^3\) Nor do Thrall's Handbook to Literature or Shipley's Dictionary of World Literature.\(^4\)

A classic work clarifying the function of explication, or rather, clarifying explication for English-reading students, is Robert Vigneron's Explication de Textes and Its Adaptation to the Teaching of Modern Languages. Vigneron's working definition of explication is this: "The truth is that it

\(^1\)The Explicator, Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1942-

\(^2\)George W. Arms and Joseph Kuntz, Poetry Explication (New York, 1950).


is nothing but a method of scientific research and accurate literary interpretation apropos of a text chosen for its significance or its beauty or both."

Of course, this statement is extremely general; but this breadth is understandable because as the point of emphasis or approach differs, specific definition will also differ. Arms and Kuntz consider explication "the examination of a work of literature for a knowledge of each part, for the relation of these parts to each other, and for their relations to the whole." After some comment, the same two authors conclude by saying that "explication faces up to the poem as a poem."

In this thesis, the procedure suggested by Fr. Edward L. Surts, S.J., of the English Department of Loyola University will be followed. In simplest form it is this:

- **Placing of the poem**
  - author; relation to his times;
  - relation of poem to poet's other works;
  - relation of poem to times.

- **Analysis of poem**
  - over-all structure, imagery, techniques, etc.

- **Synthesis of poem**
  - poem viewed as a whole; poem viewed as the creation of the poet.

Because of the variations within poems and poets, the precise application of

---


6. Arms and Kuntz, p. 18.

these steps will not always be the same. Different poems will, therefore, demand different approaches since explicati
don tries to extract from any given poem all that is explicit and implicit in that poem.

The above paragraph, with its skeletal statement of the explicati
on procedure, hints at the purpose of the thesis. It is quite simple: to arrive at some conclusions about the literary merits of two poems in Coventry Patmore's sequence of poems The Unknown Eros by means of explicati
on. Research into Patmorean studies reveals that this purely literary evaluation has not been attempted often or extensively. Patmore, certainly, has been the subject of numerous articles and some seven or eight books; but in none of these has there been any lengthy formal explication of poems in the Eros sequence. This situation has resulted from a variety of reasons. Not the least important is the fact that Patmore was one of the most interesting personalities and converts to Catholicism in nineteenth-century England. Consequently, many of the studies of him have been devoted to inter-relating his life with his poetry, not with his poetry as such. Secondly, the more literary studies have been analyses of his total work; for example, his use of nature, his leading ideas, his intellectuality. J. C. Reid has come closest to explicating any of the odes, but he too handles them in a general way.

8Proof for this statement can be found in the list of periodical articles in the bibliography of this thesis. A book that verifies the statement is Edward James Oliver, Coventry Patmore (New York, 1956).

9The most famous study of Patmore falls into this classification: Frederick Page, Patmore: a Study in Poetry (Oxford, 1933); the same is true of Osbert Burdett, The Idea of Coventry Patmore (Oxford, 1921).

A real service can be performed, therefore, by subjecting some of Patmore's poems to the relatively objective scrutiny of explication de texte. His fame, as Reid notes, must ultimately rest on his poetry. Consequently, while Patmore's interests, background, and tremendously wide reading will be noted, this study is not one of sources. It simply intends to discover the strength, the weakness, the success or failure of two of Patmore's later poems, "Psyche's Discontent" and "The Child's Purchase."
CHAPTER I

COVENTRY PATMORE

Life

Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore was born July 23, 1823, in Woodford Green, Essex and died in the year 1896, thus spanning a good part of the world-changing nineteenth century. His father was George Patmore, an agnostic literary critic and essayist of the "Cockney School." His mother was a stern woman of Presbyterian background who seems to have had little influence in her son's life, fading under the strength of the father and the boy's paternal grandmother. The oldest of four children, Coventry was spoiled by both his father and the grandmother and frightened by his mother. George Patmore educated his son personally, particularly in literary matters and sent him to school for only a few years to the College de France, when Coventry was sixteen years old.

In 1845 George Patmore had to flee England when some stock speculation failed. He took his wife with him but left Coventry and a younger brother to fend for themselves. Since Coventry had been training himself for a writing career under his father's guidance, he had no source of income and no prospects at the time of the unforeseen departure of his father. He naturally turned to writing reviews. This occupation supported him until he received work at the British Museum through the efforts of a friend Monkton Milnes. After this, the young poet had a source of income, meager but sufficient enough to let him court his future wife and to continue writing poetry.
In 1846, Patmore, aged 23, married Emily August Andrews, the well-educated, extremely dignified, sensitive daughter of a Congregationalist minister. This was the first of three marriages for Patmore, and, as far as comparison allows, the happiest. Emily provided the inspiration for the four poems, of almost novel length, that came to be called The Angel in the House. The first part, "The Betrothal," appeared in 1854; the last part, "The Victories of Love," in 1863. By 1900 this group of poems had sold one quarter of a million copies. Just before he died, however, Patmore bought up all the remaining copies of the Angel that he could and burned them -- so critical had he become of his early and his most popular work.1

When Emily died in 1862, cutting off the main source of Patmore's inspiration, he turned more completely to another interest that had long been with him. This was his concern for the spiritual life, especially Catholic theological writings.2 In 1864, on a trip to Rome, Patmore entered the Catholic Church. Rome and reading, however, were not the only reasons for his baptism. For in Rome he had met and become engaged to Marianne Caroline Byles, a well-educated devout Catholic some thirty years of age. While his conversion was completely sincere, Patmore's love for Miss Byles seems to have given him the impetus necessary for the final act of submission.

---

1Derek Patmore, The Life and Times of Coventry Patmore (London, 1949), p. 155; Derek Patmore is a reliable source. Whether or not the poet burned the remaining volumes precisely because of his critical attitude cannot be determined. Other authors speak of Patmore's anxiety over "unorthodox" lines.

Through this self-effacing woman, Patmore became a rather wealthy man, an estate owner in Sussex. Mary Patmore, as she was called by the family, died in 1880. One year later Patmore married Harriet Robson who had been for the years just preceding the marriage a governess and companion in his home. This third wife survived the poet.

In 1877 Patmore published a small volume of poems known by the title of the lead poem of the Second Book of the sequence, "The Unknown Bros." In the next few years, a considerable number of poems were added to the collection. After 1880 Patmore's poetic publications are few, "Amelia," Patmore's favorite poem, being a notable exception. The final fifteen years were taken up with essay writing, preparing articles, and doing extensive study for poems which were never completed.

These facts give only the shell of Patmore's life. A fuller account would investigate his dominating personality, his acquaintance with Ruskin, Carlyle, Tennyson, Hopkins, Lytton, and others of like fame, and, most significant perhaps, his extremely tender love for his first wife. Moreover, intense study would reveal Patmore's vast reading and analysis in a variety of fields. For purposes of this thesis, it is wise to note that in the field of mystical theology Patmore was probably the most widely read nineteenth-century English literary man, Hopkins alone excepted. He read deeply St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and St. John of the Cross, to name a few of the orthodox writers on mysticism. Swedenborg, the Lutheran mystic, he admired greatly. Patmore's examination of these writers continued while he was a country squire.

---

3Reid, pp. 68-81 and Appendix.
and while he was looked on first as the perfect poet of Victorian domesticity and then, later in the century, as the sentimental poet of Victorian sentimentalities. Prolonged reflection on the mystics and mystical writers coupled with Patmore's quasi-intuitive knowledge of, and love for, Catholic dogma produced *The Unknown Eros*.

**His Poetic Ideal**

Patmore's notion of the poet's function is an exalted one. Thus, in *Religio Poetae*, an essay dating from the latter part of his life, he writes "The Poet is *par excellence* the perceiver, nothing having any interest for him, unless he can, as it were, see and touch it with the spiritual senses, with which he is pre-eminently endowed . . . . . . . . The Poet, again, is not more singular for the delicacy of his spiritual insight, which enables him to see celestial beauty and substantial reality where all is bland to most others, than for the surprising range and alertness of vision, whereby he detects, in external nature, those likenesses and echoes by which spiritual realities can alone be rendered credible and more or less apparent, or subject to 'real apprehension,' in persons of inferior perceptive powers . . . ."  

---

4Champneys, II, p. 45; Patmore himself writes in the autobiography "It came to me to consider how it would be if Christianity were true, and if there were, not a loving and governing God, but one who was also Man, and so capable of according to me the most intimate communion with Himself. The idea no sooner flashed upon me as a possible reality than it became, what it has ever since remained -- however much I have fallen short of obedience to the heavenly vision -- the only reality worth sedulously caring for . . . ." Against this statement it must be remembered that Patmore tended to Catholicize many events and experiences.

As the perceiver, the seer, Patmore, like the Jewish prophets, was primarily concerned with man's going to God. This intention was not evident to the nineteenth-century reader of The Angel in the House. Osbert Burdett and Frederick Page, however, have shown that Patmore even as early as the Angel poem was certainly writing from the point of view that conjugal love is a great means, the normal means, to God. By the time Patmore wrote the Eros sequence human love was more than just the ethical means for man's reaching God. It had become, even down to the act of intercourse, a symbol of, and preparation for, the love of Christ for the individual soul. In this relationship, the male element represents the aggressive, intellectual, dominating force. The female represents the passive, the emotional, the dominated element. The male stands for Christ; the female, for man.

Patmore's Reputation Today: Patmorean Studies

To speak of Patmore's reputation today is actually misleading. Non-reputation would be more exact. While The Angel in the House was popular, roughly until 1880, Patmore was one of the most famous writers in England. His second marriage and his conversion to Catholicism, however, hurt his popularity.

6Sargent the portraitist used Patmore's likeness as the model for the prophet Ezekiel in his Boston Library Group. For an illustration, see Derek Patmore, Life and Times, pp. 208-09.

7The books in which these scholars presented their interpretations have already been mentioned (see above): Burdett, pp xi, xii, 25, 39; Page, p. 28.

with a large number of English readers. Then his volume of the Eros poems went down a channel completely different from that which English poetry and English critics had been following for years. Consequently, when the reaction against the Victorians set in at the beginning of the present century, Patmore was one of the most ridiculed of that group for his "domesticities of the deanery." The Unknown Eros, since it was not domestic throughout, was not ridiculed. It simply was not read.

Critical appraisal softened somewhat after the publication of Burdett's book which endeavored to show that Patmore was a poet who had used a central idea that pervaded all his poetry. Thus, the name of Burdett's book: The Idea of Coventry Patmore. In an age of despair Burdett considered Patmore's positive philosophy of love valuable. In 1933 Frederick Page published an analysis of Patmore's poetry. Page spoke with authority and there was a favorable response in England and America. Since that time, as Reid says, the eclipse seems definitely to have ended. Sir Herbert Read, although he finds Patmore's odes wanting in that quality of organic development which he so admires, precedes his very words of criticism with the qualifying phrase "strong as they are." John Heath-Stubbs has a significant observation about

---

9Reid, pp. 6-7.

10Sir Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling, Studies in English Romantic Poetry (London, 1953), pp. 90-91: "And yet the Patmorean 'Ode' for all its integrity and force, is not a successful solution to the problem of poetic form. For its intrinsic weakness we may consult Hopkins's letters . . ."
Patmore in his examination of the later influences of romanticism.  

Perhaps most significant of all, within the last three years two full length studies of Patmore have appeared, that of Oliver and that of J. C. Reid. By far the more ambitious work is that of Reid. He sees the failure to appreciate Patmore's prose and poetry as the result of the inability to understand his sources and therefore his intention and allusions.

---

11 John Heath-Stubbs, The Darkling Plain, a Study of the Later Fortunes of Romanticism in English Poetry from George Darley to W. B. Yeats (London, 1950), p. 130: "It is usual to speak of Tennyson and Browning as the 'great' Victorian poets, yet if any poet, between the time of Keats and that of Hopkins, merits that title, I believe, that in spite of his manifest eccentricities and inequalities, it is Coventry Patmore."


13 Reid, p. 8.
CHAPTER II

THE UNKNOWN EROS SEQUENCE

The intention of this chapter is to treat succinctly some matters that pertain to both the odes to be explicated. Something of the history of the sequence, its place in Patmore’s poetic output, and the over-all scheme of the series will be mentioned. Finally, some reasons for choosing "Psyche’s Discontent" and "The Child’s Purchase" will be offered.

In 1868, at the height of his popularity, Patmore privately printed and distributed among his friends a book of nine odes.1 When these poems failed to receive an enthusiastic reception, he was crestfallen. Nevertheless, he continued writing in the "irregular ode" form which he had adopted for this set of poems. In 1877, thirty-one odes, including the nine original ones, were published under the title To the Unknown Eros and Other Poems. In 1878, sixteen new odes were added to the collection. Then, in 1879, as far as can be determined, The Unknown Eros in its present arrangement of forty-two odes was published.2 The order of the odes in this latest edition is important because from it critics have tried to perceive the progression of thought which unifies the odes.

1Reid, The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore, p. 281.

2Terence L. Connolly, S.J., Ph. D., ed., Coventry Patmore, Mystical Poems of Nuptial Love (Boston, 1938), p. 148: Patmore’s final edition was undated, thus the uncertainty of its date.
These Eros poems reveal clearly what Patmore the man was doing in the years from 1862 to 1879. During this period, it will be remembered, Emily, his first wife, died; Patmore himself became a Roman Catholic; he studied more intensely than earlier the traditional mystical writers; and he made a memorable pilgrimage to Lourdes. Also during these years, Emily Honoria, his favorite daughter, entered the convent.

In content and intention, the Eros sequence is the high point of Patmore's poetical career. The Angel in the House, while concerned with God and his relations with men, was primarily concerned with human love preparing for, and within, the married state. The Unknown Eros is much more directly concerned with God's special and ordinary contact with men.

How does Patmore treat this subject? The question is best answered by referring to the matter of the odes themselves, their arrangement, and the theme of the sequence. Frederick Page maintains that the group of poems is a mere "medley" united at best by the very general subject of the soul's "seclusion with God." His thesis is that the Eros sequence is composed of two sets of poems each originally intended for two long poetic works. One set would be the fragment that Patmore was never able to form into the projected conclusion to the Angel poems, The Angel in the House and The Victories of Love. This third part of the uncompleted trilogy was to treat of the transcendental happiness that comes to lovers in the life after death. The second set (actually, just one poem in the Eros sequence) was one of the few poems which Patmore managed to write as part of his intended sequence of poems to the Blessed Virgin, who

3Page, Patmore: a Study in Poetry, pp. 107, 119.
embodied perfectly in her divine maternity, virginity, and love of God all that Patmore held dearest in life. He abandoned this work as beyond his powers after years of preparation.  

Echoing Page’s words about the soul’s "seclusion with God," but going farther, Terence L. Connolly, S.J., sees an organic unity in the arrangement of the odes as Patmore finally published them. Taking his hint, as it were, from the sub-title of the sequence, Deliciae Meae Esse cum Filiiis Hominum (Prov. viii. 31), Connolly judges that the following order is present. Book One (twenty-four poems) deals with nature as a symbol of human love, with human love itself in its sadnesses and in its delights, with political affairs as the test of man’s love for his fellow men, with philosophical speculation on man’s social relationships, and finally with odes of spiritual preparation which introduce the purgation necessary for contemplative union with God. Book Two (eighteen poems) deals directly with the union just mentioned in the Psyche odes under the symbol of marriage or betrothal, treats the position of the Church as guardian of the doctrine and grace necessary for achieving this union with God, and finally, in "The Child’s Purchase," appeals to the Blessed Virgin who embodies the spiritual marriage of God with His creature most perfectly.

Connolly’s analysis seems forced particularly in the matter of the vituperative political odes. Nevertheless, J. C. Reid, who is balanced in all judgments involving Patmore and, in fact, leans to the critical rather than to the favorable decision, agrees with Connolly. Reid’s own analysis agrees with

---

4 Ibid., 144.
5 Connolly, pp. 151-153.
Connolly's in insisting on the organic unity of the sequence. From this sequence of poems, "Psyche's Discontent" and "The Child's Purchase" have been selected for detailed explication. Both are from Book Two, number fourteen and number seventeen respectively. The former is one of the three "Psyche" poems which as a group are among the more famous of the Eros poems. These are done in dialogue form and deal most explicitly with the nuptial imagery that Patmore employed as a symbol of the union of God with the individual soul. Since the ideas and the symbol of these poems are the apex, as it were, of the sequence, one of them is certainly worthy of investigation. The second poem is really a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, the poem that Page thinks would have been the proem to Patmore's intended work on the marriage of the Virgin and the Incarnation.

---

6Reid, p. 300.

