COVENTRY PATMORE

Patmore, the poet of serene conjugal love, is not so much a mystic poet as a poet of the mystery of human love in its relationship to the divine.

Patmore, one of the most popular poets in the middle of the nineteenth century was a most neglected one at its end. Today his merits have begun to find a slow recognition once again.(1)

It surprises some that Patmore counted among his friends and admirers men of talent and culture such as Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. That such men should consider Patmore's work as a serious contribution to English poetry, Virginia Crawford writing in 1901 says, 'is one of the incomprehensible mysteries of criticism'. C.C. Abbott considers Patmore's poetry feeble and vulgar.(2) G.M. Hopkins, Patmore's relentless critic and friend says: '... for insight he beats all our living poets, his insight is really profound and he has an exquisite-ness, farfetchedness of imagery worthy of the best things of the Caroline age.'(3)

Recent studies by authors like Paul Claudel, Mario Praz and J.C. Reid seem to agree with Patmore's own opinion about his poetical achievement: "I have written little but it is all my best. I have never spoken when I had nothing to say nor spared time or labour to make my words true. I have respected posterity, and, should there be a posterity which cares for
A real difficulty in the way of Patmore's receiving rightful recognition could be a prejudice voiced by C.C. Abbott, that he aims at making the best of both worlds. The fact that he married twice after the death of his adored first wife, Emily Augusta, whom he presented, thinly veiled, as Honoria in his *The Angel in the House*, has perhaps something to do with such a prejudice. But though a work of art is based on a natural situation and "imitates" life, it is untramelled by the accidents of time and place in which it is conceived. It is unjust to expect that the private life of a poet should tally with the ideal he portrays in an idyll. Though a work of art should have at least a remote moral purpose, such a moral purpose need not be a direct reflection of the poet's own life. Even on this score, however, according to his own religious tenets, Patmore's private life was unexceptionable.

The real objection is not so obviously unreasonable. It takes the form of showing the Patmore presents love in normal married life as if it were truly divine love in the religious context. The answer to this objection will become clear as we proceed with our study.

When Patmore was thirty-nine his beloved first wife died. Possessing an exacting though loving temperament he found it hard to bring up his children. A pathetic aspect of his
widowhood is reflected in his well-known poem, *The Toys*.

The poem has the interesting quality of showing how religious association leads him to a poetic expression that has the solemnity of a scriptural parable. After describing the toys the boy had spread near by - 'a red-veined stone, a piece of glass abraded by the beach,' all trinkets gathered 'to comfort his sad heart,' Patmore concludes with words which in their sureness of religious sentiment, aptness of poetic expression and universality of application achieve a notable success.

This poem, however, is of a general nature. The difficulties seem to arise as soon as Patmore's mystical writings are considered. The argument seems to run somewhat like this: Only a mystic can indulge in mystical writings, and a much-married man is one who has not much self-control, and a man without self-control cannot be a mystic.

A man without self-control, no doubt, cannot be a mystic, if by mystic we understand a saintly person. 'One cannot fully possess God without fully possessing oneself.'(6) But a married man can possess self-control and be a mystic too according to the tenets of almost all major religions in the world.

The exemplar of married sanctity for a Catholic would be the case of Joseph and Mary. Patmore, much impressed by the ideal set by them, intended to compose a long poem but he could not proceed beyond the introductory piece, *A Child's Purchase*. The ideal he wanted to realise poetically proved beyond his power.
From this, of course, we cannot conclude that Patmore was a mystic. That he had possibly some mystical intuitions may be an interesting point to note but not relevant to the question at issue. A more fundamental question would be to ask if mystical poems could not be written by one who may not be himself a mystic.

Who a mystic is, is not easily decided, chiefly owing to the nebulous associations that the word mysticism evokes. As Silson says: 'Mysticism may be conceived in an endless variety of ways, some wide enough to embrace in their scope the vague poetical emotions of a Wordsworth or a Lamartiner, others leaving no room for anything save the rigorous terms of a St. Thomas Aquinas or a St. John of the Cross.' (7)

Yet, we must take a stand somewhere if the point is to be argued at all. It may be said that a mystic is one who has an experimental knowledge of God in the depth of his soul - variously called 'the ground of the soul', apex, synderesis, scintilla, luminous point, funklein - reaching beyond mere conceptual knowledge and aspiration. Beginning with meditative, active contemplation of God present at the centre of the soul, one passes on to passive contemplation and actual inner contact with God. Or, one may begin by communing with Nature and other persons and through them pass on to commune with God.

Poets and mystics who lean on the external world to ascend to God, commonly use Nature for a ladder. But a human
being in the external world could certainly serve as a better vehicle to take one to God, for God is certainly present more intimately in a human being than in 'thoughtless' Nature. It is Patmore's merit that he stressed the point that, where there is legitimate love and union of souls as in the case of wedded spouses, respectful communion can raise the soul to the contemplation and union with God. What begins in the exterior world gradually moves to the interior, or rather, the interior world of the spirit is inserted into the exterior.

There are several stages in this movement of the spirit. St. Thomas Aquinas, with whose works Patmore was familiar, mentions six. (8) A poet who aspires to write mystical verse may be expected to be acquainted at least with the lower stages leading to an intense awareness of God's presence in things, persons and events. For, without this minimum, he will not be really aware of what he is supposed to be writing about.

From a literary point of view, however, the actual degree of mystical attainment cannot be of primary concern. Artistic expression is at a remove from actual experience in life. This is especially true of mystical experience, since the higher it is, the farther removed is it from conscious mental realisation. When it comes to literary expression, even a mystic is like one who has had no experience except the joy of having known something that lingers as a fragrant wisp of 'Remembered Grace.'

Patmore, it is true, was not a mystic in the sense in which St. John of the Cross was. The latter comes down from a
higher plane of ineffable experience to a lower one of human expression in his writings. His awareness of the higher analogue was necessarily — he being a celibate — more vivid than the lower one of conjugal love about which his knowledge seems to be derived from the Song of Songs. On the other hand, Patmore has a greater awareness of the full implication of the lower analogue of conjugal love from which he rises to the higher one of divine love.

In either case, there is a human expression of divine realities. According to the Schoolmen, this may be done only analogically. This implies that a quality in a creature is predicated of God in an essentially different mode. Every pure perfection is posited in God, however different may be its mode of existence in God. In God Himself all perfections exist as a single reality.

Certain things said of God, however, can be taken only metaphorically, which is in fact a faint form of analogy. When in his Spousa Dei Patmore refers to God as the bridegroom and the soul as the bride, the relationship expressed between the soul and God is in the first place a pure metaphor since it implies several mixed qualities that cannot be predicated of God. And yet, in such a relationship there is the pure quality of love which can be truly but analogically applied to God. It is Scripture itself that calls God Love. Hence Patmore considers his comparison as more than mere metaphor.
Thus, both the mystic and the poet resort to analogy properly so called, or at least in its metaphorical form. The concern of a mystic, however, is the historical truth of his personal encounter with God. A poet takes the historical situation in himself or others for granted and is mainly concerned with the form of expression. He is, therefore, more likely to use rhetorical devices and metrical modulations to bring about the desired effect. This has been the case with Patmore. The fact that to an already difficult concept of Bride and Bridegroom as applied to the soul and God he adds the mythological concepts of Eros and Psyche and, for good measure, puts in a Pythoness, clearly indicates the Patmore has been deliberately aiming at poetic effect rather than at recording his personal mystical experiences.

This would also explain Patmore's use of 'a jesting humour' to which Hopkins took exception. The details given about the relationship between Psyche and Eros and the comment of the Pythoness are all so human as to risk the exclusion of the divine.

The Pythoness asks: 'But whence these wounds?
What demon thee enjoins
To scourge thy shoulders white
And tender loins!'

Psyche replies:  'Tis nothing, Mother.
Happiness at play
And speech of tenderness that no speech
   can say!'

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The Pythoness then teases:

'How learn'd thou art!

Twelve honeymoons profane has taught thy docile heart
Less than thine Eros, in a summer night!'
has no other poem treating wedded love in such an exclusive and exhaustive fashion.

Now, it must be noted that not only *The Angel in the House* but also *The Unknown Eros* primarily celebrates only wedded love. A unity of theme is thus established in all Patmore's writing.