7The text of the poems will be from Frederick Page, ed., The Poems of Coventry Patmore (London, 1949).
PSYCHE'S DISCONTENT

'Enough, enough, ambrosial plumed Boy!
My bosom is aweary of thy breath.
Thou kissest joy
To death.
Have pity of my clay-conceived birth
And maiden's simple mood,
Which longs for ether and infinitude,
As thou, being God, crav'st littleness and earth!
Thou art immortal, thou canst ever toy,
Nor savour less
The sweets of thine eternal childishness,
And hold thy godhead bright in far employ.
Me, to quite other custom life-inured,
Ah, loose from thy caress.
'Tis not to be endured!
Undo thine arms and let me see the sky,
By this infatuating flame obscured.
0, I should feel thee nearer to my heart
If thou and I
Shone each to each respondently apart,
Like stars which one the other trembling spy,
Distinct and lucid in extremes of air.
0, hear me pray ---'

'Be prudent in thy prayer!
A God is bond to her who is wholly his,
And, should she ask amiss,
He may not her beseeched harm deny.'

'Not yet, not yet!
'Tis still high day, and half my toil's to do.
How can I toil, if thus thou dost renew
Toil's guerdon, which the daytime should forget?
The long, long night, when none can work for fear,
Sweet fear incessantly consummated,
My most divinely Dear,
My Joy, my Dread,
Will soon be here!
Not, Eros, yet!
I ask, for Day, the use which is the Wife's:
To bear, apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel course of customary life's
Exceeding injurudity.
Leave me awhile, that I may shew thee clear
How Goddess-like thy love has lifted me;
How, seeming lone upon the gaunt, lone shore,
I'll trust thee near,
When thou'rt to knowledge of my heart, no more
Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed!
Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power;
To make thee laugh, in thy safe heaven, to see
With what grip fell
I'll cling to hope when life draws hard to hell,
Yea, cleave to thee when me thou seem'st to slay,
Haply, at close of some most cruel day,
To find myself in thy reveal'd arms clasp'd,
Just when I say,
My feet have slipp'd at last!
But, lo, while thus I store toil's slow increase,
To be my dower, in patience and in peace,
Thou com'st, like bolt from blue, invisibly,
With premonition none nor any sign,
And, at a gasp, no choice nor fault of mine,
Possess'd I am with thee
Ev'n as a sponge is by a surge of the sea!
'Thus irresistibly by Love embraced
Is she who boasts her more than mortal chaste!
'Find'st thou me worthy, then, by day and night,
But of this fond indignity, delight?
'Little, bold Femininity,
That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou have or be?
'Shall I, the gnat, which dances in thy ray,
Dare to be reverent? Therefore dare I say,
I cannot guess the good that I desire;
But this I know, I spurn the gifts which Hell
Can mock till which is which 'tis hard to tell.
I love thee, God; yea, and 'twas such assault
As this which made me thine; if that be fault;
But I, thy Mistress, merit should thine ire
If aught so little, transitory and low
As this which made me thine
Should hold me so.'
'Little to thee, my Psyche, is this, but much to me!
'Ah, if, my God, that be!'
'Yea, Palate fine.
That claim'st for thy proud cup the pearl of price,
And scorn'st the wine,
Accept the sweet, and say 'tis sacrifice!
Sleep, Centre to the tempest of my love,
And dream thereof,
And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place!
CHAPTER III

"PSYCHE'S DISCONTENT"

Analysis

The ninety line poem, "Psyche's Discontent," is the fourteenth in the second book of the Eros sequence. More important for purposes of understanding and evaluation is the fact that it is the third of the so-called "Psyche" poems; namely, "Eros and Psyche," "De Natura Deorum," and the present one; poems twelve, thirteen, and fourteen in the sequence. The three are grouped together because of the common character Psyche, that is, the soul, and because of the common theme.

That theme is this: the direct contact of God with the individual soul under the marriage symbol in the climax of Christian love. Such a theme does not make itself known to one unfamiliar with Patmore's work by a mere examination of the title, since he uses the characters from pagan mythology to stand for the human soul and God. Psyche, as has been said, represents the soul of man. She did the same for the Greeks and Romans. Eros, on the other hand, is more complicated as a symbol. For contemporary man, he represents sensual love. Hence the word erotic. The Oxford Classical Dictionary, however, recalls a legend of Eros made popular by Hesiod in which Eros is not at all the cupid of
later times but an old god, as old as Tartarus, who holds "contrasts to­
gether."1 From what is known of Patmore's interest in the duality pervading
the universe it is likely that he had Hesiod's version in mind. Apuleius later
tells a story of Eros and Psyche that shows affinity with the modern notion of
the two characters.2 In The Golden Ass, Apuleius treats the two as lovers, Eros
being divine, Psyche, mortal. Psyche is visited only at night by the god and
is ordered not to look at him. She violates the command and when Eros dis­
covers her disobedience, he departs from her. Only after many trials on her
part, does Eros, who really never ceased loving her, make her his wife. In the
poems under discussion, Eros the unitive force and Eros the lover blend. It is,
therefore, the complexus of tradition associated with Eros alone and Eros and
Psyche taken together that Patmore utilizes as his symbols of God and the human
soul.3

The first of these three poems, "Eros and Psyche," narrates the betrothal
of the two lovers, the union being, to repeat once more, a symbol of the
marriage of God with the soul. In "De Natura Deorum" Psyche discusses with the
pythoness (Greek priestess) the nature of the God to whom she is betrothed and

pp. 87-130.
3Father Connolly suggests a more direct source without in any way denying
the validity of what has been said above. Patmore was familiar with a trans­
lation of Robert Warings Amoris Affigies, which dates from 1648. In the trans­
lation there is the following passage: "But, O Cupid, the least of Gods, and
greatest of Deities, I should think it less than your Deserts (if yet there
could be anything greater) that you are Deif'd by those bold Philosophers the
Poets. You have the Property of a God, to be unknown, and receive Homage from
men." -- Connolly, p. 149.
what her reaction to him should be. In the third poem, Psyche confesses to God her realization that her love for Him must show itself not merely in the delight which she receives from His physical embrace, i.e., from His indwelling, but in something more.

The poem starts in the middle of things. If it is not read in the "Psyche" sequence, this opening is puzzling since the speaker is not identified by name until the last lines. Despite the absence of a name, however, what the speaker desires is obvious enough. She wants her lover to break that embrace in which he now holds her because the very contact is surfeiting her pleasure (lines 3-4). After the long, introductory pleas by Psyche, the poem becomes a dialogue between Psyche and Eros, the latter being rather chary of words until the end of the poem. The former, following up her opening request, makes the point that their love would be better felt if they were apart, i.e., physically apart; but Eros' embracing of his beloved has been commencing even during the day itself, a time which, according to Psyche's long speech -- to line 65 -- should be given over to the humdrum of human existence. In other words, Psyche is suffering feelings of guilt about the pleasure she is receiving from these love-making visits of Eros. She asks herself if she is worthy only of the indignity of being delighted. After some explanation by Psyche of what she has meant by the last question, Eros quietly tells her that she should be willing to accept what he gives, whether it be sweet or bitter.

It is apparent by line 7 that the female speaker is not concerned merely with a physical surfeit, for there she qualifies her own "simplicity" by stating that it, i.e., her simplicity, longs for "ether and infinitude." Then in the long appeal in which she asks to be allowed to spend some time in
ordinary human activities, apart from her lover's embrace, Psyche again obviously leaves the pagan world of god-man relations for a more Christian one when she protests her desire to show herself God-like in ordinary activities (line 43). Then, after a smiling admonition from Eros which includes use of the primarily Christian terms chaste and heaven, Psyche proceeds to ask that she be given something besides mere delight, a pleasure of the lowest order, by which she will be able to prove the real quality of her love.

Paraphrase of this kind does not explain the poem as a whole, it is true; but it provides a beginning. At this point, it would normally be advantageous to examine more closely the structure of the poem, its plan, and so on. Because of the reliance of this poem on allusion, however, it will be more profitable to postpone that endeavor for a few pages and to devote some time to repeat the basic symbols and then to amplify some of the allusions. Unless the symbols and the allusions are understood, the poem seems to be meaningless.

The complaining, female element is referred to as Psyche. She is named only late in the poem when she is also called "bold Femininity" (line 70). The consoling and aggressive agent is called "Plumed Boy," "God," and "Eros." The remarks made just above show that there is in the poem some kind of inter-play between the frankly sensual situation being pictured and a deeper, explicitly mentioned meaning. In other words, the poem is not dealing only with human love. Thus, Eros is God, the Christian God. Psyche is the soul of man, treated as female.

More specifically, the following lines can be amplified.
'Enough, enough, ambrosial plumed Boy!' (1)

The reference is to Eros as a youth. This is a frequent representation of him. He should not be taken as Cupid, the chubby, thoughtless matchmaker. That image of Eros is the product of later Classical art, and here it would be quite ridiculous. Eros is "plumed," i.e., he is wearing a headdress with a long plume.

Have pity of my clay-conceived birth . . . (5)

"Clay-conceived" here means born of earth. The allusion is to the Christian account of creation (Gen. ii.7).4

Which longs for ether and infinitude, (7)

"Ether" signifies the higher reaches of the sky, a concrete statement of infinitude. Here both words indicate the longing that the human soul has for complete satisfaction and love.

As thou, being God, crav'st littleness and earth; (8)

The reference here is to the Christian God who appears to need and to enjoy man's company. Patmore would cite the Incarnation.

Ah, loose from thy caress. (14)

Eros is actually in physical embrace with Psyche.

Undo thine arms and let me see the sky, (16)

Psyche begs Eros to break his embrace. This physical detail is common in the literature of mysticism, since its intimacy and intensity approximate in some way the intimacy and intensity of the mystics' realization of the presence of God. There is a similar detail in the poem upon which St. John of the Cross elaborates in the "Ascent of Mt. Carmel."5

---

4Biblical references will be to the Douay-Rheims version of the bible since this is the one with which Patmore and the English Catholics were familiar.


Upon my flowery breast, Kept wholly for himself alone,

With his gentle hand he wounded my neck and caused all my senses to be suspended (stanzas 6 and 7)
Whether or not there is question of intercourse here is another matter. In the poem "Eros and Psyche" there is question only of betrothal, and Psyche speaks of her virginity (line 35). The "logic" of the symbol demands that intercourse be assumed.

God is bond to her who is wholly his, (25)

God has to do what the beloved wants. This idea is a reference again to St. John of the Cross and others who speak of God's obligating Himself to His specially loved creatures.6

'Tis still high day, and half my toil's to do. (29)

"Toil" refers to ordinary life in which the soul does not have these special visitations from God.

How can I toil, if thus thou dost renew
Toil's guerdon, which the daytime should forget? (30-31)

The "guerdon" is a reward, i.e., the embrace, God's love-making which comes as a reward for surrender to Him.

The long, long night, when none can work for fear, (32)

The allusion here is to the mystic's "dark night of the soul." In it all the faculties of the soul give way to faith by which the soul contacts God. This state is called "night" because in it the faculties lose their ability to operate, as it were. In this night, then, Psyche fears the approach of her lover, even though he is her delight, since the act of faith is something difficult to make. St. John's poem mentioned above assumes a dark nighttime when the lover visits her beloved.7

---

6St. John of the Cross, "Spiritual Canticle, Second Redaction," in Peers, II, 343: "Great is the power and importunity of love, since it takes captive and binds God Himself. Happy the soul that loves, since it holds God a prisoner, subjected to all that it wills; for He has this quality that if He be taken by love, and taken willingly, He will be made to do what is willed of Him" (Stanza 31).

7St. John of the Cross, "Ascent of Mount Carmel," Peers, I, 10:
On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings, -- oh, happy chance

................. In darkness and secure, (stanzas 1 and 2)
Mention of night takes into its scope the Western idea that the night is the time of the consummation of physical love.

But of this indignity, delight? (69)

Psyche wants more in her relationship with God than mere physical pleasure, i.e., more than feelings of consolation and mystical ecstasy. The contrast that she uses is that of the saints who want suffering and hard tasks by which they can make their love for God grow.

But this I know, I spurn the gifts which Hell Can mock till which is which 'tis hard to tell. (75-76)

Psyche mentions here the apparent goods that the devil can use in his attempt to frustrate the sanctity of a person in the illuminative or unitive ways.

If aught so little, transitory and low As this which made me thine Should hold me so. (81-83)

The point here is similar to the point of line 69. Psyche fears that she will anger her beloved if she perseveres in her pure love for him only enjoying him.

That claim'st for thy proud cup the pearl of price, (86)

The "cup" is the figurative chalice which the Apostles John and James were to drink and the chalice that Christ Himself was to drink. The chalice refers to a challenge or trial by which to gain heavenly glory. (Matt. xx.20-23; xxvi.39-42)

The "pearl of price" alludes to the parable of the pearl. The precious stone, of course, is the kingdom of heaven. Here this infinite possession is personalized by considering it as the saint's generosity which causes him to gain heaven (Matt. xiii.45-46).

Eros reminds Psyche that she must also be willing to accept the pleasurable since it is also his will. The individual must be willing to act at the sign of God's grace. If this means divine union, the union should be accepted eagerly.

Symbols and allusions located, it will now be easier to form an over-all picture of the poem.

It has already been observed that the poem is a dialogue. It has the characteristics also of drama. The two parties converse throughout; there is no
commentary, no description. Psyche is restless, worried, concerned. Eros contrasts with her. He speaks hardly at all, always calmly, and really breaks his reserve only at the end of the poem when he speaks with tenderness and authority to calm Psyche.

The logical divisions, almost acts, can be fixed, although when reading Patmore’s odes, one does not usually notice divisions or sections. Most of the odes have a kind of movement and thought pattern that drives the reader or hearer from beginning to end without pause. Despite such a continuous forward movement, however, the first twenty-three lines, Psyche’s introductory appeal, can be said to constitute the first “act” of the poem. Here her request is the most overtly emotional one that she makes, but not necessarily the most powerful one.

Thou kispest joy
To death.

Undo thine arms and let me see the sky

0, hear me pray —

(3,4,16,23)

In a word, she merely enunciates her anxiety. She does not attempt a careful analysis of it.

The second section of the poem starts at line twenty eight and proceeds to the end of Psyche’s long promise and prayer and Eros’ two-line reply, line sixty seven. Here Psyche collects herself somewhat. She employs direct address, words of endearment, and, most significant, emotional but rhetorical repetition to persuade God to make a compromise with her by allowing her to spend the day doing what is the wife’s work,
To bear, apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel course of customary life's
Exceeding injuicundity. (39-41)

From lines forty four to fifty eight, Psyche uses a series of cumulating images to impress on her lover what great faith and hope she will show in his love. Eros' answer is still brief — two lines in which he says that she is being rewarded in this physical intimacy for her being more chaste already than ordinary mortals, i.e., for being more pure in spirit.

Psyche's reply to this last point, lines sixty eight and sixty nine, actually introduces the third and final part of the poem. Here Psyche's answer shows that she has gained even more confidence and can now pinpoint much more explicitly the real cause of her "discontent." She confesses that she distrusts the situation whereby she is treated in such a way that pleasure, here literally physical pleasure, is the only relationship between her and her love, her God. Such a gift as this she fears since the devil can use it, just as easily as God Himself (lines seventy five and seventy six). Moreover, Psyche continues, this ephemeral delight which she is taking now is so slight a thing objectively speaking that she cannot imagine it holding God to herself. This very rational statement of her case finally evokes a lengthy response from Eros which concludes the poem. One might suspect that Psyche's being the protagonist thus far would have given her the final word. In dealing with God, however, one cannot answer the calm strength of His decisions, nor can anyone go beyond what is implicit in His final assurance, namely, that Psyche should accept the sweet, i.e., the pleasure of this present union, simply because it is His will.

It is this structure, this gradual movement from confusion to relative
calm that gives the poem its unity. There are other factors contributing to the oneness of its impression which shall be seen presently, but the very plan of the poem has to be remembered as playing its part silently but effectively. The movement from confusion to calm helps the reader interpret the soul's discontent and to see the significance of that discontent. All ninety lines are concerned with one problem; one theme is developed in one situation. In a word, all of Psyche's lines serve to prepare the reader for God's final words.

Paradox and contrast also enter into the structure of the poem. A first reading rarely discloses these two related characteristics; but throughout the entire poem contrasting imagery, phrasing, and words are employed so notably that the resulting paradox and contrast deserve detailed study. The following pages contain a rather complete analysis of this aspect of the poem. Following the analysis a few remarks will be made about the function of this conscious device.

Kisest joy
To death. (3-4)

A trite image, but one that gets what vividness it has from the "life" which "kisest" implies and connotes when juxtaposed with the implications of "death."

And maiden's simple mood,
Which longs for ether and infinitude, (6-7)

A "simple" maiden is not usually pictured as desiring infinity. Thus, there is a contrast within the concepts employed. In addition, the relative clause here stands in contrast to God's "toying" with the earth, acting the child (line 8).

Like stars which one the other trembling spy,
Distinct and lucid in extremes of air. (21-22)

Patmore here has Psyche say that she would feel closer to Eros, if she
were physically farther away from him -- a paradox.

A God is bond to her who is wholly his,
And, should she ask amiss,
He may not her beseeched harm deny. (25-27)

Here the paradox is implicit. God is bound to a mortal, a paradoxical thought in itself, even to the extent of giving an evil if the mortal wishes it.

Sweet fear incessantly consummated,
My most divinely Dear,
My Joy, my Dread, (33-35)

An obvious attempt at contrast even though the expressions are stereotyped.

I'll trust thee near,
When thou'rt, to knowledge of my heart, no more
Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed! (44-48)

In this case the poet makes the contrast explicit for her pictures a "nearness" which is extremely powerful in itself but quite elusive.

Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power; (49-50)

"Frailty" and "lion-like" ... juxtaposed to heighten the contrast already implicit in the phrase.

To find myself in thy reveal'd arms clasp'd,
Just when I say,
My feet have slipp'd at last! (56-58)

The pictures resulting from "clasp'd" and "slipp'd" are antithetical.

But of this fond indignity, delight? (69)

Normally "indignity" and "delight" are not employed as appositives.

Little, bold Femininity,
That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou have or be? (70-71)

There is a subdued contrast involving "little" and "bold." "Femininity" offsets "bold" since the former connotes meekness, dependence.
In this poem, it will be remembered, "femininity" represents the passive element in man's relation with God. In the second line of those just quoted above, Psyche is asked if she "dares" to "blame" heaven.

Shall I, the gnat, which dances in thy ray,
Dare to be reverent? (72-73)

"The gnat" constitutes a "metaphysical conceit." This too involves contrast by striving for an effect from the juxtaposing of the petty and the sacred.

Accept the sweet, and say 'tis sacrifice (88)

This paradox has already been mentioned. For those advancing in the spiritual life suffering is the desideratum. Sweetness then will be accepted against the will of the mystic, as it were. Thus, the need for sacrifice.

That there is use of contrast and paradox should now be apparent. Just what its value is, however, may not be so apparent. The following remarks provide a basis for judging the device. First, the effect of the contrast and paradox is decidedly intellectual for the simple reason that both characteristics appeal primarily to the mind of the reader. Secondly, and more specifically, this tone-setting device, if it may be so styled, accords with the whole context of the poem. The paradox and contrast, therefore, become a background for the mystery that the poem itself is treating, namely, the mystery of God's giving Himself to man. This truth is itself paradoxical. From the viewpoint of the dramatic structure of the poem, the paradox and contrast amplify the different states of mind of the disappointed Psyche and the peaceful Eros. This second effect can be explained thus. Eros is unruffled, and, as a matter of fact, tries to put the entire matter in a humorous vein when he says

---

Little, bold Femininity,
That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou have or be? (70-71)

As Patmore seems to understand the relationship, then, God Himself is sharply aware of the inequality that exists between Himself and mankind; yet He wants to continue giving His love. A similar appreciation of the function of the contrast and paradox can be gotten, from Psyche's point of view, by remembering that her discontent is an uneasiness that comes -- paradoxically -- from her possessing too magnificent a good, one which is so wonderful that it frightens her. From these points it can be concluded that the device in question in no way harms the unity of impression of the poetic structure. As a matter of fact, it emphasizes the basic simplicity of the dramatic structure by providing a background for that simplicity.

The preceding pages have sketched the over-all plan of the poem, given a rather detailed account of the allusions sought, and called attention to contrasting imagery and phrasing. To eliminate any possibility of ambiguity which might develop because of confused or confusing sentences, a word of clarification will be appropriate here. In the short chart which follows some syntactical obscurities will be explained. After the chart, the question of imagery in the poem can be taken up.

Me, to quite other, custom life-inured,
Ah, loose from thy caress. (13-14)

"Me" must be taken as the direct object of "loose."

The long, long night, when none can work for fear,
Sweet fear incessantly consummated,
My most divinely Dear,
My Joy, my Dread,
Will soon be here! (32-36)
"Long, long night" is the subject of "will soon be here" (36).

To make thee laugh, in thy safe heaven, to see, (51)

Understand Leave me "to make thee laugh . ." Unless this imperative is carried over from line forty nine, the sense becomes unintelligible.

To find myself in thy reveal'd arms clasp'd (56)

Again understand Leave me "to find myself . ." This is the only way to account for the explicit infinitive of the line and to keep the spirit of the lines. Otherwise, the phrase must be considered a clumsy appositive.

Is she who boasts her more than mortal chaste? (67)

"Her" is equivalent to "herself."

But of this fond indignity, delight? (69)

"Delight" is an appositive here, not a vocative.

I love thee, God; yea, and 'twas such assault
As this which made me thine; if that be fault; (77-78)

"If that be fault" must refer to the "assault," i.e., if the assault by God and her capitulation to that assault were faults, she will not worry about that fact or those facts now. She is concerned with something else, i.e., the matter of lines eighty to eighty two.

Since a poem is actually one thing and its "parts" blend and overlap one another, mention of the principal imagery of the poem has already been made in discussing the plan of "Psyche's Discontent." For with what other picture does Patmore convey the real meaning of the poem than with that of Psyche and Eros themselves? The very situation dramatized is in itself a picture designed to impart to the reader or hearer a truth of a higher order. So much is obvious; but it is not so obvious that Patmore here makes a strenuous demand on his reader. This latter must become aware that the poet is moving back and forth from the myth, i.e., from the concrete story of the mortal and the god, to the
idea of God's wooing the soul in the Christian mystical life. This latter is completely different from the ideas involved in the pagan myth, and yet this contrast or disparity does not demand that the two notions cannot or should not be used together. In fact, the daring that Patmore reveals in making the synthesis of the pagan and Christian elements creates interest in the poem. This can be summarized briefly in the language of literary criticism by saying that the basic imagery of the poem is a fit vehicle for the concept involved.

A question immediately follows this judgment: how well does Patmore use this basically captivating imagery? Does he individualize the two participants? Should he? If they are left vague, is their vagueness effective? Does his language — individual words and phrases — give the poem a direct appeal to the senses and the emotions of the reader? All such questions are fundamentally an inquiry into the imagery of the poem. They will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

As central images Psyche and Eros contribute to the strong unity of the poem, since they are present throughout and continuously treat of the same topic. Yet there seems to have been little intention to personalize Eros. He speaks little; and what he does say, until the last section of the poem, are general truths of the ascetic-mystic life

'Be prudent in thy prayer!
A God is bond to her who is wholly his, (24-25)

Psyche, the more important of the two characters as far as the poem is concerned develops more. The three logical phases of the poem mark changes from

9Ibid., "Knowledge and Science," paras. XVII and XXXV, 88, 98.
the wildly emotional to the articulate and the controlled, from mere fear to valid discontent coming from a clear vision of her problem. In the final section, she even makes an attempt at humor.

Shall I, the gnat, which dances in thy ray, dare to be reverent? (72-73)

The changes in Psyche's character, particularly the sensitivity shown in the second section and the insight shown in the third section, combine to give her a personality, an individuality. True, it can never be forgotten that she is a symbol; she is always "femininity" and "humanity." Her problems are the soul's problems. Nevertheless, she is also an individual.

Any lack of individuality which Psyche suffers arises partially from the nature of the concept behind her character. There is another reason, however, which flows from the fact that the poet's insight and skill could have worked differently. This second reason is this: the image-making words and phrases which Patmore employed to put forth the central imagery are extremely reserved and generally weak. They are very weak by the standards of Hopkins and the moderns, but perhaps not so weak if the Victorian tradition is kept in mind.

A short, incomplete chart of the image words follows. It supplies the evidence by which to judge the indictment just made. To show Patmore's rather limited sense appeal, the sense to which the word or phrase quoted refers is included in the remarks to the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambrosial plumed (1)</th>
<th>A cloudy image; also unpleasant sounding (sight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bosom (2)</td>
<td>Antiquarian; poetically weak (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou kisset joy</td>
<td>Trite (sight and touch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To death. (3-4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word/Phrase</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clay-conceiv'd (5)</td>
<td>Strong image chiefly because of the alliteration (sight and touch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ether (7)</td>
<td>Weak, traditional word (quasi-sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toy (9)</td>
<td>(sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweets (11)</td>
<td>Commonplace word (sight and taste)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bright (12)</td>
<td>Commonplace (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caress (14)</td>
<td>Concrete (touch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infatuating flames (17)</td>
<td>Imaginal quality of the phrase weakened by the intellectuality of the adjective (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shone (19)</td>
<td>(sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trembling (21)</td>
<td>(sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extremes (22)</td>
<td>Vague word; lacks life (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high-day (29)</td>
<td>rather ordinary (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guerdon (31)</td>
<td>(sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long, long night</td>
<td>Commonplace image but the phrasing here evokes a certain emotive quality (sight-sound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fardel (41)</td>
<td>An archaic word which gets what strength it has from association with &quot;who would fardels bear&quot; from Hamlet's soliloquy (Ham.III.i.76). The word signifies a burden. (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaunt, lone shore (44)</td>
<td>The vowels here, as in &quot;long, long night&quot; (32), give a feeling of poignancy. (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream's heed (47)</td>
<td>The assonance puts life into the phrase. (sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>track'd (48)</td>
<td>(sight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lion-like (50)</td>
<td>Trite image, helped only by the alliteration. (sight)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
arms clasp'd (56)  
(sight)

bolt from blue (61)  
Trite expression (sight)

sponge (85)  
In context gets a certain power from its simplicity (sight)

surge (65)  
See above, "sponge." (sight)

the gnat, which dances

The word and image is partially saved by its being a "quasi-technical term" from ascetical theology. Weakened, on the other hand, by being part of an over-worked poetic vocabulary. (sight and touch)

pearl (86)

Traditional poetic word (sight and hearing)

tempest (89)

smile (91)  
(sight)

sleep (91)  
(sight and touch)

Granted that there is injustice done to the poem by removing words from their context in this way, the fact remains, as most critics note when reading Patmore, that his imagery does not always have the high quality that characterizes the structure and the phrasing of his poems.10 Of course, words which can be ridiculed or criticized are to be found in the verse of any poet. The problem is not in the words themselves but in the way in which they are used; and this explanation applies to Patmore too. If the lines from which the words in the chart have been removed are examined, however, one will see that Patmore's handling of the image words does not transform them into vivid,

10Reid, The Mind and Art, p. 305; also, Sir Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling, p. 91.
emotive pictures.

With the exception of the early lines, the imaginal appeal of the poem is limited almost completely to the eyes. In a situation so sensual in itself, one would expect a more sensuous approach. Unfortunately, its absence in this case does not strike the reader as a noticeable restraint for moral purposes or for purposes of taste. There is just no great strength of image, concealed, implied, or otherwise. One is reminded here, in contrast, of the "Canticle of Canticles."

More specifically, only five or six words or phrases can be considered vivid in their own context. These have been noted on the chart. Some words like "bosom" "tempest," "caress," and "pearl" are stock expressions in the poetic handbook of the nineteenth century. They require extremely skillful positioning to bring them alive, especially for the modern reader. Some phrases like "kispest joy to death," "lion-like," and "bolt from blue" are powerless from long overuse -- in a word, banal. Still other words or phrases suffer from their being terms in two vocabularies: that of English poetry and that of the mystical tradition. Such, for instance, are "flame," "night," and "pearl." In the mystical tradition this type of word is almost jargon, and thereby acceptable. As "poetic" words of the English tradition, they have been weakened by overuse.

The poem's failure in individual word-imagery or phrase imagery should not lead to the judgment that the poem's imagery is utterly defective or lifeless. A case in point would be the following lines

Thou are immortal, thou canst ever toy,
Nor savour less
The sweets of thine eternal childishness. (9-11)
Now "sweets" is admittedly an overworked word. Yet in the context, its effect is not at all cheapening or trite. Coupled with the sound of "savour" and "less," the phrase "savour less/The sweets" forms a delicate, pleasing two-line unit. Secondly, some of the imagery is undeniably striking. The following picture holds attention and prompts reflection even if it takes a moment for clear visualization.

How, seeming lone upon the gaunt, lone shore,  
I'll trust thee near,  
When thou'rt, to knowledge of my heart, no more  
Than a dream's heed  
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed! (44-48)

It takes a moment to adjust the double loss pictured here: a dream's losing of the "scent" in sea-weed. As the picture forms in the imagination, however, the reader, knowing from personal experience the haziness of a dream and the difficulty inherent in tracking in water, feels himself the loneliness that Psyche is trying to steel herself for.

There are other successes too. Note, for example

But, lo, while thus I store toil's slow increase,  
To be my dower, in patience and in peace,  
Thou com'st, like bolt from blue, invisibly  
With premonition none nor any sign,  
And, at a gasp, no choice nor fault of mine,  
Possess'd I am with thee  
Even as a sponge is by a surge of the sea! (59-65)

The poor "bolt from blue" does not vitiate these lines completely. The excellent phrasing, alliteration, and vowel repetition can be passed over temporarily since they will be examined later; and still one notable figure remains, namely, the simile of line sixty five. It can rightly be termed a "metaphysical" simile, so reminiscent is it of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century.
The metaphor which follows a few lines later belongs also to the metaphysical tradition. This time it is really a conceit.

Shall I, the gnat, which dances in thy ray,
Dare to be reverent? Therefore dare I say, (72-73)

This is a famous Patmorean effort to catch some of the intimacy and humor that characterizes the "discussion," really prayer, between God and mystics. Many people do not like it; others do. In context, it fits nicely into the dramatic development which has been discerned. At this point in the poem, Psyche has gained composure enough to formulate her discontent well. Feeling her inferiority, she brings out into the open her feeling of uneasiness and then tries to gloss it over by turning to humor. In context, the remark does not cheapen her; nor does it cheapen God. The daring, the seeming flippancy, give the metaphor a certain charm.

Finally, the last lines of the poem deserve comment. Here again the total effect of the lines does not result from the imagery alone. The phrasing and the alliteration polish the image, it is true. Nevertheless, in these lines at least, it is the picture which concretizes the knowledge and assurance which Psyche longs for.

Sleep, Centre to the tempest of my love,
And dream thereof,
And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place; (89-92)

The smile that should be present on Psyche's face is not visible because its presence is challenged by her apprehension. Therefore God tells her by means of the simile that even in her worry she is something delightful to Him. Her smile warms her face only slightly, giving it a mild glow, as the evening sun causes a glow in the yard or park into which it slants. The glow, though slight, is
nonetheless actual. Thus the simile closes the problem of the poem, hinting at a solution but not calling on Psyche to break the charm of Eros' assuring words.

The present treatment of the imagery of poem has noted four points. First, the basic image of the poem is actually the characters themselves since they are symbols. Secondly, there is a notable unity in this imagery. Thirdly, the vocabulary is inadequate for vivifying the weak secondary imagery. Fourthly, despite the weaknesses considered in the third point, there are some strong similes and metaphors. The next consideration will be the technique of the poem. This study will doubtless balance some of the adverse criticism made in the last few pages. Patmore's poem has a quiet but persistent effect, and it is the complexus of his poetic devices that aids in achieving that effect.

Patmore called the poems in the Eros sequence "irregular odes." Certainly, "Psyche's Discontent" is enthusiastic and exalted verse, directed to a fixed purpose, and dealing progressively with one dignified theme.\textsuperscript{11} Page's comment that all the odes do not fit the rule of thumb for classifying the poem as an ode, i.e., they do not all begin with "O," is not a serious difficulty.\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, all of the odes do not call out solemnly to some god, to the real God, or to some personified virtue; but neither is this a necessary characteristic of the ode as written by Milton and Wordsworth, whom Patmore imitated.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11}Edmund Gosse, "Ode," Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed. (London, 1910), XX, 1-2; the article in the fourteenth edition is a synopsis of the one noted.

\textsuperscript{12}Reid, p. 107.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 272.
Some have said that the odes of the sequence are written in free verse, a statement hard to verify especially since free verse generally lacks rhyme. It is certainly not true in the present poem, for a short investigation shows the iambic nature of the lines. This claim for an "iambic" measure would not, of course, satisfy Patmore himself because he maintained that he used his own prosody. Since, however, the application of his own theory of prosody does not make a substantial difference in the literary evaluation of this poem, the discussion of Patmore’s theory has been left for an appendix. The following lines indicate the feasibility of scanning the poem within traditional patterns.