*The Angel in the House*, with its sequel *The Victories of Love*, treats of love's beginning and maturing in the earlier stages of wedded life. The first book of *The Unknown Eros* deals mostly with the maturer aspects of domestic love, its purification, and the terrible pathos that emerges when the beloved dies. In the second book, the poet sees his beloved in heaven. The wedded love here appears in its utter purity; it is seen not only as the wedded love of a particular couple, but as a concrete analogue leading to the wedding of the soul with God. But the main point of reference and interest is human wedded love itself in its magnificence.

When Patmore compares human love with the divine his aim is to explain the mystery of human love. This is quite unlike what St. Bernard or St. John of the Cross do. *Their* aim is to explain the mystery of divine love by using a human comparison. A clear awareness of this fact will remove many puzzles in *The Unknown Eros*.

One such puzzle is the very title. Eros may stand for God or Christ; but, whether known or unknown, the erotic aspect
suggested by the name cannot be avoided. It pointedly draws our attention to such a suggestion. But, in fact, the poet is not concerned with the erotic aspect of divine love - such love does not exist in Christianity - but the divine aspect of wedded human love.

Another puzzle is the tone of the poem. Hopkins writes: 'This poem and the next two are such a new thing and belong to such new atmosphere that I feel it as dangerous to criticize them almost as the Canticles. What I feel least at my ease about is a certain jesting humour, which does not seem to me quite to hit the mark in this profoundly delicate matter.'

But if the main accent is on human love, the tone may not look so inappropriate. The problem, however, will remain in the form of the question: Why, then, does the poet drag in divine love at all?

He does it because he had an integrated view of life based on his religious perceptions. He was convinced that he had had a glimpse of the ineffable. He was sure that man's life on earth is not a closed-in system. Since religious experience walks just a step ahead of poetic experience, it is no wonder that these two merge in Patmore's poetic expression. The particular mode it assumed largely depends on the circumstances of his life.

When Coventry Patmore was a little boy, his father gave him no religious instruction. He rather tried to instil into
the small boy sentiments of atheistic humanism. When, therefore, on the occasion of a chance perusal of a devotional book Patmore felt that God revealed Himself to him 'more clearly than sun at noon day' - as he writes in his autobiography - it made a lasting impression. (10) Thereafter, his religious bent of mind steadily gained ground till the end of his life.

The next powerful experience that shaped Patmore's religious and poetic view of life came when he married Augusta Andrews in 1847. By all accounts, she seems to have been an extraordinary woman - cultured, sociable, patient and devout. Her attractive personality drew to the modest salon that Patmore kept in the northern suburbs of London, such great men as Ruskin, Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning and the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood.

With such a wife Coventry Patmore was perfectly happy and his life with her proved to be the greatest basic experience of his life, the more so that the mystery of wedded life took on the colouring of a religious experience. In a letter to her on January 31, 1848, he writes: '....the never-failing freshness and mystery of marriage is increased each year by the sum of all the love and joy which have arisen between us during its happy months. Nor does the sense of my total undesert take away anything from my happiness. It adds to it. I can compare the joy with which I remember that you honour me by your love to nothing except the joy with which I sometimes
The last sentence is significant. Already has the nucleus of Patmore's thought and vision taken shape. From saying wedded joy is similar to divine joy, to saying that divine joy is the goal of wedded joy, the transition is not difficult for one of Patmore's temperament. But as he lived on and pondered, the mystery of wedded love seemed to him to have deeper and deeper roots.

In 1893, when he had stopped writing poetry, three years before his death, he wrote in his prose work, *Religio Poetae*, 'Love is rooted deeper in the earth than any other passion and for that cause its head, like that of the tree lódrasil, soars higher into heaven.'(12)

For Patmore to say 'rooted in the earth' primarily implies wedded love. When it soars higher it is still linked with the root and even in its heavenly dimension of divine love it is based on the earthly. In this perspective, God may be unknown to many, but the unknown God is the unknown Eros.

When such an extraordinary wife as Emily died in 1862, it was bound to leave a profound impression on the poet. For six years he gave up writing poetry. But the theme of love never left his heart. His conversion to Catholicism in 1861 only strengthened his tendency to brood and meditate over the mystery of wedded love which then became all the more vivid as
an object of contemplation and of deep pathos. The poems that are based on the religious experience of this period not only show a new depth in religious feeling but are vibrant with a new vehemence of controlled poetic expression. *Amelia*, written in 1878, sixteen years after the death of his first wife, better expresses his wedded love in its depth of pathos than *The Angel in the House* with its idyllic calm and ideal joy.

"But the continuity of thought and feeling is kept up. Patmore has asserted that the theme in the earlier and later poems is basically the same. He maintained: 'The relationship of the soul to Christ as his betrothed wife is the key to the feeling with which prayer and love and honour should be offered to Him.' (13)

The same interpenetration of human love and religious sentiment is noticeable in the poems that occupy, as it were, the middle place between *The Angel in the House* and the second book of *The Unknown Eros*. *The Azalea, Departure* and *A Farewell* express the poet's intense sadness occasioned by the loss of his wife. *The Azalea* and *Departure* speak of the dark tunnel through which religious people must pass to come out bright and pure. Though the presence of the beloved is unmistakably indicated, it is again a question of religious metamorphosis of wedded love on its ascent towards the purer heights.

Whether Patmore really entered into the region of mystical experience before writing the more mystical *Odes* of the later
period, is not easily ascertained. But the year 1877, when *The Unknown Eros* was published, was one of profound religious experience for Patmore. He paid a visit to Lourdes in the same year. 'I knelt,' he writes, 'at the shrine by the River Gave, and rose without emotion or enthusiasm or unusual sense of devotion but with a tranquil sense that the prayer of thirty-five years had been granted.' (14)

What the prayer was we can only guess. But it is significant that some of the best Odes he wrote were published just at this time. Did he pray for the grace to understand the mystery of wedded love and to give adequate poetic expression to it? At any rate, it seems to do with spiritual insight and conviction. Thereafter, he was convinced that he had taken the right path in his mode of life and the choice of the theme with respect to his poetry.

The period of the Odes, which saw his last poetic outpouring, was accompanied also by a religious experience which he underwent, as it were vicariously.

The Lourdes apparition in 1858 profoundly affected the Catholic world. Patmore, thirty five at the time, was already attracted to Catholicism. He considered himself a seer of visions as a young boy. So the story of the little seer at Lourdes, Bernadette, could not but have impressed him with the idea of a possible communication between the visible and the invisible world.
The story of another visionary, Marie Lataste (1822–47) also made a profound impression on him. She was a simple girl who had visions of Christ who, she said, instructed her on profound religious truths. It is interesting to note that even G.M. Hopkins was influenced by her writings. According to Frederick Page, in *The Unknown Eros*, Psyche, Eros and the Pythoness stand for Lataste, Christ and Lataste's spiritual director. Though there is some aptness in this identification, the scope of Patmore's vision excludes such narrowing down of the field on which his imagination plays.

A case nearer to the poet's own heart is that of Emily, the namesake of and daughter by his first wife. It would appear that in the first Emily Patmore understood the devotion and dedication of Psyche towards Eros, or the soul towards Christ. He himself would assume the place of Christ towards the soul. On the other hand, in the person of his daughter Patmore would vicariously assume the feminine role, the role of Psyche towards Eros or of the soul towards Christ.

After the death of his first wife, Patmore himself brought up his daughter with care. She showed considerable poetic talent and a genuine religious bent of mind. She became a nun in the Society of the Holy Child Jesus and was considered a mystic by her fellow-religious. (15)

Our interest in these biographical details lies in the fact that the time taken for the composition of *The Unknown Eros*
almost parallels the duration of the life and death of the poet's daughter-mystic in the religious life.

In 1873, Emily entered the convent, situated at St. Leonards and among the Western suburbs of Hastings. Soon after her profession in 1875, Patmore shifted his residence to Hastings. There the poet resided, watching the encounter of the Unknown Eros and the Psyche in his daughter. Apparently, even nature and the environment of the place helped both the poet and his daughter. "The early mornings at St. Leonards are often of extraordinary beauty with fairy-like effects of sun and mist and the opalescent tints of the sea while the grim, ruin-crowned rock stands on guard over the splendour below." (16) The sea interpreted the moods of father as well as of daughter.