Have pity of my clay-conceived birth
And maiden's simple mood, (5-6)
To bear apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel coarse of customary life’s
Exceeding in unkindness. (39-41)
Possess'd I am with thee
Ev'n as a sponge is by a surge of the sea. (64-65)
Shall I, the gnat, which dances in thy ray,
Dare to be reverent! Therefore dare I say, (72-73)

The iambic dominance is evident from the scansion, but every foot is not iambic. The anapests of line sixty five are designed to catch the inward, rising

14 For practical purposes, Patmore’s theory cannot be applied to his own poems. See appendix.
movement of the sea as it rolls to shore. According to the traditional scansion, the longest lines have five or six feet

\[ \text{- - - - - - \ - - - - - - -} \]

Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power; (50)

\[ \text{-. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -} \]

That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou have or be? (71)

The shortest line has one iambic foot

Thou kisdest joy
To death. (7-4)

Ten of the lines of the poem have two feet, basically iambic. Seven of them have three iambic feet to the lines. The majority have feet of the same kind. There is no set rule for predicting line length or any sequence of lines of different length. From such an irregular sequence it is clear that there is no stanzaic pattern either.

In itself the rhythmical pattern of "Psyche's Discontent" is not extraordinary. What is extraordinary, however, is the variation in the number of feet used in the lines themselves. But before that variation can be discussed adequately, it is necessary to describe and evaluate the rhyme, the alliteration, and the assonance of the poem because these three aspects of the poem are intimately connected with the variation in line length.

Rhyme constitutes a most important feature of all Patmore's odes. J. C. Reid ascribes a definite function to Patmore's rhyme, maintaining that the rhyme accounts for the feel of regularity that the poet achieved in the framework of the "irregular" ode. 15

15 Reid, pp. 277-278.
As an aid to visualizing the rhyme scheme, a detailed chart is placed here.

1 -- a
   b
   a

5 -- c
   d
   d

10 -- e
   f
   e

15 -- g
   h
   g

20 -- h
   g
   h

25 -- j
   j
   k

30 -- k
   n
   m

35 -- n
   m
   n

40 -- o
   p
   m

45 -- m
   q

50 -- t
   u
   v

55 -- v
   w
   v

60 -- x
   y
   p

65 -- p
   z
   z

70 -- s
   a_1
   a_1

75 -- u
   v
   b_1

80 -- d_1
   y
   d_1

85 -- y
   e_1
   y

90 -- f_1
   e_1
   f_1

Code:

- quasi-pattern abab
- quasi-pattern cddc
- "couplet"

"referred rhyme"
This elaborate chart does have its value. Note first of all that the couplets have been marked by red lines and that arrows are used to indicate rhymes that recur. In themselves, these points seem trivial; but they take on significance as one comes to realize that such points are other means by which Patmore has tightened this poem. There can be no doubt that Reid's statement about the importance of rhyme in Patmore's odes is verified in "Psyche's Discontent."

There is an irregular "pattern" of rhyme running through the poem. It can almost be termed "stanzaic." The pattern usually assumes two forms: a b a b or c d d c. The couplet understood in the sense of two continuous rhymed lines appears nineteen times. The device which makes the greatest impression, however, is what for want of a more accurate term will be designated "recall." By this term is meant the repetition of a rhyming word five, six, seven, or more lines after a rhyme pattern for the sound involved has already been introduced. Perhaps this repetition is unintentional, but it is much more likely that it is a consciously worked for effect. The number of such "recalled" rhymes is large. Accident alone would not account for this quantity. Moreover, this recall serves a definite purpose. It helps, lightly, but decidedly, to unify the poem and to impress that unity on the reader. As the lines string themselves out, the reader is brought back on himself by the recalled rhymes.

A further and more significant use of rhyme is its emphasizing quality. This aspect can best be described by returning momentarily to the question of the irregular line length. These irregular lines seem to be ordered by no pattern whatsoever. When this observation was made on page thirty eight, further discussion was transmitted until rhyme had been treated. The reason for
this delay was that the rhyme of the poem suggests a clue to the line variation. Patmore's desire to find the apt rhyme might very well have been what determined the line length. Study the following lines, for instance

Nor savour less
The sweets of thine eternal childishness, (10-11)

The first iambic foot of the second line could be transferred to the first of these two lines. Metrically it would make no difference; but in so doing the rhyme would become internal (a device used constantly by Gerard Manley Hopkins). Now it is precisely the rhyme of these two lines as they are now constructed, i.e., end rhyme, which brings the lines together despite the disparity in their length. The following lines reveal the same dependence on rhyme although the rhyme in this instance is alternate rather than continuous.

O, I should feel thee nearer to my heart
If thou and I
Shone each to each respondently apart,
Like stars which one the other trembling spy. (18-21)

As Patmore and other metrists have remarked, one function of rhyme is to help the memory. Here "heart" and "apart" do that; but line twenty has been stopped to do more than merely help the memory. Its present arrangement stresses the two pronouns and then catches the rhyme with "spy." Lines forty seven and forty eight show the same tendency to place a rhyme between lines of vastly different length and thereby gain emphasis for the image in the line and the phrase

Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed (47-48)

It is not overstating the case to hold that Patmore's rhyming greatly enhances his poem. The seeming irregularity of the pattern is enough to keep the poem from becoming monotonous, while on the other hand the recall and the couplets produce a feeling of regularity and unity. Patmore's method,
consequently, is a compromise between the un-rhymed and the regularly rhymed.

Patmore alliterated extensively but never so energetically as his friend Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J. (The significant alliteration and assonance have been marked in the typed text of the poem, page twelve.) The reason for the extensive use was undoubtedly not only the poet's desire to polish his verse and to please the ear as much as possible but also to help the meter of the poem. Yet the most frequent alliterative device would hardly pass for conscious effort if it were not for the very frequency with which Patmore attempted it. The reference is to the two-word initial alliteration which hardly intrudes itself but does serve as a phrase unifier.

maiden's simple mood (6)
Be prudent in thy prayer (24)
And should she ask amiss (26)
In patience and in peace (60)
cannot guess the good (74)

In addition to employing alliteration for euphony and as a unifier of single lines, Patmore occasionally alliterates run-on lines to achieve a "rocking" effect: the run-on lines thrust the reader forward; the alliterations pull him backward

Nor savour less
The sweets of thine eternal childishness, (10-11)

Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power. (49-50)

In both examples, in addition to the alliteration understood strictly, the "s" sound and the "f" sound are respectively repeated.

The finest general alliteration appears in the important last two lines:

And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place. (91-92)

The seven sounds of "s" soften the lines and complement the imagery and the meter quite effectively. In fact, such soft-sounding alliterations seem to be Patmore's favorites. The only "hard" one which occurs is "clay-conceived" (5).

Assonance appears much more rarely than alliteration. Whether Patmore was striving for its euphonic effect cannot be determined from this poem alone. Since decided assonance is infrequent (two examples), he probably was not. One effective assonant line is the short "than a dream's heed" (47). In context, this line was shortened to take advantage of the rhyme with the following line; thus,

Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed! (47-48)

The assonance and the rhyme together unify the image. The second assonant line is

Cleave to thee when me thou seem'st to slay (54)

In conclusion, it can be said of the alliteration and the assonance that both contribute to the unity of impression of the poem and to its finish.

With these prefatory remarks on rhyme, alliteration, and assonance now completed, the matter of the irregular line length can be broached. This feature is invariably the first one observed by the reader, especially since the lines are printed flush to the left margin rather than indented in the
traditional ode form. The question is this: is some kind of intelligibility present in the arrangement of the lines?

One way to attack the problem of line length in this ode is to return to what has already been observed about its unity. Patmore, it will be remembered, eschewed a stanzaic form, probably because he wanted to move his thought from beginning to end in the tightest possible form, much like a short story writer. The rhyme scheme by its pattern of recall and its emphasizing quality also heightens the unity of the poem. Why not approach the phrasing under this same aspect, i.e., under the aspect of the unity of the poem? Perhaps it will be fruitful.

Since only the effect desired, the sense, and the rhyme scheme determine the line length and no arbitrary "form" does so, the poet can literally rush his hearer or reader along from beginning to end without too decided a break in thought. Within the poem itself, he can move the reader along until he is stopped for an instant by a long line or by an extraordinarily short one. For example,

Enough, enough, ambrosial plumed Boy!
My bosom is aweary of thy breath,
Thou kispest joy
To death. (1-4)

To hear, apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel coarse of customary life's
Exceeding injuicudity. (39-41)

Little, bold Femininity,
That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou have or be?
(70-71)

On the other hand, the twenty-six run-on lines of the poem stress the tumbling, swift movement of the poem. Sometimes the run-on line is used between short and long lines, sometimes between lines of approximately the same length.
If thou and I
Shone each to each respondently apart, (19-20)

How can I toil, if thus thou dost renew
Toil's guerdon, which the daytime should forget? (30-31)

When thou'rt, to knowledge of my heart, no more
Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed! (46-48)

With what grip fell
I'll cling to hope when life draws hard to hell, (52-53)

'Thus irresistibly by Love embraced
Is she who boasts her more than mortal chaste!' (66-67)

When the run-on lines are made of a short line followed by a longer line and the lines also rhyme, the pairs of lines are notably impressive. The rhyme-word in the second line gives emphasis and a sense of pause; the run-on with its lack of break works against the pause, giving both lines a "give and take" character which is similar to the "rocking" effect mentioned on page forty two. In other words, the variation in line length supplies a "feeling" of antithesis; the run-on lines provide movement while the rhyme establishes a pause-causing rhythm within the poem itself. From these three, i.e., from the variation in line length, run-on lines, and rhyme, a proportion develops which underlies the pleasant harmony that the reader perceives.

17 J. C. Reid points out that in many poems of the Eros sequence Fatmore accentuates the unity of impression by using a minimum number of sentences which are developed to maximum length., p. 280.
Psyche's second request exemplifies well the value of the shortened line, even when there is no reliance on the run-on line.

But, lo, while thus I store toil's slow increase
To be my dower, in patience and in peace,
Thou com'st, like bolt from blue, invisibly,
With premonition none nor any sign,
And, at a gasp, no choice nor fault of mine,
Possess'd I am with thee
Ev'n as a sponge is by a surge of the sea! (59-63)

There is a swelling dignity here which is capped by leaving the most important verse of the section only three iambic feet and then following the short line by the anapests of verse sixty three. There is a similar situation at the end of the poem.

'Sleep, Centre to the tempest of my love,
And dream thereof,
And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place!' (89-92)

The verse of two feet sets up the pair of five-feet lines that follow. These in turn satisfactorily conclude the ode, the rhyme and the equality of line length producing a sense of completion.

Although the phrasing and the technique of the poem fortify the otherwise drab imagery with some life and a subtle strength, Patmore cannot be judged an unqualified success in this matter. Occasionally his phrasing is clumsy and his diction faulty.

The most glaring failure in phrasing occurs in the first line of "Psyche's Discontent."

Enough, enough, ambrosial plumed Boy! (1)

"Ambrosial plumed" simply does not satisfy; the two words do not go together, the banality of the picture remaining unconsidered for the moment. The vowel
"hodge-podge" which results from the juxtaposing of the two words stumbles and
offsends the tongue. Some later lines have similar but not so glaring defects:

And, should she ask amiss,
He may not her beseeched harm deny. (26-27)

The clumsy monosyllables of the first half of verse twenty seven taken in
conjunction with the equally clumsy "beseeched" ruin this line. The following
lines fail also:

The long, long night when none can work for fear,
Sweet fear incessantly consummated,
My most divinely Dear,
My Joy, my Dread,
Will soon be here! (32-36)

The long separation of subject and object does not seem justified here. Thus,
the appositive of line thirty three obfuscates rather than clarifies. Moreover,
it starts a train of rather rhetorical thought in the speaker Psyche which
evokes the antithetical "Joy" and "Dread." These last words might be defended
on the ground that Patmore is trying to reveal the intense and highly confused
emotional state of Psyche. Although this motive is worthwhile, the words used
and their position do not produce that effect without a large admixture of
sentimentality.

The diction of the ode is likewise weak. (Diction and secondary imagery are,
of course, closely related. Failure in one means failure in the other.) Too
much of what Patmore brings to his work is stock from an old poetic storehouse.\textsuperscript{16}

This defect in diction from over-dependence on the "traditional" poetic vocab-
ulary is most acute in the early lines of the ode: "Bosom . . . aweary . . .
breath . . . ambrosial." "Aweary" surely does not fit the passion of the moment

\textsuperscript{16}Reid, p. 305.
that Patmore is describing; the image is supposed to be one of intimate physical embrace.

The diction is injurious to the total effect of the poem in a second sense, for quite often the vocabulary either lacks imagination or has too intellectual a quality. For instance,

As thou, being God, crav'st lilleness and earth! (3)
Sweets of thine eternal childishness (11)
And hold thy godhead bright in far employ (12)
By this infatuating flame obscured. (17)
Shone each to each respondently apart, (20)
The fardel coarse of customary life's
Exceeding inexcundity. (40-41)
Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower (40)
To make thee laugh, in thy safe heaven, to see (51)
Thus irresistibly by Love embraced (66)

Taken in the aggregate, such diction does not stimulate man's emotions or senses enough to strengthen the impress of the content of the poem on the mind or in the consciousness. It is important to remember that this criticism arises from an excess of these "intellectual" words, because in certain individual cases Patmore can and has handled such words effectively. Another factor should also be adduced in Patmore's defence. It is this: such words as "lilleness," "childishness," and "femininity" are part of the vocabulary of his mysticism. Their vagueness, nevertheless, cannot be advantageous in poetry. Consequently, final judgment must state that the matter and the concept of "Psyche's Discontent" deserve more than the dryness and vagueness that Patmore's diction imparts.
Connected with, and overlapping, the diction problem is another flaw. It is Patmore's penchant for words with an excessive number of vowels in them which can also be detected a debilitating fondness for Latin derivatives; thus, "childishness" (11), "infatuation" (17), "respondently" (19), and "irresistibly" (66). Especially disturbing are "injucundity" (41), "incomparable" (49), "frailty" (50), and "femininity" (70). These words, again, are not poor in themselves but in their cumulative effect over the course of ninety verses, they suggest the presence of a trickery which hopes to attract attention to the lines by mere sound not by force of thought or image. The following lines offend most

Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power. (49-50)

and

Find'st thou me worthy, then, by day and night,
But of this fond indignity, delight?
'Little, bold Femininity, (68-70)

The "i" sounds in the first example go to excess. Psyche seems to be playing with the words to vitalize their emotion. The second example's defects hardly need comment.

The emotional aspects of a poem invariably cause difficulties both in the analysis of this part of a poem and in the formulation of the results of such study. When the "ripping and cutting" begin, the individuality and the delicateness of the poem escape in a puff of air. Patmore's poetry in the Eros sequence is no exception. One reason for the elusiveness of the emotional in "Psyche's Discontent" is the fact that, paradoxical as it may seem, Patmore does not wish primarily to arouse an emotion. Rather, he intends to convey an insight, chiefly intellectual, which is mingled with the emotive and the
sensual. Now Patmore's chief means for achieving such an effect is the unity of impression with which he has endowed his poem. To stress the primacy of the unity is, of course, to repeat what was implicit in the opening sentences of this paragraph. It is always dangerous to take poems apart too completely.

Herbert Read has made a statement that substantiates what has just been said. He maintains that a poem's function is not only arousal of an emotion. The poem is also written to convey understanding. Now such a judgment seems valid for "Psyche's Discontent." No matter how intellectual one becomes in his philosophy of poetry, however, he will never stop asking himself: how much of the poignancy (to be specific) that is inherent in the situation of the poem has the poet succeeded in putting into his verses?

To answer such a question is really to return to what has already been considered under a variety of headings in the preceding pages, for emotion or tone results from the complexus of structure, imagery, phrasing, diction, and so on.

Thus, in Psyche's second, long speech, the structure, the imagery, and the phrasing, rhetorical as these may be, produce some kind of sympathy in the reader. The repetitions from line forty two to fifty eight are strong. The dream image of lines forty seven and forty eight forms slowly but once formed lingers and colors the rest of the section. The "o" vowels of line forty four

---

and the repetition of "lone" activate the reader's feelings

How, seeming lone upon the gaunt, lone shore (44)

From here to the end of the request, the lines generally move with a symphonic pulsation to the concluding anapests of the "sponge" simile. Even here, however, Patmore's sensibility failed him somewhat. Thus, lines thirty three to thirty six are exaggerated; instead of showing the frenzy in Psyche's mind, they show a clumsiness in Patmore's control of words. The image of the line "My feet have slipped at last" (53) does not have the dignity that the context demands. It is not a poor image, but it is not forceful enough. "Bolt from blue" (61) hinders rather than helps since the stereotyped never captures the poignancy of a situation or state.