The buried military ruins of the place gave Patmore some of his memorable images in the Odes. The remains of a Roman Castle on the top of the hills reminded Patmore of all the Roman Catholics in England under the leadership of Cardinal Newman residing at Edgbaston:

'Lo, yonder, where our little English band,
With peace in heart and wrath in hand
Have dimly ta'en their stand,
Sweetly the light
Shines from the solitary peak of Edgbaston.'

(The standards).
For Patmore, the English political atmosphere formed part of his integrated view of life along with his religious and poetic perceptions. Hence the vehemence and jarring note of his political Odes. But he is true to himself and speaks from the heart. He is sure of being in the right and retires quietly to contemplate the world sitting on the seashore. *Magna est Veritas* presents the poet in this reflective mood.

Even more effectively is this mood suggested in *Wind and Wave*. It is a wonderful description of the slight breeze over the sea and the bursting of a brilliant morn. The breeze, slowly agitating the surface and then developing into a wind that whips up the waves into a roaring sea, symbolizes the agitation of the passions caused by a woman. There is also a suggestion of Aprodite’s birth over the foam, with overtones of the Blessed Virgin, and finally of the human spirit itself as the feminine element under divine influence. In an indirect but very suggestive manner, the Unknown Eros and Psyche are already implicitly present in this Ode.

That the woman of whom the Ode speaks falls within the framework of married love is hinted at the very beginning:

'The wedded light and heat
Winnowing the witless space.'

Then the words 'Is one found' refer to the ideal womanhood that each happily wedded man finds in his spouse. It already
anticipates the adored 'Margaret, Maud or Cecily' of *Spes Dei*.

The exact description of the waves breaking on the shores with its multiple significance is a triumph of poetic expression with respect to a human experience sublimated to a religious awareness.

At Hastings, the sea and the hills, indeed, provided images for Patmore's poetic expression. But, what is more vital, the spiritual odyssey of his daughter in the convent coloured the content of his poetic output. In fact, he sent his Odes of *The Unknown Eros* for her criticism.

He soon realised that his daughter was privileged to enter into the inner chamber of 'the Unknown Eros', while he could have but a glimpse from the outside. This confirms our view that Patmore had no personal experience of a mystical nature, except at the lower levels. He was not, however, a 'speculative mystic' in the sense in which J.C. Reid understands it. (17) He is a step ahead of Shelley and Wordsworth, Browning and Blake, reaching the very borderland between the world of natural poetry and supernatural mysticism.

His is love poetry, but the love concerned is one within the bounds of traditional morality taught by a venerable religious body to which he submitted himself by choice. When Eros, known for his erratic pranks and blind unreasonableness, is put under such a strait-jacket, one might expect the poet's scope would
be severely limited. On the contrary, Patmore played variations within this narrow scale with such virtuosity that his artistic vista opened out to the portals of eternity. Beginning with human love, he reached the sphere of divine love, and yet his formal approach was as poet and not as a mystic.

All this sets him apart as a poet. He expresses his awareness of this at the beginning of the Second Book of The Unknown Eros:

'What rumoured heavens are these
Which not a poet sings
O, Unknown Eros?'

The religious dimension of his new awareness is couched in mystic language:

'O, Unknown Eros, sire of awful bliss,
What portent and what Delphic word,
Such as in form of snake forbodes the bird
Is this?'

Though aware of his vocation to be the bard and priest of a new God, he is unable to visualise this God. It would appear that not to know the face of the new God is indeed a condition to be fulfilled in this service. In mystical language, this would be translated thus: The beautific vision is for the next world; here on earth, intimate union through faith is all that can be achieved.
Patmore's ambition in life was to attain the apex of legitimate wedded love. But its mystery lies precisely in the paradox that the apex is reached by renouncing the love as a supreme sacrifice. It is only when Emily died that he could suspect the mysterious heights of love. At its peak wedded love vanishes in mystic clouds. It is this enigma that the poet expresses through Eros' lips at the end of the first ode of the Second Book.

'There lies the crown
Which all thy longing cures.
Refuse it, Mortal, that it may be yours.'

As applied to the function of the poet who undertakes to serve Eros, these lines have the further connotation that only one who has experienced deep love and suffered its loss heroically in this world is qualified to sing its praise.

Trained in such a school of suffering and sacrifice and ready to sing he looked about for the perfect theme. He found that the marriage of the Blessed Virgin to be the one totally perfect subject for poetry, the reason being that in it he found 'perfect humanity verging upon but never entering the breathless region of Divinity.'(18) Since this theme, however, proved beyond his power, as stated before, he turned to the next best - his personal experience welded to that of his daughter.

He never forgets how far his own experience reaches. Where he cannot himself enter, he humbly acknowledges the fact
as in *Deliciae Sapientiae De Amore*:

'Love, light for me
Thy ruddiest blazing torch,
That I, albeit a beggar at thy Porch
Of the glad Palace of Virginity,
May gaze within, and sing the pomp I see;
For, crown'd with roses all,
'Tis there, O Love, they keep thy festival.'

That he does not include himself in the company within is not due to his not being a virgin. According to Patmore even normally wedded people are considered virgins with respect to heaven. He is here excluded from the palace company merely because he has not yet reached that high mystic state.

The Ode is actually a description of heaven which mystics of the first rank almost attain while still living on earth. Patmore describes this heaven as a wedding festival quite in keeping with scriptural symbolism.

"0, hear
Them singing clear
'Cor meum et caro mea' round the 'I am',
The Husband of the Heavens."

The 'I am' is God who is Love and husband of the souls in heaven. To this heavenly wedding earthly wedding tends. The apotheosis of the one into the other is what fascinates the poet.
Not only the soul but even the body has its share of union and joy with God.

The full wedding celebration is in heaven, but it begins already on earth. For this divine wedding every one who loves God is a virgin:

'Love makes the life to be
A fount of perpetual virginity.'

Consecrated virgins like his own daughter are already wedded to God. In many a cell they lie 'emparadised.'

It is likely that he had his daughter in mind when he wrote:

'Ye wedded few that honour, in sweet thought
And glittering will
So fresh from the garden gather still
The lily sacrificed.'

When his daughter died in July 1882, on the burial day Patmore stood at the grave with 'one tall white lily in his hand.' When others had thrown flowers, with an anguished look he too, threw the single lily and walked away to write poems no more.

Does this mean that Psyche stands for his daughter? Poetic expression, as a rule, cannot be so directly linked with particular factors in the poet's life. Yet it may be said that, among others, his daughter's was the greatest influence that
determined the content and tone of the odes.

He writes of mystic union as one who has watched another closely and in tones that remind one partly of St. John of the Cross and partly of his own domestic felicity. The Unknown Eros is so called not only because many do not know God as Love but even to the poet God as Love is unknown in total and immediate mystical experience. He is happy enough to be among the elect without claiming to be the elect of the elect.

It is now clear why Patmore pitched on such an extraordinary title for so exalted a subject. His general theme of song is true love in all its aspects. But one region of it is unknown to him by direct experience, though he can see it through the eyes of true mystics. All love, when genuine — whether human or divine — is wedded love. It is 'Known Eros' with respect to human wedded love; it is 'Unknown Eros' with respect to the divine. So The Angel in the House may be called The Known Eros, though it too has a direct reference to the heavenly wedding. The Unknown Eros refers to people leading heavenly lives, loving as angels do though their love of God has direct reference to earthly wedded love.

The tradition of courtly love in Patmore's Poetry.

Patmore was a man of aristocratic taste. Like his contemporaries, he had the habit of looking back to the Middle Ages for cultural sustenance. Even his religion goes back to the days when all England was Catholic. It is specially with
reference to his literary roots that he is closely connected with the courtly love of the Middle ages.

He may be considered a poet of courtly love, but with a difference. Courtly love had its origin in the cultural milieu of the Middle Ages and found its mythological expression in the tales of King Arthur and His Round Table. 'Camelot' stood for love, valour and chivalry.

The idealization of women under the influence of the Catholic tradition of venerating Mary was one major characteristic of the age. But so many alien influences had imperceptibly permeated the texture of courtly love that Eros of the proper kind because indeed unknown. The amorous ideals celebrated by Ovid, the Moorish influence in Spain, the lyrical outpourings of the Provençal troubadours, had all their share to contribute.