Synthesis

Thirty-five pages of fragments, if "fragments" is taken literally, are difficult to retrieve; the task becomes even more taxing when done figuratively. As an introduction to the synthesizing of "Psyche's Discontent," the following paragraphs will be an attempt to elaborate on the conception and the structure of Patmore's poem, as it is in itself apart from any intention which the poet may have had.

No one at all familiar with the tradition of mysticism in Western Christianity would make the mistake of saying that Patmore has tried merely to revitalize a pagan myth. Granted that there is a justifiable reason for going to the story of Psyche and Eros for characters or symbols, the real source of "Psyche's Discontent" is the Canticle of Canticles. Seeing the source also helps to reveal the cultural background of the poem and also to show the later
poem's originality. For there is no attempt on the part of the author of the Canticle to indicate that these concrete situations and physical characteristics so vividly depicted in the Canticles are to be interpreted in a spiritual way, thereby elevating the merely sensual to a higher plane. When the "Song of Solomon" is read today, the mystical interpretation is imposed on it (and justifiably). Moreover, context places the Canticles between the Books of Ecclesiastes and Wisdom, both books of the mind. This position colors the impression made by the Canticles, just as the traditional Catholic interpretation does. Patmore, on the other hand, has not written a poem in which it is left to the reader to apply the traditional interpretation. The tradition, rather, has already been incorporated explicitly into the poem. It is of the very substance of the poem. Patmore used the Canticles' imagery and pagan names; but he also inserted dialogue of such a kind that the symbolic and the literal were combined. This factor alters, to a certain extent, the emotional impression of the poem. The meaning of the symbols is not merely hinted at; the truth which the symbols stand for is openly discussed by the characters, who themselves are symbols. This being the case, there will naturally be a more intellectual tone to the work. As a matter of fact, the appeal will be primarily there.

If the appeal of the poem is to the mind, what of the basic imagery? This question has already been put on pages twenty eight and twenty nine where it was expressed in words that come to this: how well does the poet, really the poem, move back and forth from the sensual-emotive symbol to the psychological-mystical experience? That the poet wanted this movement is evident from the poem itself and can be learned from extrinsic sources, although these latter do
not serve the present purpose. The question then can be cast in contemporary terminology by phrasing it in this way: when Patmore unites in one poem the symbol and the idea his symbols stand for, does he so imbed the idea in his symbols that the poem is organically one?

In general, the answer can be affirmative; but at the same time there must be reservations. The strong points will be reviewed first and then the weak ones. As far as possible, this will be done collectively to help the reader keep in mind the all-important fact that the poem is one thing and has to be judged accordingly.

The dramatic technique that Patmore chose to follow catches vividly the central problem of the poem: Psyche's discontent at the pleasure of her embrace in God. The traditional imagery plus the extended treatment of "day" as the period of time when the soul is not being influenced by this direct contact of God's is smoothly worked in. Moreover, and this is a striking point, the antithetical, paradoxical structuring of the poem enriches subtly the paradox that is basic to the very meaning of the poem itself. Another factor also stemming from the structure sharpens Psyche's expression of her anxiety and thereby aids the poem's intellectual intensity. This factor is the unity of the poem. As has been noted, except for the repetitions in Psyche's long request (the second part) everything in the poem develops the central issue. Not even Eros enters

---

20 Coventry Patmore, "Love and Poetry," Religio Poetae, Etc., p. 144: "Nuptial love bears the clearest marks of being nothing other than the rehearsal of a communion of a higher nature." Patmore wanted the chosen others to come to realize what he knew and felt, that human love is a symbol of an all-consuming divine love as well as a foretaste of it.
forcefully until the closing lines of the poem, lest the anguish in the female soul be missed or underestimated. Finally, allusion likewise serves to move the reader from the literal meaning to the real meaning of the poem. Moreover, this same allusion to the mystics and to Sacred Scripture guarantees the poem a certain dignity and forces the cultured reader to recall certain ideas and to develop a frame of mind that includes more than a bare intellectual judgment.

Connected inextricably with the unity and, for that matter, with the intellectual tone of the poem is the technique. In this regard, the rhyme and the phrasing dependent on that rhyme catch up the ideas and the images and blend them into an organic whole. Alliterations help in this too.

Despite the complimentary summary which has been given in the paragraphs above, the question put on the preceding page does not merit an unqualified affirmative answer. Patmore's diction and his secondary imagery are weak. Neither of these defects is inconsequential and both have to be faced by even the most ardent of Patmore's admirers. It is to these failings that Herbert Read referred when he commented -- speaking of another poem of the sequence but judging the entire sequence -- that the Patmorean ode does not "bite into the mind." 21 Gerard Manley Hopkins, generally favorable towards Patmore's poetry, wrote to Robert Bridges that the fundamental failure in Patmore's odes was their "failure to fuse." 22 He must have had in mind the diction of the odes, because the language of "Psyche's Discontent" does not always "flush and fuse"

21 Read, True Voice of Feeling, p. 91.

the feeling. Patmore's over-use of polysyllabic words, the verses lacking in strong emotive words, and the ion words with their appeal to the philosopher are sufficient evidence for Hopkins' judgment.

So much for a re-assembling of the poem. Here it will be appropriate to quote from J. C. Reid, who has often been mentioned as one of the most perceptive and yet balanced of Patmore's admirers. In speaking of the Eros sequence in general and of "Sponsa Dei" in particular -- the fifth poem of Book II -- he judges that "as a whole, 'Sponsa Dei' is greater than the sum of its parts, and the same is true of many of the other odes."23 To claim that this statement applies to "Psyche's Discontent" is not to stretch Reid's praise too far. The poem under discussion does have characteristics as a whole, as a unit, that its parts do not account for. The very rashness of the attempt strengthens the effect of the poem. To see the pagan myth as a corroborating factor in the traditional Catholic mysticism is no insignificant observation. Patmore's concept and experiment are worth much more than the merely pagan, or, at most, merely humanistic use of the Eros and Psyche myth. On the other hand, the mystical tradition is extrinsically and poetically "re-vitalized" by its union with the pagan theme. The result of this is a richer concept of love for modern man.

Naturally such tribute to the idea behind the poem cannot be unlimited. Patmore is being evaluated here as a poet, not as a spiritual writer or popularizer of the mystical way. Therefore, a man with only half the insight of Patmore might very well produce better poetry, as a more adept handler of

23 Reid, p. 306.
language, imagery, pathos, and so on. Nevertheless, the fact remains that con-
cept, insight, and the very introduction of so important a set of truths all
enter into the evaluations that readers make of a poem. By that fact alone,
Patmore has a special claim to his reader's attention and sympathy; and he
should be forgiven some defects.

Somehow "Psyche's Discontent" has an individuality. Precisely what it is,
eludes complete and exhaustive analysis; but to deny the fact is impossible.
Perhaps Percy Lubbock came closest to expressing what brings readers back to
Patmore, when he wrote "Patmore's poetry presents a union of severity -- a
certain noble gauntness -- with a sensuousness that lavishes itself in such
lovely and minute detail."24 Now the sensuousness and detail of "Psyche's
Discontent" are not completely "lovely." The "noble gauntness" is present,
however, in the structure, phrasing, rhyme, and antithesis because the handling
of these makes the very fibre of the poem reflect and amplify its meaning.
When the imagery is equal to the thought and the technique, the result is
indeed "nobly gaunt."

24 Percy Lubbock, "Coventry Patmore," The Quarterly Review (April 1908),
THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

A Prologue

As a young Child, whose Mother, for a jest,
To his own use a golden coin flings down,
Devises blythe how he may spend it best,
Or on a horse, a bride-cake, or a crown,
Till, wearied with his quest,
Nor liking altogether that nor this,
He gives it back for nothing but a kiss,
Endow'd so I
With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy,
And scanning power and pleasure and renown,
Till each in turn, with looking at, looks vain,
For her mouth's bliss,
To her who gave it give I it again.
Ah, Lady elect,
Whom the Time's scorn has saved from its respect,
Would I had art
For uttering this which sings within my heart!
But, lo,
Thee to admire is all the art I know.
My Mother and God's; Fountain of miracle!
Give me thereby some praise of thee to tell
In such a Song
As may my Guide severe and glad not wrong
Who never spake till thou'dst on him conferr'd
The right, convincing word!
Grant me the steady heat
Of thought wise, splendid, sweet,
Urged by the great, rejoicing wind that rings
With draught of unseen wings,
Making each phrase, for love and for delight,
Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night!
Aid thou thine own dear fame, thou only Fair,
At whose petition meek
The heavens themselves decree that, as it were,
They will be weak!
Thou Speaker of all wisdom in a Word,
Thy Lord!
Speaker who thus could'st well afford
Thence to be silent; -- ah, what silence that
Which had for prologue thy 'Magnificat'? --
O, Silence full of wonders
More than by Moses in the Mount were heard,
More than were utter'd by the Seven Thunders;
Silence that crowns, unnoted, like the voiceless blue,
The loud world's varying view,
And in its holy heart the sense of all things ponders!
That acceptably I may speak of thee,
Ora pro me!

Key-note and stop
Of the thunder-going chorus of sky-Powers;
Essential drop
Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd flowers
To anoint with nuptial praise
The Head which for thy Beauty doff'd its rays,
And thee, in His exceeding glad descending, meant,
And Man's new days
Made of His deed the adorning accident!
Vast Nothingness of Self, fair female Twin
Of Fulness, sucking all God's glory in!
(Ah, Mistress mine,
To nothing I have added only sin,
And yet would shine!)
Ora pro me!

Life's cradle and death's tomb!
To lie within whose womb,
There, with divine self-will infatuate,
Love-captive to the thing He did create,
Thy God did not abhor,
No more
Than Man, in Youth's high spousal-tide,
Abhors at last to touch
The strange lips of his long-procrastinating Bride;
Nay, not the least imagined part as much!
Ora pro me!

My Lady, yea, the Lady of my Lord
Who didst the first deser'y
The burning secret of virginity,
We know with what reward!
Prism whereby
Alone we see
Heav'n's light in its triplicity;
Rainbow complex
In bright distinction of all beams of sex,
Shining for aye
In the simultaneous sky,
To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and Brother,
Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet Mother;
Ora pro me!
Mildness, whom God obeys, obeying thyself
Him in thy joyful Saint, nigh lost to sight
In the great gulf
Of his own glory and thy neighbour light;
With whom thou wast as else with husband none
For perfect fruit of inmost amity;
Who felt for thee
Such rapture of refusal that no kiss
Ever seal'd wedlock so conjoint with bliss;
And whose good singular eternally
'Tis now, with nameless peace and vehemence,
To enjoy thy married smile,
That mystery of innocence;
Ora pro me!
Sweet Girlhood without guile,
The extreme of God's creative energy;
Sunshiny Peak of human personality;
The world's sad aspirations' one Success;
Bright blush, that sav'st our shame from shamefulness;
Chief Stone of stumbling; Sign built in the way
To set the foolish everywhere a-bray;
Hem of God's robe, which all who touch are heal'd;
To which the outside Many honour yield
With a reward and grace
Unguess'd by the unwash'd boor that hails Him to His face,
Spurning the safe, ingratiating courtesy
Of suing Him by thee;
Ora pro me!
Creature of God rather the sole than first;
Knot of the cord
Which binds together all and all unto their Lord;
Suppliant Omnipotence, best to the worst;
Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ
And Egypt's brick-kilns, where the lost crowd plods,
Blaspheming its false Gods;
Peace-beaming Star, by which shall come enticed,
Though nought thereof as yet they weet,
Unto thy Babe's small feet,
The Mighty, wand'ring disemparadised,
Like Lucifer, because to thee
They will not bend the knee;
Ora pro me!
Desire of Him whom all things else desire!
Rush aye with Him as He with thee on fire!
Neither in His great Deed nor on His throne --
0, folly of Love, the intense
Last culmination of Intelligence, --
Him seem'd it good that God should be alone!

Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips,
Ere the world was, with absolute delight
His infinite reposed in thy Finite;
Well match'd: He, universal being's Spring,
And thou, in whom art gather'd up the ends of everything!
Ora pro me!
In season due, on His sweet-fearful bed,
Rock'd by an earthquake, curtain'd with eclipse,
Thou shar'dst the rapture of the sharp spear's head,
And thy bliss pale
Wrought for our boon what Eve's did for our bale;
Thereafter, holding a little thy soft breath,
Thou underwent'st the ceremony of death;
And, now, Queen-Wife,
Sitt'st at the right hand of the Lord of Life,
Who, of all beauty, craves for only fee
The glory of hearing it besought with smiles by thee!
Ora pro me!
Mother, who lead'st me still by unknown ways,
Giving the gifts I know not how to ask,
Bless thou the work
Which, done, redeems my many wasted days,
Makes white the murk,
And crowns the few which thou wilt not dispraise,
When clear my Songs of Lady's graces rang,
And little guess'd I 'twas of thee I sang!
Vainly, till now, my pray'rs would thee compel
To fire my verse with thy shy fame, too long
Shunning world-blazon of well-pondered song;
But doubtful smiles, at last, 'mid thy denials lurk;
From which I spell,
'Humility and greatness grace the task
Which he who does it deems impossible!'
CHAPTER IV

"THE CHILD'S PURCHASE"

Analysis

The second poem to be analyzed in this thesis is quite different from "Psyche's Discontent," both in structure and in tone. Yet it reveals many similarities with the Psyche poem, enough, certainly, to make it obviously the work of Patmore. "The Child's Purchase" is the seventeenth poem in the second book of the Eros sequence, the second to the last as a matter of fact. Poem eighteen, "Dead Language," serves as an epilogue to the entire sequence. Consequently, "The Child's Purchase" can be considered the close of the sequence. As has already been noted on pages ten and eleven of the present work, the "purchase" poem represents what to Patmore's mind is the spiritual marriage par excellence. According to Eleanor Downing, this poem of the perfections of the Blessed Virgin is Patmore's "culminating poem on virginity."¹ J. C. Reid describes it in this manner: "The Child's Purchase" is his [i.e., Patmore's] final poetic word on love and virginity. In the Blessed Virgin he sees the perfection of virginity, of married love and of the love of God, as well as the

¹Eleanor A. Downing, "Patmore's Philosophy of Love," Thought, A Quarterly of the Sciences and Letters, IX (June 1934), 77.
supreme expression of the meaning of the Incarnation." ²

Father Connolly sets the date of composition as late in 1877; publication was in the Oden of 1878. ³ Thus the composition followed closely on Patmore's trip to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes, France. Since this pilgrimage and its background shed some light on Patmore the man, it will not be out of place to include the poet's own account of the journey. He tells this story in the short autobiography that he wrote to describe his conversion to Catholicism and which Champneys included in the second volume of his life of Patmore.

Before and ever since my reception into this Church my feelings had been, as it seemed to me, hopelessly out of harmony with the feelings and practice of the best Catholics with regard to the Blessed Virgin. I was in the habit, indeed, of addressing her in prayer, and believed that I had often found such prayers to be successful beyond others; but I could not abide the Rosary, and was chilled and revolted at what seemed to me the excess of many forms of devotion to her. Good I hoped might come of some practical contradiction of this repugnance, some confession in act and will of what my feelings thus refused to accept. I therefore resolved to do the very last thing in the world which my natural inclination would have suggested. I resolved to make an external profession of my acceptance of the Church's mind by a pilgrimage to Lourdes. This I undertook without any sensible devotion, . . . Accordingly on the 14th of October, 1877, I knelt at the shrine by the River Gave, and rose without any emotion or enthusiasm or unusual sense of devotion, but with a tranquil sense that the prayers of thirty-five years had been granted. I paid two visits of thanksgiving to Lourdes in the two succeeding Octobers, for the gift which was then received, and which has never since been for a single hour withdrawn. ⁴

If the sophisticated repugnance at "devotion" to Mary is precisely what one

²Reid, Mind and Art, p. 299.

³Connolly, Mystical Poems, pp. 286-287.

⁴Champneys, Memoirs and Correspondence, II, p. 56.
might expect from a man of Patmore's background and tastes, the drastic action is also typical of his temperament.

Although this journey was certainly a factor in the composition of the poem, the visit to Lourdes does not itself enter into the material of the poem nor is it the purpose of this thesis to find any relationship. One other point about the poem should be mentioned: "The Child's Purchase" was written for another sequence of poems in honor of the Virgin. Despite this fact, however, it fits well in the Eros sequence because Mary is the perfection of all that Patmore has presented in the preceding poems of the sequence. Its position near the end of the sequence indicates and amplifies this perfection of the Blessed Virgin.