By the Middle Ages, the ideal of courtly love had crystallized into a definite pattern with its fixed code of conduct. A knight chose, or was chosen by, a woman to whose service he was expected to devote himself heart and soul, undertaking great hardships to prove his love. One peculiar condition was that the lovers could not be a married couple and hence the love affair should be kept secret. This unchristian attitude led to adulterous adventures, as is well exemplified in the case of Lancelot and Guinevere in the very sanctuary of courtly love, the mythic Camelot. However, when courtly love came to Italy, at least the school of Dante
eliminated the sinful element by associating courtly love with elements of spiritual beauty and Platonic ideas as can be seen in Dante's attitude towards Beatrice. It is in this form, more or less modified, that courtly love came down even up to the time of Patmore.

The new element that Patmore introduced was a sane balance between extremes. Courtly love had imbibed elements of lewdness from Ovid among the Latins and a Dionysian vein of voluptuousness from Anacreon among the Greeks. On the other hand, the idealistic school of Dante was too far removed from reality in its concept of courtly love to suit the taste of a poet with Patmore's temperament. One was lawless and Patmore had a strong sense of law in whose praise he sang with emphatic accent in Legem Tuam Dilexi; and the other had the consistency of an iridescent soap-bubble. Patmore thrilled with the joy of a new discovery when he pitched upon a third variety of courtly love that would be irreproachable and yet lend itself to highest poetic expression:

I saw three cupids (so I dream'd)
Who made three kites, on which were drawn
In letters that like roses gleamed
Plato, Anacreon and Vaughan.

The boy who held by Plato tried
His airy venture first; all sail
It heav'nward rush'd till scarce descried,
* Then pitch'd and dropped, for want of tail.*
Anacreon's love, with shouts of mirth
That pride of spirit thus should fall
To his kite link'd a lump of earth
And, lo, it would not soar at all.

Last, my disciple freighted his
With a long streamer made of flowers,
The children of the sod, and this
Rose in the sun, and flew for hours.(19)

'My disciple' - that is, Patmore's cupid. It is the wedded love personified in Felix Vaughan. But his muse is not going to be heavy either with the earthiness of illicit amours or the dulness of wedded love. She will sing within the castle of a perfectly normal home with such romantic fervour, as will put the chivalrous fancy of Camelot into the shade.

Patmore was perfectly aware that his courtly muse occupied a place not only between the ancient philosophies of Anacreon and Plato but also between the medieval extremes of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* on the one hand, and Petrarch's vision of Laura and Dante's praise of Beatrice on the other.

His overstatement that future commentators of his poem would see in it 'a future for philosophy' while he is but an ancient bard of simple mind, while seeming to be self-deprecatory actually provokes one to wonder if the woman he praises in
The Angel in the House has not some mythological intent and whether she is for mortal woman meant.

That his theme is not the humdrum domestic life but has its own soaring poetic aspect, different from yet near others' theme, is stated in the lines:

The first of themes, sung last of all
In green and undiscovered ground
Yet near where many others sing
I have the very well-head found
Whence gushes the Pierian Spring.(20)

This new theme, I have suggested, is a particular type of courtly love peculiar to our poet's muse. The aptness of the suggestion will be appreciated if it is remembered that a peculiar relationship exists between the tradition of courtly love and that of Cistercian Mysticism. Etienne Gilson is as pains to show that, though chronologically both the mystic school of St. Bernard and the institution of Troubadours flourished at the same time in the twelfth century, it was not St. Bernard that gave birth to the movement of courtly love though unconsciously he might have influenced its development.(21) The Provencal variety of courtly love, it is true, was not as pure as the edited versions of Troubadour songs would lead one to believe. But the Neapolitan version of it found in Dante is quite another matter. And as Dante was influenced by St. Bernard, so was Patmore, who with his wife translated a work of the saint.
into English under the title *St. Bernard on the Love of God*. The result was, however, as already stated, slightly different.

Patmore was aware of what was lacking in courtly love, but he was also keenly interested in its finer points where they existed - courtesy and disinterested love based on service. It came to him as a revelation that these very elements when incorporated in wedded love would elevate married life to heights hitherto unknown. It is with this inspiration in his soul that he launched into the composition of a poem that would be something new in the world of letters - *The Angel in the House*.

Patmore begins by stating how impossible it would be for him to sing of wedded love unless God, Primal Love, grants him power to utter things too simple and too sweet for words. Wisely, it is in the person of a fictitious character, Vaughan a poet that Patmore expresses his own sentiments.

Domestic love, this poet states, far from being unreal, is the only mortal reality of immortal worth. Then he plunges into praise of womanhood that has the colouring of courtly love:

"When I behold the skies so oft
Passing the pageantry of dreams
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet soft,
A couch for nuptial Juno seems,

I from my lyre the music smite,
Nor want for justly matching words." (22)
Here is the typical Troubadour with his lyre and song. The theme is, openly, wedded love. There is an echo of Spenser's Epithalamion in the flowing rhythm and images of the following:

'The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,
A couch for nuptial Juno seems.'

Patmore then proceeds to the praise of 'woman' in terms that seem to be in deliberate contrast to the praise of 'man' in Shakespeare's Hamlet. 'Hamlet' looks on man like a despondent philosopher. Patmore looks on woman as an enchanted lover. Thus in The Rose of the World (23), he sings her praise imitating the Shakesperian syntax while sticking on to his jogging tetrameter:

'In mind and manners how discreet;
How artless in her very art;
How candid in discourse; how sweet
The concord of her lips and heart;
How simple and how circumspect;
How subtle and how fancy-free...'

Patmore explicitly extolls the superiority of woman over man, which is surprising in the context of the accusation levelled against him of entertaining a 'pasha-like sense of feminine inferiority, which seems to reflect some of the least desirable of Victorian attitudes.'(24)
Patmore concludes that, on every count, in God's creation woman has a higher place than man:

'Were she but half of what she is,
He twice himself, mere love alone
Her special crown, as truth is his,
Gives title to the worthier throne.'

If there is a lurking suspicion that Patmore is perhaps not altogether sincere in his praise, it may be said that he is only following the courtly tradition of the Troubadours. These singers knew the limitations of the ladies they served, yet extolled them to the skies. And yet they do not deliberately lie. The presupposition is that wish is the mother of reality. The object of love, perceiving the devotion of the admirer seeping through her, tries to live up to the expectation of the worshipper. Patmore adapts and recommends the same method for enhancing the beauty and greatness of the lady at home. There is sound sense and insight in these lines:

"It is but as the pedigree
Of perfectness which is to be
That our best good can honour claim;
Yet honour to deny were shame
And robbery; for it is the mould
Wherein to beauty runs the gold
Of good intention."(25)
It is, therefore, deliberately that Patmore glorifies woman as the paragon of perfection. It is right in the tradition of courtly love. No Troubadour could outdo Patmore in the following lines:

"Boon Nature to the woman bows;
She walks in earth's whole glory clad,
And, chiefest far herself of shows,
All others help her, and are glad:
No splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome
But serves for her familiar wear."(26)

There is another aspect in which Patmore follows the pattern set by the Troubadours and is surprisingly successful in doing so. One of the conventions of the Troubadours was to consider the Lady inaccessible. One might think that this would be a difficult proposition to fit in the scheme of things that Patmore has in view. For wedded love means precisely the opposite of inaccessibility. But Patmore comes up with an ingenious solution. It is true, besides.

The truth is that human love, in spite of the greatest intimacy, never achieves that union for which the spirit longs. Even in wedded love there is a certain area of the beloved one which no lover attains. In this ultimate denial of intimacy there is an element of virginity even in wedded love:
'Why, having won her, do I woo?
Because her spirit's vestal grace
Provokes me always to pursue
But, spirit-like, eludes embrace.'(27)

The main reason for her inaccessibility is that an area in her personality is accessible only to heaven:

'... though free of the outer court
I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
Sacred to Heaven; because, in short,
She's not and never can be mine.'(28)

If this is true, is there any point in keeping up the quest? Yes, there is. It is precisely here that Patmore comes along with the religious experience that has given him the vision of a great truth. The pursuit, when kept up with religious reverence, brings one nearer and nearer the goal which, like a mathematical limit, is ever approximated but never attained in this world. The real union however, does take place in heaven. Love is a mighty tree that begins as a tiny sapling and, when fully grown, its lofty branches at first brush against, then burst into, the heavens:

'This little germ of mystical love,
Which springs so simply from the sod,
The road is, as my song shall prove,
Of all our love to man and God.'(29)
The poet then rebukes those that despise wedded love simply because the roots are in the earth, forgetting where the tree is. If wedded love were to end here on earth, Patmore says, it is not worth the trouble of a poet to waste his breath on. But if in its fulness it can be attained in heaven, then it is precious and virtuous, pertaining to religious experience and shining like a bright sun leading all the world with his bounty.

Disinterested service is another aspect of courtly love that Patmore introduces into the wedded state he describes. Such service spontaneously shown during the days of courting before the wedding should be continued after the wedding ceremony too. To do otherwise would be like having frost during the harvest. It would also raise the suspicion that the only reason why he respected her before the wedding was that he did not then possess her - a poor reason! The slackening of respect is a great mistake. It is by keeping it up by deliberate watchfulness that the initial vision of early love could be kept up in all its romantic glamour. Heaven gives such a vision to a man only once a lifetime. It is up to him to keep up the vision untarnished.

In this fashion, all the imaginary perfections sung by the Troubadours could be with truthfulness realised in wedded love. For Patmore, moreover, these aspects of wedded love derive their beauty and validity from their prototype, the Blessed Trinity.
'And in our love we dimly scan
The love which is between Himself.'(30)

Here then, in The Angel in the House, we find expressed Patmore's deep religious conviction that true love is love within God's laws, that wedded love is the very revelation of God's inner life of love, that it should be fostered with the fervour of the Troubadours. Though the poet himself disarmingly admits, 'Mine is no horse with wings to gain / The region of the spheral Chime '(31), yet with the titles evocative of a vast range of literary memories, with the prologues defining the areas of pertinent sensibility, and with the body of the poem projecting into an order of the ideal what is fundamentally his personal experience, with his insistence on the good, the wise, the true, the beautiful and the divine, Patmore has achieved an integrated expression of a rich religious experience based on a profound human situation, in verses that with all their appearance of ease, manifest the craftsmanship of a master poet.

The Angel in the House is effective at three levels - the titles of preludes, the preludes proper and the story proper. In this, Patmore seems to have adopted a medieval method of meditation which essentially consists in prayerfully thinking over a philosophic and religious truth and applying it to the practical concerns of life, so that in everything one does one might glorify God. Broadly speaking, the three levels of every
canto in *The Angel in the House* has a similar function. The eighth canto of the first book, for instance, has five titles for the five preludes—*Life of Life*, *The Revelation*, *The Spirit's Epochs*, *The Prototype*, *The Praise of Love*—followed by the narrative, *Sarum Plain*.

Now, the evocative titles serve as spiritual nose-gars that store all the distilled sweetness of the meditation that is contained in the prelude proper, so that even before the meditation is begun a congenial spiritual atmosphere is created. They flash out rays of light from a core of truth because of the reader's acquaintance with associated ideas and emotional background.

The prelude proper serves as a kind of cathartic agent purifying the mind while enlightening it. At times, the poet seems to be talking of the grace of God that almost merges into the statement of a mystic vision.

In the narrative section of the canto, the vision is identified with a human situation in the state of wedded love.

The title *Life of Life*, for instance, might evoke Shelley's verses:

'Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them.'(32)

'Life of Life' also suggests the medieval—and even modern—concept of grace, which is said to imbue the soul with divine
life just as the soul itself animates the body. Grace is the splendour of the love that exists between a devout soul and God, its spouse. Thus is indicated that the narrative that follows regarding the love of a man and woman is related to divine love.

The prelude proper that follows the title *Life of Life* deals with the flash of enlightenment which, the poet says, if it could be properly expressed,

'Evil would die a natural death
And nothing transient be desired.'

The narrative, *Sorun Plain*, takes on an easy tone. The image of Vaughan and the Dean's daughters picnicking near the Druid Stones on Salisbury Plain is presented with utter clarity however dated the Victorian attitude of the holidayers might appear to the modern reader. But the poet never forgets his purpose of balancing the three layers of significance present in every canto.

The titles and preludes have another important function. Apart from indicating the significance of the narrative section, they serve as the link with the later poem, *The Unknown Eros*. As *The Angel in the House* comes to a close, there is the transitional poem, *The Victories of Love*, in which there are no preludes and narrative but only a number of 'epistles' and a 'wedding sermon.' *The Unknown Eros*, as it were, totally drops
the narrative and presents only Odes that appear to be of the same tone and intent as the preludes of *The Angel in the House*. *The Unknown Eros* forms part of a description of a soul's voyage that begins with *The Angel in the House* and becomes progressively interiorised.

**The Unknown Eros:**

We have just seen that the preludes and their titles work at a higher level and preshadow the Odes. It may also be seen that though the Angel of *The Angel in the House* stands for Honoria, it stands more particularly for the love between Vaughan and Honoria as has been observed already by Alice Meynell. It is, in fact, socially and religiously acceptable erotic love. So then, we may imagine that *The Angel in the House* might possibly have been entitled *The Eros in the House*. But Patmore had his reasons not to be in a hurry to use such a title.

He wanted to present the gradual emergence of a new horizon. This he does by crisscrossing the semantic strands between the earlier and later poems. What at first would seem to be profane has an implication of the religious, and vice-versa. *The Angel in the House*, treating of mere human love, already implies the religious element by the introduction of the word 'Angel'. 'Angel' has always been understood to be a being that establishes communication between the divine and the human. From the other end, we notice that *The Unknown Eros,*
which obviously refers to God, directly brings us down to the earthy, erotic love, without losing hold of the divine.

It is necessary now to indicate briefly what Eros stands for in relation to other forms of love. Without a knowledge of the distinction, the very basic idea of the Unknown Eros will not be clear. Patmore himself seems to have been fully aware of the distinction. In his *Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis makes a brilliant analysis of love. Briefly, the four loves are:

I. **Affection**, the οὐδαμή of the Greeks, which is a tenderness universal in its object and based on the condition that the extremes of both familiarity and of remoteness are excluded.

II. **Friendship**, the φίλία of Aristotle, or Cicero's amicitia, which is the least biological of loves and characterised by 'clubableness' resulting from the coincidence of tastes and insights.

III. **Erotic Love**, or ζωή of the Greeks or Amor of the Latins, which is a uniquely human variation of sexuality extending from the animal to the human. It imparts to love a soaring iridescence. It can operate apart from Venus, which exclusively connotes the sexual. Absence of Venus does not ensure that Eros is pure; nor does the presence of Venus make Eros impure where legitimate conditions are present.
IV. Charity, or Caritas, is the noblest form of love comprising three varieties of love: - a) from God to man, b) from man to God, c) from man to his neighbour. This love is identified with God Himself, who is Love.

We can find an immediate application of these distinctions - specially the last two - to Patmore's poetry. Trying to identify the 'Unknown Eros' at the very beginning of the second book, the poet writes:

"Thou are not amor; or, if so, you pyre
That waits the willing victim, flames with vestal fire;
Nor moon Queen of maids; or if thou 'rt she,
Ah, then, from Thee
Let Bride and Bridegroom learn what kisses be!"

Amor, as we have noted above, is the same as Eros. To say that the 'Unknown Eros' is not Amor is to say it is not what Eros is ordinarily understood to be. What it is, then, is to be found by investigation. When all the poems of The Unknown Eros are studied, it turns out to be the fourth variety of love indicated above - Charity. But then, it also belongs to the third variety because it is Eros though unknown. What is unknown is that a particular variety of Eros belongs to the fourth group as well. Another way of saying the same is to consider Charity as 'informing' or elevating ordinary Eros to the level of the divine.
Patmore is bent on elevating Eros to the highest possible level. To unsympathetic readers this might seem the glorification of boring 'domestic affections.' C.S. Lewis complains that Patmore talks as if falling in love is the same as sanctification. And he does too; and what is more, he may be right! For many a man, falling in love may be the only elevating influence that life ever presents, provided always there is an awareness that the laws of God have a prior claim:

'An idle poet, here and there
Looks round him; but for all the rest,
The world, unfathomably fair,
Is duller than a witling's jest,
Love wakes men, once a lifetime each.'(33)

Now, Eros, of whatever kind has a likeness to God, who is Love. But without a clear definition as to what this likeness might consist in, one would come to the dangerous conclusion that the worst form of erotic love too is divine. Lewis makes a profound statement regarding this point:

'This love is really and truly like Love Himself. In it there is real nearness to God by resemblance; but not therefore and necessarily, a nearness of Approach. Eros, honoured so far as love of God and Charity to our fellows will allow, may become for us a means of Approach. His total commitment is a paradigm or example, built into our natures, of the love we ought to experience towards God and man.'(34)
It is precisely this **nearness of Approach** that Patmore endeavor to exemplify in his two major sequences of poems. He places Eros within the institution of marriage, elevates it as high as possible without violating Charity, then sees in it a paradigm of God's love and then passes on to the description of the love of God thus reached.