The poem's structure provides the best beginning for the actual analysis of the poem. Structure is also the point of distinction between the present poem and "Psyche's Discontent." The latter poem is dramatic, constructed somewhat like a short story, with the short story's singleness of theme and plot. "The Child's Purchase," on the other hand, does not compare easily with any one of the other literary types. This is probably because it merits most clearly the classification of "ode," for it is an exalted and prolonged apostrophe, invoking a holy person and lovingly dwelling on her excellences and prerogatives. Most simply expressed, the poem is a hymn, a prayer in verse. Moreover, it is a prologue, i.e., an introduction. It does not develop a theme or present a point of view so much as it asks for help in an arduous and "impossible" task.

---


6 Page, Patmore: a Study, p. 130; Connolly, p. 286.
A parable, which provides the title and the beginning of the poem, introduces the poet himself and shows what his desire is

Grant me the steady heat
Of Thought wise, splendid, sweet. (26-27)

His request for words reminds the poet of the Virgin Mary's silence, an instance of the Patmorean grasp of the paradoxical and the contrasting. The logically united first section -- to line 48 -- closes with the first of the Latin invocations, *Ora pro me*, which are repeated litany-like throughout the poem.\(^7\)

From verse forty eight onward the logical structure of the poem is not so apparent. Not having a stanzatic pattern to serve him as a guide to the order, the reader plunges ahead, caught up in the litany of titles and reflections that follow but unaffected by the seeming absence of order. Closer examination actually reveals that there is a rough ordering of the poem around the notions

---

\(^7\)This note will explain briefly some passages which suffer from syntactical obscurity or complexity. They need not enter the actual body of the analysis. (Allusions and images will be explained in their proper places.)

Lines 51-57: Broken down into sense lines the section would read like this: "Distill'd . . . to anoint the Head which for your beauty doff'd its rays

*\[\text{which meant you, i.e., intended you in His descent to earth}\]*

*\[\text{and who made man's new, i.e., redeemed, days merely the accidental result of His coming.}\]*

In this last clause, by a poetic license Patmore tells Mary that Christ came for her glorification primarily and for man's redemption secondarily. (Interpretation in a letter to the author from Fr. Terence Connolly, S.J., editor of the book already cited, October 1, 1958.)

Lines 84-85: Shining for aye

*\[\text{In the simultaneous sky}\]*

The OED supplies no meaning of "simultaneous" which will make sense in this passage if the word is taken as an adjective modifying "sky." In form it can
of the Incarnation and Mary's mystical marriage to God. Verses 49-74, for example, can be taken as invocations to Mary in her essential holiness.

Essential drop
Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd flowers (51-52)

Life's cradle and death's tomb. (64)

Lines 75 to 101 emphasize the Virgin's place at the apex of Patmore's mystical hierarchy. The section might be styled one that stresses her "crucial importance" in this mysticism.

Yea, the Lady of my Lord,
Who did the first descry
The burning secret of virginity . . . (75-77)

Mary was virginal of mind and body, but at the same time she was married. Thus, St. Joseph is introduced:

be taken as an adjective modifying "sky," but in meaning it must be taken as referring to the two lines of the poem which immediately follow the verses under discussion:

To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and Brother,
Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet Mother; (86-87)

Mary shines in the sky (as a rainbow) being simultaneously spouse, daughter, sister and mother of Christ.

Lines 89-90: Mildness, whom God obeys, obeying thyself
  Him in thy joyful Saint, nigh lost to sight
These lines can be paraphrased in this way: Mildness, i.e., Mary, whom God obeys, you obey God ("Him") yourself. In obeying the joyful saint, i.e. Joseph.

Lines 98-99: And whose good singular eternally
  'Tis now, with nameless peace and vehemence
Patmore has again arranged the words for the sake of an effect. The verses are best read: and whose singular good it is now to enjoy eternally, with nameless peace and vehemence, thy married smile, that mystery of innocence.

Lines 111-113: Hem of God's robe, which all who touch are heal'd:
  To which the outside Many honour yield
  With a reward and grace . . .

The difficult phrase is "To which the outside." Patmore has twisted the position of the object of the preposition "to" and the relative modifier. In prose, the phrase would read, "To the outside of which . . ."
With whom thou was as else with husband none
For perfect fruit of inmost amity; (93-94)

Verses 102 to 154 are the least "orderable" part of the poem. Here the litany is most pronounced. It cries to Mary in every possible image of her holiness, most especially of her role in the Redemption and in her office of mediatrix between God and man.

Chief stone of stumbling; Sign built in the way
To set the foolish everywhere a-bray; (106-109)

Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ (121)

Well match'd: He, universal being's Spring,
And thou, in whom art gather'd up the ends of everything
(140-141)

Thereafter holding a little thy soft breath,
Thou underwent'st the ceremony of death; (148-149)

Then, from line 154 to the end of the poem, Patmore returns to the request with which he opened the ode

Bless thou the work
Which, done, redeems my many wasted days. (157-158)

It is obvious from this examination of the rough ordering of the poem that the ode does not get its strength primarily from the logical force inherent in the thought pattern itself. Its effect will have to be sought in the rapid succession of titles and glories which the poet presents. Patmore, in other words, seems not to have been concerned with logic here. Rather, he was attempting to stimulate the reader's knowledge, based on dogma or the mystical tradition of the Church, to an experiencing of the reverence and awe which he himself felt for the Virgin.

This stimulation arises from two related sources: one is the metaphorical approach in itself; the second is the use of the same set of figures, metaphors
or apostrophe as the case may be, insofar as they are part of the literature of the Catholic tradition. Or more simply, while the various titles under which Mary is viewed in "The Child's Purchase" can be made intelligible by mere analysis and relation to Catholic dogma, most of them are taken from Scripture and the literature of mysticism and are intended by their allusion to these sources to enrich the reader's grasp of the poem with the overtones and meaning of these same "sources." Such allusions account partially for the richness and complexity of the impact of "The Child's Purchase."

The following catalogue of the allusions of the ode is designed to furnish an amplification and explicitation sufficient to show how Scripture and the tradition have been utilized.8

In such a Song
As may my Guide severe and glad not wrong
Who never spake till thou'dst on him conferr'd (22-24)

By common Catholic opinion "guide" here means the Holy Spirit. His not speaking is a reference to Mary's fiat, or consent to become the mother of the Messiah (Lk. 1:33).

Urged by the great, rejoicing wind that rings
With draught of unseen wings, (28-29)

The reference is again to the Holy Spirit, this time in allusion to His Pentecostal appearance in a rush of wind and fiery tongues (Acts ii.2-3).

Thou Speaker of all wisdom in a Word,
Thy Lord!
Speaker who thus could'st well afford
Thence to be silent; -- ah, what silence that
Which had for prologue thy 'Magnificat'? -- (36-40)

"Word" alludes to Mary's fiat again; it also alludes to her divine Son, the Verbum. Relative to the First meaning, Mary showed her great

8The source and use of these allusions accounts partially for the decline of interest in Patmore during the late nineteenth century.
generosity and holiness by uttering one word only (Lk. i.38). The "Magnificat" is the title given to Mary's reply to Elizabeth.

O, Silence full of wonders
More than by Moses in the Mount were heard,
More than were utter'd by the Seven Thunders; (42-43)

The references are biblical. The "wonders" which Moses heard were the commandments (Ex. xx). The "Seven Thunders" are from the Apocalypse. "And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken. And write them not (Apoc. x.4).

And in its holy heart the sense of all things ponders; (46)

The word "ponders" brings to mind the words from St. Luke. After receiving the shepherds, "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Lk. ii.19). "Ponder" is the word used by the Douay with which Patmore would have been familiar. The allusion is surely present, however, even without Patmore's intention.

To anoint with nuptial praise
The Head which for thy beauty doff'd its rays, (53-54)

"Head," i.e., of the Body, Christ, head of the Mystical Body. Christ "doff'd his rays," i.e., hid or obscured his divinity, as it were, to take on humanity.

Vast nothingness of Self, fair female Twin
Of Fulness, sucking all God's glory in! (58-59)

"Nothingness" is fundamentally another reference to the "Magnificat." "Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Lk. i.47-48).

"Female Twin" is the passive element or aspect of a person's sanctity by which the person can be acted upon or completed. Mary's realization of her nothingness before God enabled her to be filled with God's grace -- a use of paradox, not unique with Patmore, but common to the ascetical tradition.

The image of "sucking all God's glory in" is a reference to St. Bernard. In number twenty of his essay "Knowledge and Science" Patmore quotes the saint in this way: "The Beatific Vision is not seen by the eyes,
but is substance which is sucked as through a nipple."

Life's cradle and death's tomb! (64)

Father Connolly sees the source of this line in the first stanza of the liturgical hymn "Vexilla Regis"—a valid conjecture.

Fulget Crucis mysterium
Qua vita mortem pertulit,
Et morte vitam protulit.

The allusion seems to be present whether Patmore's liturgical interests are appealed to or not.

Who didst the first descry
The burning secret of purity . . . (76-77)

The Catholic saint or mystic vows chastity to enable himself to pass directly to the "spiritual marriage" with Christ.

To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and Brother
Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet Mother; (86-87)

This pair of lines condenses into the briefest space all the relations between Christ and Mary. A paraphrase would read like this: to one person, that is, to Christ who is husband, father, son, and brother to you, you are a spouse, daughter, sister, and mother.

The easiest amplification of this couplet is by a scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christ</th>
<th>Husband . . . . . in the mystical marriage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>creator (as God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>born of Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>fellow human being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Spouse . . . . . passive element in the mystical marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter . . . . to the creator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sister . . . . fellow human being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother . . . . of the Second Person of the Trinity Incarnate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The world's sad aspirations' one Success (106)

This line undoubtedly depends on Wordsworth's famous line: "Our tainted

9Patmore, "Knowledge and Science," in The Rod, the Root and the Flower, ed., Derek Patmore, para. XX, p. 81.
nature's solitary boast.\textsuperscript{10}

Chief stone of stumbling; Sign built in the way (108)

Here there is a slight re-arrangement of a phrase from St. Paul. The image as used by St. Paul pertains primarily to Christ, but in the poem it is applied to the Blessed Virgin. "But we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness." The preceding verse of Corinthians is suggested by the word "sign." "For both the Jews require signs; and the Greeks seek after wisdom" (I Cor. i. 22-23).

Hem of God's robe, which all who touch are heal'd: (110)

This verse hints at the power that went out from Christ by the mere touching of His garment. Mary, as the Mediatrix of all graces, is likened to this hem. She is a similar source of grace. "And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years came behind him and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself: If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed" (Mt. ix.20-21).

To which the outside many honour yield
With a reward and grace
Unguess'd by the unwash'd boor that hails Him to His face
(111-113)

In the parable of the marriage feast, the unwashed guest has not taken care to put himself into the proper garb and is therefore cast out from the banquet. Thus, this guest can be compared to those who do not arrive at their salvation by the means which God has willed, one of these being devotion to Mary (Mt. xxii.11-14).

Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ (121)

By a play on words the Blessed Virgin is regarded as a saviour from the Saviour Himself. Christ as God retains some of the divine distance. Mary, merely a creature, helps to bring the idea of an incarnate divinity closer to man.

And Egypt's brick-kilns, where the lost crowd plods,
Blaspheming its false Gods; (122-123)

"And they [Egyptians] made their [Jews] life bitter with hard works in clay and brick, and with all manner of service wherewith they were overcharged in the works of the earth" (Ex. 1.14).

These two lines must be taken in conjunction with the one preceding. Mary is a balance between the abstract Christ of the true religion and the idolatry of one form or another which men are prone to fall into.

Peace-beaming Star, by which shall come enticed, (124)

The star which led the wise men from the East is appropriated to Mary as a symbol of her guidance of men (Mt. ii.9).

Bush aye with Him as He with thee on fire! (132)

"And the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush; and he saw that the bush was on fire and was not burnt (Ex. iii.2).

Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips,
Ere the world was, with absolute delight
His Infinite reposed in thy Finite; (137-139)

The poet appears to be alluding to the fact that the liturgy uses the "Wisdom" books to praise Mary. The allusion must not be extended too much. Nevertheless, the following lines from Proverbs are pertinent:

"... I was with him forming all things; and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times; Playing in the world. And my delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii.30-31).

Such a long catalogue speaks for itself. The allusions must be judged to enrich the ideas of the poem by giving them a context. From this context, as a result, the reader is able to perceive not only the bare concept or gist but also, by implication and connotation, everything that has been said in the literature alluded to. This "fattened" or enriched perception serves to amplify the emotional quality of the poem.

A second primarily intellectual device which Patmore employs here, as in the Psyche poem, is paradox or contrast. In the Psyche poem the theme itself had a paradoxical element, and the same judgment can be made for the Purchase
poem. The Blessed Virgin is most human but at the same time she most closely approaches the divine, as far as the merely human can. She is therefore a meeting point for opposing characteristics. The following list includes most of the paradox or contrast, whether obvious or hidden.

With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy (9)

"Toys" in the second part of the introductory story is ironical. It shows by disdain the intrinsic vanity of the desires enumerated in the tenth verse.11

Whom the Time's scorn has saved from its respect (15)

The "scorn," i.e., the hate, something evil, saves, i.e., does something beneficial.

My Mother and God's; Fountain of miracle! (20)

Simple juxtaposition to stress the incongruity of this truth.

The Heavens themselves decree that, as it were,
They will be weak. (34-35)

Heaven, which usually symbolizes power, will act as if it were powerless when it comes to answering Mary's requests --- powerless in that it will not be able to refuse her.

Thou Speaker of all wisdom in a Word (36)

The contrast is between the totality of wisdom and its having been expressed in one word (Fiat).

Vast nothingness of Self, fair female Twin
Of Fulness, sucking all God's glory in! (58-59)

In the words underlined there is antithesis. In reality, however, both ideas are realized in the same subject, in Mary herself.

11In "Toys," (Poem X, Book I of the Eros sequence) Patmore classifies our human endeavors and inordinate actions with the same figure but not with the same degree of irony.
Ah, Mistress mine,
To nothing I have added only sin, (60-61)

The poet expresses his own unworthiness by a paradoxical mathematical formula.

Life's cradle and death's tomb! (64)
"Cradle" and "tomb," beginning and end, are contrasted.

To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and Brother
Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet Mother; (86-87)

Each series of nouns is made up of words which are mutually exclusive, if not strictly contrary. Yet all are predicated — in their series — of the same subject.

Mildness, whom God obeys ... (89)

Men do not usually associate "mildness" with the authority that commands obedience.

Who felt for thee
Such rapture of refusal that no kiss (95-96)

"Rapture" is normally not linked to "denial" or "refusal,"

Bright Blush, that sav'st our shame from shamelessness; (107)

Mary's sense of sin is so profound that she has preserved a wholesome sense of sin in man himself who without Mary would probably lose even the sense of sin along with sinlessness.

Suppliant Omnipotence; best to the worst; (120)

The two polysyllabic words signify concepts which are not commonly joined. The two monosyllabic words express the contrary degrees of the same adjective.

Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ (121)

(This line has already been treated on page 70.) The paradoxical intent is so apparent here that no comment is needed.

Unto thy Babe's small feet,
The Mighty, wand'ring disemparadised ... (126-127)

"Babe" is opposed to "Mighty."
Desire of Him whom all things else desire! (131)

Another clear case of paradox. Mere comprehension of the verse gives the contrast.

Ere the world was, with absolute delight
His Infinite reposed in thy Finite; (139)

That which is without limit (in one sense) reposes in, i.e., is limited by the limited.

In season due, on His sweet-fearful bed, (143)

Juxtaposing of two words which taken separately connote contrary notions.

Thou underwent' at the ceremony of death;
And, now, Queen-Wife,
Sitt'st at the right hand of the Lord of Life, (149-151)

A sign of death here emphasizes an entrance into a glorious life.

Since no one part of the poem is developed at length, none of the paradoxes or antitheses are developed at length.

Despite the number of contrasting elements in "The Child's Purchase," the device intrudes less into the reader's apprehension and appreciation of the poem than does the same general device in "Psyche's Discontent." This can be safely said even though there are very obvious attempts at paradox in the Purchase poem. Perhaps one reason for the reader's awareness of the contrast is the general superiority of the secondary imagery in the present poem when this imagery is compared to that in "Psyche's Discontent." Since the pictures in "The Child's Purchase" come alive more frequently, they tend to push the reader's consciousness of the paradox and contrast into the background.