In idolising Eros, Patmore follows the medieval love-poetry, but with a difference as said earlier. But there may be some danger in this. 'Medieval love poetry,' say C.S. Lewis, 'is half make-believe religion of love. Eros demand worship. He tries to turn 'being in love' into religion itself; the danger of idolatry in this medieval religion of love is not idolising one another, especially in marriage... but the danger is in idolising Eros himself.'(35)

Patmore faces the danger boldly and avoids the danger of idolatry by postulating that the Eros he speaks of in the married state has already the potentiality to bloom into the truly divine Eros, God, Love Himself. In fact this true Eros is already present, all unbeknown, in the married state of men. For Eros, to Patmore's mind, when sanctified by the sacrament of marriage, is interiorly given a new form by Charity or grace infused into him. 'The total and secure transformation of a natural love into a mode of charity is a work so difficult that perhaps no fallen man has ever come within sight of doing it perfectly.'(36) In actual life, this may indeed be difficult,
but in poetry it can certainly be presented as an idealised pattern, and that is what Patmore does.

The Unknown Bros consists of two books of which the second is on the whole deeper in its mystical tone. The first book contains certain odes that seem harsh - the political odes for instance - but there are also in it some of the most poignant odes in the language - *Azalea, The Toys*.

Together, the two books trace the progressive interiorization of the soul. Already in the Proem the poet shows a concern for the inner and the outer. The three aspects under which his mentor wants him to sing are: i) anger at unrighted wrongs in the world, ii) compassionate love, and iii) delights of love. Penetrating beyond appearances and cliches, he has to sing with deep feeling and insight which may include mystic intuitions.

The political odes, that seem to be in such bad taste, are in fact a manifestation of one of these aspects - wrath based on Love. The Proem itself devotes many lines to the political situation in England.

The first Ode of the first book - *Saint Valentine's Day* - identifies Patmore's early spiritual awakening with an early Spring. He becomes a heavenly-minded thrush as well as a blackbird:
'At dusk of dawn, on his dark spray apart
With it the Blackbird breaks the young Day's heart;
.   In evening's hush
About it talks the heavenly-minded Thrush.'

The 'it' refers to a peaceful, contrite and poignant joy that is the first step towards true mystical interiorization.

*Wind and Wave* tries to resolve the tension between his attraction towards God, the Unknown Eros, and his hope of renewing his acquaintance with his now dead earthly beloved in heaven. Believing in God, Patmore could take Heaven as a corollary, and union with the dead beloved as another corollary. But the reverse process of believing in God for the sake of being united with the beloved will not do.\(^{(37)}\)

This problem greatly engaged the poet's attention. Already in *The Angel in the House* he argues that, though 'in heaven none marry', the already married on earth will retain the wedded state in heaven.\(^{(38)}\) In the *Wedding Sermon* he contends that one should not pretend that life in heaven would be more ethereal than God Himself intended it.\(^{(39)}\) It is God Himself who has promised to restore even bodily life with its five senses, 'the five - stringed lyre.' Then the poet argues that the soul is, properly speaking, nothing but the wings of the body, or, more generally, Spirit is only wings of Nature and there could be no soaring of the Spirit without Nature. Since body and soul are mutually dependent, body too, in a transformed
state, will be present in heaven. So will the sexes, so will
the marriage bond, be present, all transformed.

The mystery of heavenly existence is not easily fathomed.
What has baffled intellectual giants may not find easy solution
at the hands of our poet. Nevertheless, we are interested in
his artistic presentation of the ascension of the soul. At a
later stage, we see how Patmore, having reached a higher level
of perception, is willing to resign himself to God's will and
to abandon the idea of union with his beloved in heaven in too
material a sense. Here, again, a passage in Lewis' Four Loves
can very well be applied to Patmore's slow realisation of a
deep truth:

'Only by being in some respect like Him, only by being a
manifestation of His beauty, loving kindness, wisdom or goodness,
has an earthly beloved excited our love. It is not that we
have loved them too much, but that we did not quite understand
what we were loving. It is not that we shall be asked to turn
from them, so dearly familiar, to a stranger. When we see the
face of God, we shall know that we have always known it. He
has been a party to, has made, sustained and moved moment by
moment within, all our earthly experience of innocent love.
All that was true love in them was, even on earth, far more His
than ours, and ours only because His. In Heaven there will be
no anguish and no duty of turning away from our earthly Beloveds.
First, because we shall have turned already from the portraits
to the original, from the rivulet: to the Fountain, from the
creatures He made lovable to Love Himself. But secondly, because we shall find them all in Him. By loving Him more than we shall then, we shall love them more than we do now.' (40)

What Lewis expresses with such remarkable clarity, Patmore expresses in verse in an artistically realised form that takes the reader on a spiritual voyage along with him. In the Odes we see the poet's whole personality in its complexity of natural and supernatural tendencies inexorably marching on towards union with the Unknown Eros.

In the ode, Wind and Wave there is an ocean surge of emotion tending towards Him, but the poet seems to be hardly aware of the goal in terms of intellectual conception. On the other hand, he also seems to be confusedly aware of it, like one who standing near a vast cataract, hears no sound because the ear fails to hear midst overwhelming noise:

'And so the whole
Unfathomable and immense
Triumphant tide comes at the last to reach
And burst in wind-kissed splendours
on the deafening beach,
Where forms of children in first innocence
Laugh and fling pebbles on the rainbow'd crest
Of its untired unrest.'

This suggests Plato's symposium with which Patmore was well acquainted. The soul ascends to the shores of that 'vast
sea of beauty' to which one ascends guided by Eros - from things of beauty, to forms of beauty, thence to practices of beautiful acts, onwards to notions of beauty, and at last to the one absolute idea of beauty. Throughout the ascension, the growth of joy is presupposed. The forms of children in Patmore's verse suggest the Platonic forms which Plato expresses as successive spiritual births. Without this explanation, the expression 'forms of children' would seem a very odd way of describing children for a poet of Patmore's concreteness in poetic expression.

There is a great difference, however, between the approaches of Plato and Patmore. Patmore's ascension is of the will, emotion and feelings towards an object of love; Plato's is, as becomes a philosopher, of the intellect tending towards progressive illumination and ending in a vision of absolute beauty.

In Beata, Patmore again reaches towards the abode of the Absolute, which brings to mind Plato's allegory of the cave. The poet describes how a ray of light from heaven descends and impinges 'on a diamond stalactite' in his mind, splits into joyous rainbow hues that make clear to him 'absolute Reason Power and Love.' This ray thus leads the poet back to the Absolute in the form of the Blessed Trinity. But the medium for this ascension is the memory of his dead wife, the stalactite that grows in the cold caverns of his sorrowing soul.
Here too there is a difference in the mode of expression between Plato and Patmore. Plato's allegory indicates that man can rise from shadows to the light of reality. Patmore's image suggests the ascension of the soul from a ray of light to the ocean of light, its source.

After Beata follow several Odes which keep up the dialogue between the poet and his wife in heaven. But this dialogue is not verbal. The verbal expression of the poem is only a manifestation of a communication at a deeper level. If this is not realised these odes would sound more like monologues.

The dialogue has some resemblance with the dialogue between the Gawain-poet of the fourteenth century, and his dead daughter in heaven. It is a dream-vision that the poet describes in his Pearl where the dialogue occurs. Being in heaven the child appears supernaturally mature and advises her father not to grieve unreasonably. The Pearl has been variously interpreted but in general it may be said that, using a courtly language and the device of dream experience, it inculcates the need to evaluate earthly life and love in terms of heavenly life and love.

The same pattern of spiritual progress is depicted in Patmore's odes as in the Pearl. In the earlier odes Patmore appears too possessively attached to his wife. In the later odes he appears as effecting a progressive detachment until he assumes the role of Psyche towards God or the Unknown Eros.
In Ode after Ode starting with The Day after Tomorrow, the poet now turns to his wife in heaven, now turns back to the last days of her life on earth, and with accumulated pressure of unbearable sorrow creates a sense of the deepest pathos that is so artistically realised that it is hard to find a comparable work elsewhere in English. Tennyson's In Memoriam mourning Hallam or Milton's sorrow for his drowned friend that Lycidas commemorates never touch us with the same intimacy or poignancy. In Patmore's Odes form and matter so blend and come home to us that we are tempted to call them faulty by way of excess. The only poem that appears closest to the spirit of Patmore's Odes is The Pearl but even that is vitiated by an appearance of artificiality in the conventional use of a dream-vision.

In Patmore's The Day After Tomorrow a sea separates him from his beloved dead but through it he communicates with her. Yet the vehemence of numbing sorrow is such that it might be a sea of tears. Tristitia expresses his wish that she should remain happy in heaven even if he himself were to be damned. The Azalea subtly expresses the change in the depth of pathos. It is a deeply moving presentation of his sorrowful situation. The artistic perfection of the following line is superb:

'It was the azalea's breath, and she was dead!'

Francis Thompson's Daisy is gently wistful, full of resigned melancholy. But The Azalea is sharply poignant.
Eurydice is less harrowing chiefly because the sorrow is communicated through a myth and feelings are objectified enough not to touch one too intimately.

Tired Memory is intensely autobiographical and traces back the path he trod with his wife in the days of her earthly pilgrimage. Here is expressed an important stage of his turning towards God even if it should mean that he has to give up his attachment to his wife now dead, though he fails to see how he could be happy in a state 'wherein she has no part.' And so he wonders if by taking a second wife he has not betrayed both the first and the second.

Veritas Est Veritas shows his endeavour to detach himself from political bonds as Tired Memory, from familial ones.

But the dialectics goes on. His soul rises and falls. This is paralleled in the Gawain-poet's Pearl by the dialects expressed from the twentieth to the eightieth stanza.

Faint Yet Pursuing again shows Patmore's humility and submission to the divine will whatever place God might assign him but the pursuit of perfection he will not give up.

The same resignation is indicated in Crest And Gulf where crest and gulf stand for the ups and downs of spiritual progress. A man must move when heaven calls and mark time and wait for the next change.
From all these we are given to understand that the poet is learning heavenly courtesy progressively even as the Gawain-poet is shown to do in the Pearl. Just as in The Angel in the House earthly courtesy towards a woman one marries is traced, in The Unknown Eros heavenly courtesy is traced. One cannot force one's way up but must enter into dialogue with the other world and be prepared to follow the rules of the heavenly encounter.

As the odes of the first book of The Unknown Eros succeed one after the other the poet reveals how step by step he ascends higher and higher in spirit. In A Farewell he at last completely detaches himself at least so far as his will is concerned - 'with all my will but much against my heart.' He now comes to understand that he must persevere in order to reach his goal regardless of defeats.

'The man who, though his fights be all defeats

Still fights

Enters at last

The heavenly Jerusalem's rejoicing streets.'

The poet's last statement in the first book of The Unknown Eros is to the effect that by God's grace he has found God at last. This is like the ascension of Eros in Plato's Symposium. He is at the very threshold of Absolute Beauty now. This also corresponds to the Pearl poet's vision of heavenly Jerusalem separated from him by a river on one of whose banks he stands.
in wonder while on the other stands his beloved, now become the beloved of the Lamb.

It has been noted by some authors that the Pearl poem of the Middle Ages has a striking similarity with T.S. Eliot's Marina. (41) The longing pursuit of a dead beloved and the desire to cross over to the other side of the grave is to be seen in both. A feeling that one is travelling from the exterior to the interior world is also present in both. We have stated that Patmore's The Unknown Eros is very much like the Pearl poem. So it is natural that we should find it similar to Eliot's Marina too. This is particularly true with respect to the first Ode of the second book of The Unknown Eros.

This Ode, entitled To the Unknown Eros, is in the form of a number of questions addressed to Eros. Eliot's Marina, though addressed to 'my daughter', has the same purpose. It is composed of a series of questions too. The questions are, in fact, exclamations both in Patmore's Ode and Eliot's poem. Patmore's

'What rumoured heavens are these
Which not a poet sings,
O, Unknown Eros?'

is matched by Eliot's more elaborate,
'What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands
What water lapping the bow
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog
What images return
O my daughter?'

Patmore is, as it were, poised for space travel, Eliot for sea-faring in a boat, yet the sense of the preternatural, unexplored territory is present in both.

There are other similarities with Patmore's poem, not only in Marina but also in Eliot's The Journey of the Magi. But we must move on to other Odes where Patmore carries his spiritual journey farther in.

In The Contract and Arbor Vitae, Patmore indicates where the Unknown Eros will meet Psyche. J.C. Reid thinks that The Contract is a parable in which Patmore distinguishes love from lust, and Arbor Vitae, he thinks, stands for the Church. But he fails to explain how these Odes happen to occupy the places they do in the sequence of the Odes.

It is more likely that Patmore, with his flair for esoteric interpretations, here follows John Scotus Eriugena, for whom Paradise represents human nature with its double aspect of the interior and the exterior, representing the masculine and feminine principles. The masculine principle, the Vōıs, is interior, where reason abides. The exterior is the feminine
principle, represented by the body and is called \( \tau \zeta \sigma \eta \sigma \varsigma \). The Arbor Vitae, or the tree of life, or \( \pi \alpha \nu \), is planted in the inner region. In the outer region lies curled the serpent of low desire beside the Tree of Knowledge.

For Patmore, then, The Contract stands for the inner region of 'homo'; To The Body represents the outer. Together they form the human paradise. The Arbor Vitae represents the tree of life, planted in the inner region.

In some respects, Arbor Vitae resembles Keats' Ode to Psyche. J.C. Reid would have it that it stands for the Church. It can, no doubt, and it can refer to the Arbor Vitae of the Apocalypse too, but in our context it would be best to place it within the soul where the encounter of Psyche and Eros takes place, an encounter towards which all the Odes tend. After all, for Patmore as for all Catholics, the core of the Church is in the soul.

In Sponsa Dei, Patmore declares that hereafter the theme is to be the nuptial love between the soul and God, or Psyche and Eros. It would appear that man, representing all that is of this earth, longs for the love of woman, all unawares that this longing is but a reaction to and reflection of the divine Lover, Eros, whose love extends towards all mankind. By the masculine principle in it the soul becomes the active agent of love, but by the feminine principle in it it is the passive recipient of God's love. On the whole, the human
Psyche is the spouse of God.

In Legem Tuam Dilexi Patmore brushes aside all sentimentality in the love encounter between Psyche and Eros. The responsive love of Psyche fundamentally consists in observing God's law. Love is consummated in union. So the whole universe surges up mightily in responsive love to God's initial love. The limit that God imposes on every creature, making it into a finished finite product, is His kiss of love. While this is true of all creation, a slight modification of statement is indicated with respect to the rational creature. He must accept the limitation imposed on him consciously and voluntarily as an act of responsive love. 'If you love me,' Christ said, 'keep my commandments.' It is Psyche's voice of love that responds: 'Legem Tuam Dilexi.'

Sing Us One of the Songs of Sion indicates how, according to the poet's faith, the encounter of Psyche and Eros, or Christ, can take place only among the believers in the Catholic Church whose prophet in England was Cardinal Newman. The poet himself wishes to assume the prophet's role when Newman passes away.

The next Ode has the interesting title, Deliciae Sapicitiae De Amore. Almost certainly Patmore borrowed it from the title of Robert Waring's prose essay, Deliciae Sapientiae Amore Conjugali. The poet was acquainted with this essay, since he confesses in 1863, that he used some ideas from it in The Angel in the House. (42) It is possible that either Waring
himself or Patmore saw the connection between this title and the Book of Proverbs where it is said: 'et deliciae meae, esse cum filiis hominum', that is, 'and my delights were to be with the children of men.' (43) This is said by Wisdom, or Sapientia. Patmore makes a happy combination of both sources and comes out with an Ode that, in title and content, reveals how God delights in dealing with men in terms of mystic nuptials.