What are some examples of this imagery which verify the claim just made? Actually, any number of lines would serve as proof because there are quotable
sections throughout the poem where idea, phrasing, and image blend excellently.
In addition to these, however, and independently of them, there are short phrases here and there which carry a sparkle even outside of context. Thus, for instance, "mouth's bliss" (12) of the introductory parable. Here it means "kiss," with which it rhymes. In line twenty eight, the "rejoicing wind" is fresh, appealing to the ear and to the sense of touch. "Voiceless blue" of verse forty four causes one to pause and think. "World's varying view," "thunder-going chorus," and "sky-Powers" do not depend on context for a certain vigor and palpable vitality (49-50). "Sweetest-savour'd flowers" (52) has a richness, dignity, and, at the same time, a homely charm. "Milk-sweet Mother" (87) is used in a restrained way and therefore does not cloy, as it could. "Bright blush" (107) is effective, perhaps because of the alliteration and despite its seeming triteness. "Abstract Christ" (121) is clever if a little harsh. The verse following with "Egypt's brick-kilns" is even better. "Peace-beaming Star" (124) and "unborn laughter" (137) are both Scriptural in origin but bespeak an individuality in handling.

Some of the metaphors and similes, although they are commonplace in themselves, take on force and dignity from the context where they are aided by the phrasing, the idea, or the alliteration. Thus

Making each phrase for love and for delight
Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night. (30-31)

Admittedly, "Twinkle like Sirius" is not original. In the lines quoted, nevertheless, it is felicitous. The phrasing and the rhythm save the image, and, in fact, make it vivid. Another instance of some other aspect of the poem helping the imagery occurs in line ten which reads
With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy,
And scanning power and pleasure and renown . . . (9-10)

"Power and pleasure and renown" remind the reader of the prosaic diction and imagery which disturbed in "Psyché's Discontent." If a critic studies the words in the context of the entire introductory paragraph, however, he will not condemn this phrase of "The Child's Purchase" so quickly. The child

Devises blythe how he may spend it best,
Or on a horse, a bride-cake, or a crown, (3-4)

Then the poet himself is presented with a "coin" and, given his choice, scans

... power and pleasure and renown

The adult's quest, plainly put, parallels the child's search for something on which to spend his coin: horse, symbol of prestige and power in Victorian England; bride-cake, symbol of marriage, embodiment of pleasure; a crown, the symbol of excellence or renown in government or human endeavor. Consequently, the seemingly dull nouns of verse ten have quite a satisfying effect. In a similar way the rather weak phrase "golden coin" (2) is balanced by "golden speech" (9). The balance offsets the damage caused by the banality.

Despite this explanation, Patmore's previously noted tendency to employ weak imagery appears again in "The Child's Purchase." Thus

frosty night (31)

---

12"Horse" as a symbol of prestige forces the critic back into the nineteenth century and away from an interpretation that tries to follow the "text-in-itself" procedure. Since the period is so close and the case in point is not occult and since the parallel is compelling in the other nouns, such an interpretation does not seem to be a flagrant violation of principles.
These phrases lack vitality. The paucity of such phrases in a poem of so many lines, however, keeps this particular weakness from being so acute as it was in the Psyche poem.

Occasionally, Patmore's proneness for the formally intellectual leaves the poem with an accurate but flat verse.

Sweet Girlhood without guile,
The extreme of God's creative energy; (103-104)

"Extreme" is a good analogous term, but it does not picture much. A more notable and more damaging instance of prosaic expression occurs in the last four lines of the poem. Here the defect is doubly inopportune since the verses preceding these have a moving musical quality.

Vainly, till now, my pray'rs would thee compel
To fire my verse with thy shy fame, too long
Shunning world-blazon of well-ponder'd song;
But doubtful smiles, at last, 'mid thy denial lurk;
From which I spell,
'Humility and greatness grace the task
Which he who does it deems impossible!' (163-169)

Despite these examples, flatness does not pervade the poem; the claim that the imagery enhances the poem can still be verified.

Discussion of the imagery of the poem should not be concluded until some
clarification of the more difficult metaphors has been made. In line forty nine

Key-note and stop
Of the thunder-going chorus of sky-Powers (49-50)

"key-note" is best taken as the note which tunes the chorus of sky-powers, i.e.,
angels. "Stop" is best taken as the knob of that lever of the organ by which
special tones are put in or taken out. Thus Mary's holiness is the occasion
and the lever, i.e., the signal, for angelic rejoicing. A second difficulty
arises in verses seventy nine and following where our Lady is called

Prism whereby
Alone we see
Heaven's light in its triplicity; (79-81)

The metaphor is built on the prism's quality as a refractor of light. Mary's
purity of soul is so great that her goodness by its very strength brings man
into some kind of contact with the Godhead, thereby enabling him to know more
about the Trinity by studying Mary's relation to the three divine persons.
Father Connolly explains the lines this way: "White light containing the three
primary colors is a particularly appropriate symbol of the Trinity. It is
broken up, as it were, and made visible in Mary in whom we see reflected the
power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son and the goodness of the Holy
Ghost."

An image which follows immediately after the figure of the prism is even

---


14 Connolly, p. 292; for Patmore's reference to the image in question, see
The Rod, the Root and the Flower, "Homo," para. XX, p. 125.
more difficult to grasp.

Rainbow complex
In bright distinction of all beams of sex,
Shining for aye
In the simultaneous sig. (32-35)

The "rainbow" alludes to the bow set in the clouds by God after the deluge as the sign of His covenant with Noah (Ex. ix.15-17). In the poem, however, the word is best understood as a general guarantee of some sort of union of friendship between God and man. If this interpretation is allowed, then the rainbow image can be applied to Mary in the sense that Mary herself is a guarantee that man's sanctification will take place. Moreover, the Virgin is a bow in which there are no beams of color denoting sex. This is Patmore's way of saying that in Mary the active element in man, i.e., the masculine element, and the passive element, i.e., the feminine are so united that the active-passive duality no longer prevails in her. (This explanation precludes any physiological reference, of course.) In other words, the synthesis of the masculine and feminine elements of man's psychological make-up is so achieved in Mary that she is not vir or mulier but homo. She and Christ are morally one, and as the model of this mystical union she will shine for all eternity.15

The techniques of "The Child's Purchase" are basically the same as those of the other poem studied and of the other poems in the Eros sequence. An irregular rhyme scheme blends with the alliteration and the phrasing to insure

15Connolly, p. 233; Patmore has an essay entitled "The Bow Set in the Cloud" in which he interprets the "bow" of sacred scripture as a guarantee of the vision of God Himself. Religio Poetae, "The Bow Set in the Cloud," pp. 51-57.
an individuality for the poem. It is true that the imagery of the Purchase poem sometimes forces the technical aspects into the background. These aspects, nevertheless, are necessary to the structure of the poem. Without the distinctive touch of its alliteration and phrasing, the poem would fail. With them and by means of them, the thought and imagery have combined, as J. C. Reid observes, to create a "fusion of intelligence and sensibility."

As a means of analyzing this "fusion" the meter, diction, alliteration and assonance, rhyme, and phrasing will be discussed in the following pages.

The metrical pattern of the poem, like that of the Psyche poem, is basically iambic -- traditional terminology being employed once more. Trochaic, spondaic, and even dactylic feet also appear:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Grant me the steady heat} & : \: - \: - \: | \: \cdot \: - \\
\text{Of thought wise, splendid, sweet,} & : \: - \: - \: | \: | \: - \\
\text{Urged by the great rejoicing wind that rings} & : \: - \: - \: | \: - \\
\text{With draught of unseen wings,} & : \: - \: - \: | \: - \: - \\
\text{Making each phrase, for love and for delight,} & : \: - \: - \: | \: - \: - \\
\text{Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night!} & (26-31)
\end{align*}
\]

The refrain, \textit{Ora pro me}, is made up of two feet, a trochee and an iamb. The shortest lines have one foot, two syllables; the longest verse has seven feet, all iambic:

\begin{align*}
\text{And thou, in whom are gather'd up the ends of everything!} & (141)
\end{align*}

Since the analysis of meter in "Psyche's Discontent" hinted that line length

\[16\textit{Reid, p. 300.}\]
is determined not by merely metrical requirements but by the desire to emphasize or to catch a certain rhyme, it will not be necessary to say anything more about meter as such.

Patmorean diction was never able to get beyond its Victorian boundaries although his ideas and imagery frequently did. Thus, while "The Child's Purchase" fails in the matter of word choice less often than many other poems of the sequence, the penchant for the polysyllabic word is still annoyingly evident. Patmore will be abstract when the concrete would be more apt.

And thee, in his exceeding glad descending meant (55)

Bright blush, that sav'st our shame from shamelessness; (107)

Suppliant Omnipotence; best to the worst; (120)

The poorest line in the entire poem suffers from faulty word choice and an over-abundance of "s" sounds.

The world's sad aspirations' one Success; (106)

If the reader wants to speak the words of this verse properly, he has to sacrifice understanding; in interpreting the lines orally, his pronunciation will become entangled on the word "aspirations." On a few occasions, Patmore's words are from the collection of over-worked "poetic" words. Thus,

No more
Than Man, in Youth's high spousal-tide . . (70)

Wrought for our boon what Eve's did for our bale; (147)

"Spousal-tide" and "boon" and "bale" ennervate and soften the lines in which they appear.

These failings in diction, however, are more by way of exception in "The Child's Purchase" than they are typical of the whole poem. For a poem of
169 lines, the number of defects is not so large as to constitute a fundamental weakness. In actual fact, there are strong, fresh phrases that balance the shortcomings well. For the most part, such phrases have already been noticed in the section on imagery. Instances in which words more or less colorless in themselves have come alive because of phrasing or alliteration have been shown already and will be further shown in the following pages. 17

Patmore alliterated because he wanted smoothness and finish in his verses and he thought that alliteration was the necessary means; yet he rarely goes to excess. "The Child's Purchase" is no exception. Alliteration is utilized extensively but not heavily, and it is used for the same purposes observed in "Psyche's Discontent": to unite phrases, to euphonize, and to heighten the effect of run-on lines.

The poem's significant alliteration has been underscored in the typed text. The following lines are quoted because they are especially impressive.

0. Silence full of wonders
More than by Moses in the Mount were heard
More "thunder" uttered by the seven thunders; (41-43)

Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd flowers (52)

The "m" alliteration of the first example dignifies and solemnizes the comparison. The "s" sound of the second example is not confined to the alliteration itself but permeates the verse making its sound complement the image.

Alliteration near the end of one line and at the beginning of the next one

17 See above, p. 75.
appears eight times in run-on lines. It will be remembered from the study of "Psyche's Discontent" that this carrying-over of alliteration helped Patmore achieve a "rocking" effect in run-on lines. The run-on thrusts the reader forward; the alliteration tends to cast him back to the preceding line. Some examples are

Essential drop
Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd flowers (51-52)

And Man's new days
Made of His deeds the adorning accident! (56-57)

No more
Than Man, in Youth's high spousal-tide (69-70)

Spurning the safe, ingratiant courtesy
Of suing Him by thee; (114-115)

In the last pair of verses, alliteration strictly taken is not so close; but the "s" sounds in the last syllable of line 114 carry the alliteration from the beginning of line 114 to line 115.

The lesser kind of alliteration mentioned in the preceding paragraph provides some of the best lines in the poem a "fibre" or substance that makes such verses a delight to speak aloud.

Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips (137)

Rock'd by an earth quake, curtain'd with eclipse (144)

The hard sounds of line 144 are a suitable complement to the image of the first part of the line.

Assonance plays a lesser role than alliteration in "The Child's Purchase." When it is used, its function is to balance and unify. There is notable assonance in two lines quoted above as examples of alliteration:
More than by Moses in the Mount were heard
More than were utter'd by the Seven Thunders; (42-43)

A second example is

Peace-beaming Star, by which shall come enticed, (124)

The following lines combine assonance, alliteration, and some third quality for polish.

Aid thou thine own dear fame, thou only Fair, (32)

Here the "third quality" is the repetition of the various "o" sounds. The following poetic paragraph uses much assonance, loose alliteration, and balanced phrasing to achieve its often-quoted success.

Grant me the steady heat
Of thought wise, splendid, sweet,
Urged by the great, rejoicing wind that rings
With draught of unseen wings,
Making each phrase, for Love and for delight,
Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night! (26-31)

Since the rhyme scheme of the Purchase poem has the same general characteristics as that of "Psyche's Discontent," there is no necessity to present here another chart. It suffices to note that the couplet of two continuous rhyming lines occurs thirty-eight times. This means that 76 of the 166 verses of the poem are rhymed in pairs. The remainder of the poem falls into quatrains which usually rhyme according to the pattern \(a_b\ a_b\). Couplets predominate in second part of the poem; the quatrain, in the first part (as in the Psyche poem). A variation which combines the couplet and the quatrain takes the form \(a_b\ b\ a\). This latter pattern allows the couplet to remain the basic rhyme even when a quatrain form is followed.

Neither in His great Deed nor on His throne --
O, folly of Love, the intense
Last culmination of Intelligence, --
Him seem'd it good that God should be alone! (133-136)
Rhymes are "recalled" in the present poem as they were in "Psyche's Discontent." An extreme instance of this begins in verse 137 which reads:

Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips.

The rhyming mate for this line does not appear for eight lines, and then in a completely new "paragraph" or thought section of the poem:

Rock'd by an earthquake, curtain'd with eclipse (144)

For the most part, however, Patmore follows his own principle of recall more closely by establishing the rhyme in an ordinary way and then, for the sake of unity, recalling the same rhyme a few lines later. The most effective use of such recall is in the introductory story of the coin, where the rhyming lines:

Not liking altogether that nor this
He gives it back for nothing but a kiss (6-7)

are echoed at the end of the story by the short verse:

For her mouth's bliss, (12)

Similarly, lines 42 to 44:

O, Silence full of wonders
More than by Moses in the Mount were heard
More than were uttered by the Seven Thunders;

are recalled by the rhyme of line 46:

And in its holy heart the sense of all things ponders!

Of the thirty-eight couplets, sixteen are formed from verses which run-on.

For example,

Endow'd so I
With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy (8-9)

Shining for aye
In the simultaneous sky (84-85)

Since the run-on lines, considerations of rhyme omitted, accelerate the
movement of the poem and since rhyme tends to impart a feeling of regularity, the two factors, i.e., the rhyme and the run-on lines, can work against one another, contributing a "rocking" effect which is very much like the effect of the run-on lines when they are checked by alliteration. A feeling of both freedom and regularity is thereby gained. 18

Some other rhyme patterns merit attention. In verses 49-52, for instance, perfectly balanced phrasing combines with the rhyme scheme to form a pair of fine metaphors.

Key-note and stop
Of the thunder-going chorus of sky-Powers;
Essential drop
Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd flowers,

The short lines are noun phrases; the long lines are qualifying phrases. The interlocking rhyme of the similar phrases stresses their similarity and at the same time accentuates the short phrases. Another interesting rhyme occurs in the sentence containing the famous words "abstract Christ." Unfortunately, the rhyme has been overshadowed by that particular image; for careful reading shows a decided onomatopoeic effect.

Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ
And Egypt's brick-kilns, where the lost crowd plods,
Blaspheming its false Gods; (121-123)

The "o" and the "d" sounds fall heavily like the footsteps of men who move listlessly under some heavy burden. The "o" is made even heavier by the vowel repetition of "lost crowd plods."

The final technical consideration is phrasing, an aspect which actually

---

18 The only unrhymed line in the poem is verse 93; an odd occurrence.
includes within itself all that has been discussed under the title of "techniques." Thus considered, phrasing is really the building block of poetic structure. Not even the idea of a poem eludes the poem's phrasing because the latter embodies the former. Phrase analysis, consequently, comes closer than any other particularized study, e.g., alliteration, to a study of the poem as a unit, as an organic whole. In other words, phrase study of a poem initiates the return of the so-called "parts" or "characteristics" or "devices" to their original context where they function as organic parts of a complex whole.

The introductory story of the child's purchase presents an opportunity for the examination of at least one section of the poem as a unit.

As a young child, whose mother, for a jest,
To his own use a golden coin flings down,
Devises blythe how he may spend it best,
Or on a horse, a bride-cake, or a crown,
Till, wearied with his quest,
Nor liking altogether that nor this,
He gives it back for nothing but a kiss,
Endow'd so I
With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy,
And scanning power and pleasure and renown,
Till each in turn, with looking at, looks vain,
For her mouth's bliss,
To her who gave it give I it again. (1-13)

The scheme of the parable is tight; there is no extra word, no delay. The entire incident and its application are put in one sentence -- with no full stops. Only the middle line ("Endow'd so I") is run-on, that is true; but the sense of the lines keeps the reader plunging ahead. Actually the run-on line in this instance demands a pause in recitation because of its position and shortness since it is the transition point where the mind prepares to link the child's experience with the poet's. The periodic development of both the child's
purchase and the poet's decision dignifies the lines and balances the two parts against one another. In this periodic structure, the main action of the first seven lines is reserved to verse seven. Similarly, the chief action of the second part of the opening is saved for verse thirteen. The sole significant weakness in the introduction is in line thirteen where the phrasing is clumsy and therefore confusing.

The same dignified phrasing together with interlocked rhyme makes the following paragraph so quotable and quoted.

Mother, who lead'st me still by unknown ways,
Giving the gifts I know not how to ask,
Bless thou the work
Which, done, redeems my many wasted days,
Makes white the murk,
And crowns the few which thou wilt not dispraise,
When clear my Songs of Lady's graces rang,
And little guess'd I 'twas of thee I sang! (155-162)

The most important phrase, "Bless thou the work," is clipped short, not to be passed over more quickly but to allow for delay. The series of adjectival clauses then amplifies the "work"; and then the final line of the section returns in thought to the first line, closing the section.

Synthesis

Synthesizing a poem is to poetic appreciation what conducting a symphony is to music. The conductor must know each theme, the function of each instrument, the subordination and heightening to be sought. In a word, he must go through the operation of putting the musical composition back together after the practices have worked on this theme and that movement. The conductor must re-compose the work by restoring the symphony's wholeness; and the critic of
poetry must do the same. The poem has to be torn apart, the "movements" examined, the "themes" compared. The latter work has already been done on "The Child's Purchase." Now it must be brought together again. The technique, the imagery, and the thought content must be returned to their proper places in the "score."

This reconstructing after analysis need not be performed by a process of mere mathematical addition. "The Child's Purchase" can actually be reunited in the reader's mind by comparing it to a litany. J. C. Reid speaks of the "magnificent litany which is the core of the poem." In what way is the poem really like a litany; in what way is it different from a litany?

The most obvious similarity is the refrain that Patmore has made use of, Ora pro me. This is an explicit indication that in his own mind at least the poet is aware of the poem's litany character. A second correspondence is the very construction of the poem. All litanies, to the divinity or to creatures, combine a variety of titles by which the person supplicated is invoked. The repetition of the same title or mere use of the person's name would be depressing both ascetically and aesthetically. That there is such a varied cataloguing of titles is too apparent to need comment. Thirdly, a litany is a prayer; so is "The Child's Purchase."

When Reid was quoted above to the effect that he classified the poem as a litany, he was actually speaking explicitly of the section which begins at line 103 and continues until verse 154. In this "core" of the poem, the affinity to a litany is most marked. The stream of titles and the minimum

19 Reid, p. 300.
amount of personal comment approximate the general characteristics of a liturgi-
cal litany.

The dissimilarities between a litany and "The Child's Purchase" force the reader to appreciate more clearly the structure and purpose of the latter. First, a litany that is liturgically acceptable will be much more restrained than even Patmore's heavily thought-directed poem. Litanies, therefore, never do anything more than give the title, e.g., *Rosa Mystica*, under which the subject of the litany is to be addressed. Any explicit effort to strive for emotional overtones is omitted. This does not say that such emotional overtones are not present. The point is that these overtones or emotional effects are not sought by verbal amplification and by undisguised intent. In Patmore's poem, on the other hand, everything is ordered to an emotionalized concept of the Blessed Virgin as the perfect recipient of God's love. Therefore, editorializing is consonant with the intention of the poem. Thus, in the section from line 89 to 102, which speaks of St. Joseph, Mary is not called upon only as the spouse of St. Joseph. Instead there is a rather complete explanation of Joseph's relation to Mary, his own glory, and the virginal but perfect happiness of their marriage. The group of verses dealing with the "Magnificat" (beginning at line 40) discloses the same conscious development by way of specific discussion.

This dissimilarity can be stated in another way. Litanies imply a set formula for all their invocations. "The Child's Purchase" differs from this norm because the poet by his own discretion comments on or makes judgments about the images or ideas which he is presenting. Consequently, in lines 110 to 115 Patmore elaborates the notion inherent in a preceding line which reads:
Ham of God's robe, which all who touch are heal'd; (110)
by sarcastically passing a judgment on those who refuse to avail themselves of Mary's intercession:

To which the outside Mary honour yield
With a reward and grace
Unguess'd by the unwash'd boor that hails Him to His face,
Spurning the safe, ingratiating courtesy
Of suing Him by thee; (111-115)

Or in lines 140 to 141, Patmore comments on the concept which he has enunciated in the preceding line:

His Infinite reposed in thy Finite;
Well-matched: He, universal being's Spring,
And thou, in whom are gather'd up the ends of everything! (139-141)

Closely connected with the foregoing disparity is another one, the presence of the personal element in "The Child's Purchase." A liturgical litany, of course, never descends to the personal, i.e., to the purely personal. Patmore's poem does. In fact, some of its most effective parts are those which are most individual in their character:

(Ah, Mistress mine,
To nothing I have added only sin,
And yet would shine!) (60-62)

Mother, who lead'st me still by unknown ways (155)

When J. C. Reid compared the Purchase poem to a litany, he also offered this evaluation of it. "The 'rinsed and wrung' language of this ode, its dignity and its fusion of intelligence and sensibility make it a great religious poem, sincere, humble, yet full of daring insights."20 Reid's

20Reid, p. 300; also, see above, p. 80.
objectivity merits thoughtful consideration for his praise of any work. An elaboration of his statement will, therefore, be the gist of the concluding remarks on "The Child's Purchase."

Poetically or technically speaking, the phrase "fusion of sensibility and intelligence" is most important in any final critique of a poem by Patmore for the simple reason that the absence of such a fusion has been considered this poet's basic defect by such perceiving critics as Hopkins, Herbert Read, and J. C. Reid himself.21 It was precisely this accusation that was laid against "Psyche's Discontent." When Reid, then, cites this fusion of intelligence and sensibility as a strong point of the poem, it must be significant.

How does this wedding of the two qualities come about? This is the question that comes to mind immediately. In answer, the following points can be adduced. First, the intelligence, i.e., the concept, the idea, has already been treated. The Virgin's dignity and her position as God's most beloved and most perfect creature, the perfect spouse for God and for Christ are the leading notions in the marriage symbolism which the Eros sequence formulates. In the Purchase poem, these ideas are rigorously put forth, clearly stated or implied, no matter how novel or unfamiliar they may seem in themselves or to modern men. Secondly, as far as poetic endeavor is concerned, the structure which conveys these concepts is more than equal to the task. The contrast and paradox, for instance, bring a certain freshness to the purely intellectual content of the poem. Moreover, the imaginal quality of the poem is strong.

much stronger, for example, than the secondary imagery of the Psyche poem. The vocabulary, too, is more vivid and more gripping. Since both of these topics have been taken up in their proper places in the analysis of the poem, they will not be repeated here; but only a little recollection is required to convince the reader that the stronger and more definite imagery of the Purchase poem focuses more attention on the emotional coloring of what is admittedly mind-centered matter. The vocabulary, too, comparatively free as it is of the affectation that hinders the effect of the Psyche poem, verifies Reid's claim for the "sincerity" of "The Child's Purchase." When the lively imagery and the more direct vocabulary join with Patmore's polished alliteration, his generally skillful phrasing, and his striking use of paradox and contrast, a poem of a high order results. Finally, it is not easing out of a problem to say that such daring verses as

For her mouth's bliss (12)
Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ (121)
Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips (137)

more than compensate for the few failings in imagery, diction, and phrasing.

This fusion of intelligence and sensibility, moreover, constitutes the true basis for the genuine emotional response that this poem prompts. Enough has been set forth about the imagery to show that there is a definite emotional appeal in the poem. It arises organically from the imagery and the diction and from the cumulative presentation of the Virgin's titles, as well as from the general liturgical and biblical references. Still another factor contributing to the emotional appeal is the balanced blending of the personal and the objective. This balance itself, however, results from the successful fusing of the idea of
the poem and the concretizing of that idea, because the titles of the Virgin
and the expressed experiencing of these titles unite to produce a two-pronged
attack on the reader's feelings.

In a word, "The Child's Purchase" is an excellent poem, not one of the
greatest ever written, not even the best that Patmore wrote, but still worthy of
high praise. As a climax to the Eros sequence it is fitting and sincere.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

According to its introduction, the intention of the present work is merely to investigate the strength and weakness, success or failure of two of Patmore's odes. This has now been done. Prefatory to any concluding remarks it must be remembered that all that has been noted about the two poems of the thesis cannot be applied to Patmore's other poetry; nor, strictly, can a portion of what has been said be applied to his other poetry, because no investigation of these other poems has been made and none has been intended. Moreover, it is not the intention of this thesis to use the two poems studied as points for generalizing about Patmore's work as a whole.

In the opinion of the author, two points worthy of brief comment have come to the fore in the explication of "Psyche's Discontent" and "The Child's Purchase." They are the paradox and contrast of the poems (the two qualities being considered as one) and the rhyme and alliteration.¹ Both of these characteristics have received considerable treatment in the body of the thesis; so nothing new will be presented here. J. C. Reid, among the critics, has especially stressed the importance of rhyme and alliteration in the Eros poems and has also made reference to the paradoxical language of all Patmore's

¹"New Critics" such as Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren would probably consider this paradox-contrast device as a form of irony.
poetry.2 As far as the present author knows, however, no one has yet verified exhaustively these judgments of Reid’s. To their verification, in a limited area, the present thesis now lays claim.

That paradox and contrast permeate the two poems is indisputable. Since the device is used unobtrusively, however, it is only after repeated readings that the quantity of paradox and contrast appears to be so great. When it is discovered, the quality of this paradox and contrast will occasionally be found to be only rhetorical, especially in "The Child's Purchase." This latter evaluation is surprising because for most people the Purchase poem is more enjoyable than the Psyche poem. "The Child's Purchase" itself, nevertheless, has some fine contrast in it; e.g., "Vast Nothingness of Self, fair female Twin / Of Fulness" (57-58). Speaking generally, however, one finds a better fusion of the paradox and contrast with the thought and imaginal fibre in the Psyche poem.

The second characteristic on which analysis has focused attention is the rhyme and alliteration. The point to be stressed here is that the rhyme and the alliteration get their value from their help in ordering the phrasing of the poems and supplying them with a rhythm and nearly tangible proportion. The rhyme and alliteration also help in fusing the thought, the imagery, and the diction of the poems into a whole. They do more than merely polish and embellish the work. Moreover, the serious defects of the poems are not from the rhyme or alliteration but from imagery and diction. Since they are tastefully and sincerely exploited, both rhyme and alliteration contribute to the

2Reid, Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore, pp. 277-279, 315-316.
"song" quality and readability of the poems -- a trait which lesser poetry does not possess and which better poetry sometimes loses in striving for better imagery or diction. The reader can most satisfactorily prove the beauty of the rhyme and alliteration by constantly re-reading the two poems. Slowly but surely then the rhyme, alliteration, and excellent phrasing will triumph over the wordiness and the occasional cloying image.

The emphasis of this thesis has been almost painfully centered on the purely poetical, to the exclusion of source study or general evaluation of the poet. Even in the purely poetic field, however, this thesis has been rather "technical" to the exclusion of discussion of the poetic character of the concept or theme of the two poems. In the opinion of the author, such an approach had to be taken because no one appreciative of the Catholic mystical tradition would deny the beauty or sublimity of Patmore's conceptions, but critics have to ask about the poetic treatment of such conceptions. Despite some negative findings, Patmore's two odes bear scrutiny well. It is the hope of the author that studies of this type will do their part in making the reading public aware of Patmore's interesting and unique contribution to Catholic and English letters.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES


II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS DEALING WITH PATMORE


B. ARTICLES DEALING WITH PATMORE


Downing, Eleanor A. "Patmore's Philosophy of Love":
(1) "The Unknown Eros," Thought, Fordham University Quarterly, VIII (March 1934), 627-641.
(2) "The Unknown Eros," Thought, IX (June 1934), 62-77.

Gardner, W. H. "The Achievement of Coventry Patmore":
(1) "The Early Poems," The Month, VII (February 1952), 69-78.

Patmore, Derek. "Three Poets Discuss New Verse Forms," The Month, VI (August 1951), 69-78.

C. WORKS CONSULTED IN CONNECTION WITH EXPLICATION DE TEXTE


The Explicator. Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1942-.


APPENDIX I

THE METRICS OF THE ODES

Not one of the leading Patmorean scholars has as yet been able to analyze the metrics of the Eros sequence in accord with Patmore's own theory of prosody. Consequently, this thesis has not attempted what seems to be impossible. The aim of this appendix, therefore, will be limited to offering a brief explanation of the general characteristics of Patmore's prosody and Frederick Page's attempted scansion of some of his lines.

Patmore wrote in the "irregular ode" form, the form used by Milton, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. By this is meant that there is no regular form adhered to within the stanza (if there are stanzas) and no regular repetition of stanzas. The obvious variation which Patmore introduced was this: he did not indent the short verses of his odes as is commonly done; e.g., Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality." Patmore writes: "... all have tried to represent the varying pauses, and then prepare the ear for them, by printing the lines affected with catalexis with shorter or longer blank spaces at the beginning; a precaution which seems to me to be unnecessary; for, if the feeling justifies the metre, the ear will take naturally to its variation; but if there is not sufficient motive power of passionate thought, no typographical aids will
make anything of this sort of verse but metrical nonsense ... Given this theory, it is not difficult to understand why the traditional indentation was abandoned.

The preceding paragraph revealed nothing startlingly different; but obscurities do rise when one tries to apply Patmore's theory of meter to his own odes. For Patmore held that time is the important factor in English verse, not syllable stress. Iota or stress merely measures the time or, in other words, acts like the bar in a measure of music. In any given poem, all the lines will take the same time to pronounce, either in sounding or in pausing. Thus a long line of ten syllables should occupy no more time than one of two syllables when the pauses of the latter are taken into consideration. Moreover, the number of syllables in a line must always be divisible by four, since the dipode (unit of four syllables) is also basic to English verse. If the number of syllables is not divisible by four, enough pauses must be added to the line to get a quantity of syllables and pauses divisible by four. Thus, the so-called iambic pentameter will be a trimeter, i.e., a line composed of three units of four syllables, in which the ten syllables are supplemented by a pause of two syllables' length.


2 Cf. in this regard Sidney Lanier, The Science of English Verse (New York, 1893), pp. 39-40, 62-63, 97-117. Lanier's work is the classic treatment of the "time" theory in English prosody. It was published first in 1880. Patmore first published his essay on metrics in 1857 (under the title "English Metrical Critics"; see Reid, p. 355). Lanier, however, does not refer to Patmore. Lanier held that duration is the primary characteristic of rhythm; it is a matter of silence as well as of sound. Accent constitutes "secondary rhythm."

3 Reid, p. 227; Page, p. 151.
There is no need to go farther into the theory. Its novelty becomes a real problem when one applies it to Patmore’s own odes. In fact, it seems that it cannot be done. Frederick Page attempted a scansion of part of one of the odes. (His effort is reproduced at the end of this appendix.) He had to conclude with these words, however: “Even of Patmore’s lovers, some have found his practice of the ‘irregular ode’ questionable, and his theory of it difficult. I had supposed I understood it, but now I ask myself more questions than I can answer. I print, however, what I had written, and leave it for discussion.”  

J. C. Reid has agreed with Page to the extent that he too sees questions. After a thorough examination of Patmore’s theory and Page’s study, he sums up by saying: “What the precise musical organization of Patmore’s odes is, appears to elude analysis as effectively as the choruses of Samson Agonistes have so far done.”

---

4 Page, p. 147.

5 Reid, p. 277.
Page's Scansion of a Passage from One of Patmore's Odes

In trying to apply the dipode theory to the scansion, Page employed the following code:

1. Each line is divided into groups of four syllables or groups having the time of four syllables.
2. A tonic sol-fa notation is used.
3. A dipode is represented thus:

```
\| / \| / \| / \|
```

4. The long vertical bars equal major accents; the slant bars, /, equal minor accents.
5. Empty spaces represent pauses. Prolongation of a syllable is represented by as many dashes, -, as are required.

Thy ruddiest blasing tor ːːːː /:
That I albeit a beggar by the For ːːː /:
Of the glad Palace of Virgilian ty ːː /
May gaze in and sing the pomp I see ːː /

'Tis there Love they keep thy fes ti- val ːː 6

---

6Page, pp. 168-170. The lines scanned are from "Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore," poem IX of Book Two, ll. 1-7.
The thesis submitted by Kevin E. Gallagher, S.J.,

has been read and approved by three members of the Department of

English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the

thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact

that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the

thesis is now given final approval with reference to content,

form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Oct. 5, 1959

Date

Signature of Advisor