So far as he is concerned, the poet confesses, he will sing mainly of those who have had a premonition of heavenly love in their past experience of human love. He, therefore, invites all true lovers to have a share in his vision and to look at the heavenly feast, 'the dainty and unsating wedding feast.'

Here the poet conjures up the vision of heaven as depicted by St. John in the Book of Apocalypse. Here also the Gawain-poet and Patmore are one in describing the heavenly bliss where one's beloved reaches the highest level and where one hopes to follow later.

In this vision, Patmore sees those wedded lovers who on earth had often wondered how their love would turn out in heaven. Such people are visualised as realising the full fruition of their wedded, courtly, love on earth.

The Ode ends with the statement that the bliss of heaven will ultimately consist in one being loved by God as His spouse whatever may be the way - in virginity or wedded state - one reaches heaven. For, 'the Elect / Of generous Love... affect /
One important point to be noted about this Ode is that, though the poet describes heaven in it at great length, it is as the terminus of a spiritual ascension of one whose feet are solidly planted on this earth, that it is presented. The aspiring human love towards God is met by God who waits to crown it 'not by-and-by, but now.'

When we at last reach the three crowning Odes - Eros and Psyche, De Natura Deorum and Psyche's Discontent - the scene shifts from the objective description of union with God to the subjective. The peculiar mode of their presentation may mean one of two things. 1) The poet has reached such a height of mystical union that direct description of the experience becomes impossible, necessitating the use of mythology as the vehicle of communicating a transcendental experience. Or 2) it may mean that his personal experience has here come to an end and, in order to complete the full scope of the mental ascension in the company of Eros, he has to borrow from the experience of others. For this, he would not commit himself to a particular experience of his own nun-daughter, or Lataste, or any other mystic. He would rather make it an objective picture of what happens in the subjective world of many mystics. Mythological figures serve to express the deepest human experiences. It is as such that Patmore uses them here.
The second alternative seems preferable. For Patmore never claimed to be a mystic, though he was well versed in mystical literature. At the same time, he had reached at least the foot of the mountain of spiritual ascension and on this he insists by printing the word 'did' in italics in the following:

"Often in straits which else for me were ill,
I mind me still
I did respire the lonely auras sweet,
I did the blest abodes behold, and,
   at the mountains' feet,
Bathed in the holy stream by Hermon's thyme hill."

It is surely significant that these words from Auras Of Delight occur immediately before the three peak Odes mentioned earlier. The allusion to the heavenly Jerusalem into which he is not about to enter to describe the intimate encounter of Psyche and Eros has a biblical overtone.

Now, to criticise the three peak Odes would be, according to Hopkins, like criticising the Canticle of Canticles. By this, of course, he does not mean that they should not be criticised at all, but that it should be done with some reverence.

In general, it might be said that in them Patmore presents a most intimate picture of what one might call Incarnational Psychology, the encounter in personal love between the divine adapting itself to the human and the human transcending its
Eros and Psyche describes the first encounter. The soul's surprise, its doubts, its reassurance, its joy and wonder, its ecstasy, its sense of unworthiness in itself, its humble acceptance of some equality with God through grace infused, its surrender, its readiness to undergo hardships, its expectation of future caresses, are all ably depicted. The image evoked to represent the wonder of the soul awakened to a new awareness of God has a touch of the magical in it:

'What divine, waste tracts of life shine sudden, like moonbeams
On windless ocean shaken by sweet dreams.'

Patmore describes the ecstasy of union thus:

"O, too much joy; O, touch of airy fire;
O, turmoil of content; O, unperturbed desire,
From fountains of spirit impell'd...."

There is surely an echo of St. John of the Cross here when Le sings in his Living Flame of Love,

'Oh, living flame of love that tenderly woundest
my soul in its deepest centre ...
Oh, sweet boom! Oh, delectable wound!'

De Natura Deorum describes the perplexities of a soul that undergoes the mystical experience for the first time.
She naturally goes to spiritual directors hoping to clear up her confusion of mind but she soon discovers that none but the Divine Lover Himself has to guide her.

_Psyche's Discontent_ describes the peak experience of familiar union with God. Psyche's discontent is a sort of divine perversity. Oppressed by too much delight, she wants to be separated from Eros and at the same time to be united with Him. 'I cannot guess the good I desire.' So intoxicated is she with divine love that she thinks it an indignity to her to be considered by Eros worthy only of delight by day and night. Eros, on his part, with divine, fond familiarity teasingly expresses his tenderest love:

'Yea, Palate fine,
That claimest 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!' 

These mystic Odes, together with the Corollary Pain, presuppose a world of theological background a grasp of which is necessary to feel their full poetic impact. The apparent ease and familiarity with which the poet expresses himself should not blind us to the skill with which he expresses every modulation.
of feeling and awareness in a truly divine situation in which Psyche finds herself. I think Patmore has achieved a marvellous tour de force in these Odes of *The Unknown Eros*.

**Conclusion:**

H.G.Wells has a story whose allegorical significance will serve to state the situation in which Patmore found himself at the end of his spiritual quest as expressed in his poetry. *The Pearl of Love* is the story of a prince in North India who raised a monument more beautiful than the Taj Mahal over the mortal remains of his dead wife as an everlasting memorial of his love. Through the years, as the structure rose higher and higher in perfect symmetry, he noticed that there was just one thing that prevented the monument from being a pearl of artistic perfection - the sarcophagus. He removed it and the architectural beauty of the monument was perfect.

Various interpretations have been offered, but the point of the allegory for our purpose in this. The prince removed the sarcophagus in order that his beloved might be totally transformed into the work of art and live in it.

Something similar happens in Patmore's case. He became a poet, he has stated in *The Angel in the House*, in order to celebrate his idyllic love-life with his wedded spouse. After her untimely death, he wanted to construct in her honour a
worthy monument in verse. Thus resulted the Odes. The first Book of The Unknown Eros is full of sad reminiscences. But by the time he has reached the end of the second Book, no trace of the earthly beloved seems to be left. And yet we are aware that the presence of his beloved haunts every inch of the monumental structure. It is 'The Pearl of Love' that Patmore built for his beloved, but when the work of art was finished he found that her mortal remains only marred the perfect beauty of the monument. He removed the sarcophagus. We are face to face with Divine Love.

Notes:
(2) L III, P.XL, footnote.
(3) L I, p. 82
(4) L III, p XL
(5) L III, p. XXX
(6) Etienne Gilson, The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard (London), 1940, p. 239
(7) Ibid. p. 119
(8) Summa Theologica, II-IIæ, q.180, a4, ad 3.
(9) L III, p. 347
(11) Ibid. p. 14
(12) J.C. Reid, Loc. Cit., p. 149, quoted.
(13) Ibid, p. 20, quoted
(14) Ibid, p. 37, quoted
(16) Ibid. p. 70
(17) J.C.Reid, Loc.Cit., p. 320
(18) A Daughter of C. Patmore, p. 136
(20) Ibid. Bk.I, Prologue.
(21) Étienne Gilson, Loc.Cit.
(23) A in H, Bk.I, CanIV
(26) A in H, Can.IV, Prel.II
(28) Ibid.
(29) A in H, Bk.I, Can.VI.
(30) A in H, Bk. II, Can.VIII
(31) A in H., Bk.I, Prel.I
(32) Prometheus Unbound
(33) A in H, Bk.I, Can.VIII
(34) C.S.Lewis, The Four Loves (London), 1960, p. 126
(35) Ibid., pp. 126-27
(36) Ibid. p. 155
(37) Ibid., p. 157. Though Lewis is not dealing with Patmore, his explanation serves well to capture in words the poet's situation.

(38) A in H, Bk.II, Can.X, Prel.3

(39) Wedding Sermon, see 10.

(40) C.S.Lewis, Loc.Cit., p. 158


Note.

In later editions this information is omitted.

(43) *Book of Proverbs*, Chap. 8, V.31, Doway Version.

(44) *Sponsa Del.*