

## 2. THE SHAPING OF THE PILGRIM MUSE

### 2.1. Poetic theories of the early nineteenth century

The poetic theories which were prevalent in the early nineteenth century played a major role in Newman's poetic beliefs. In such a century, so divided yet so distinguished, poets could not be poets in the manner in which Goethe and Keats were. The poets of the century were keenly aware that the world stood most in need of reform. The twin perceptions on which the Victorian writers rooted the aesthetic imperative was that a world without faith would be chaotic and faith without imagination would be a delusion. Tennyson, Arnold, Swinburne, Hopkins were all sensitive to the stress of the time. They felt that lacking such an aesthetic perception, modern man would be without guidance in a chaotic world which in turn would lead to a meaningless existence.

Newman tried to capture the educative influence of poetry to refine and to purify the native passions of the soul. Thus he brought it into harmony with divine reason. Early Victorian poetic theory emphasized the fact that poetry was a matter of insight into reality. It was considered a question of moral values. This view of poetry at the service of reason, morals and religion was pervasive. Their poetic theory emphasized the responsibility of the poet to capture his own insight into the condition of the world around him. It recognized the relation between poetry and experience of life. The world of things and particularly the world of men with their feelings, aspirations and actions were the raw materials of poetry.

Though the post-Romantic theorists distinguished the immediate end of poetry as pleasure, they were also concerned with its relation to morals and society. The early Victorians

wanted the poet to be the model of their age, its teacher and guide. The poet was to be a mediator between the soul and the Infinite. Poets were both seers and men of genius, and poetry was considered to be a regenerating force. It was conceived as an effective social and moral force. Moral values conditioned the ideal of beauty. Carlyle wanted all literature to have 'a didactic character,' and the poet to 'instruct.' Proctor called poetry a 'moral science' and G. H. Lewes called it, 'the phasis of a religious Idea.' These beliefs of the time were in concord with Newman's aspirations for the ideal. He was one of the 'chief justices' of early Victorian poetic theory.<sup>1</sup> Poets such as Keble, Patmore and William Allingham spoke about the practical values of poetry.

To withstand the growing disbelief of the modern era, earnest men such as Carlyle, Keble and Newman called upon literature for the support of a faltering religion. As the Church was threatened by the liberal spirit, Newman and his Tractarian colleagues recognized the efficacy of poetry in making revealed truths emotionally appealing to minds disposed to scepticism. Carlyle found in poetry "another form of Wisdom of Religion,"<sup>2</sup> Keble "the ordained vehicle of revelation,"<sup>3</sup> and Newman, "the utterance of the inward emotions of a right moral feeling."<sup>4</sup> But while for Carlyle and for the majority of critics in the Victorian period, poetry was 'end-religion' itself, Keble and Newman held on to the traditional recognition of poetry 'as a means.'<sup>5</sup>

Keble's aesthetic orientation was a 'dialectic of being.' Here the divine insured both the validity of the genuine poet's vision and the lines of analogy drawn between the real world and the world of appearances. He considered artistic insight to be true if the poet was sincere to the vision revealed. Most Victorian critics repudiated Keble's view. As a result there appeared 'a dialectic of becoming.' What was emphasized here

was the need for psychic integrity.<sup>6</sup> The individual poet had to determine his own integrity first in order to define the unity of the universe. While the 'dialectic of being' found its sanction in a realm of existence 'beyond the natural horizon,' the 'dialectic of becoming' found its place within the world of flux. Man is to find significance in the world of here and now. According to this theory, poetry was essentially a process. Matthew Arnold remarked that life was the province of poetry and that existence was a becoming.<sup>7</sup> Frederick Rogers in his exposition of the Victorian aesthetic position spoke of the true poet as one who struggled to find a solution in nature which harmonized everything. Newman agreed with this opinion.<sup>8</sup> Ruskin's view of "the organic functioning of the whole man"<sup>9</sup> as the basis for genuine artistic vision was almost universal throughout this period. For a critic of this period, morality was an aesthetic term which referred to the ability of the artist to know by intuition the relative disposition of things and also to perceive subjectively and objectively.

The view that marked the criticism of the period from Carlyle to Arnold was that poetry was a function of the imaginative reason: it was an intellectual disposition. Hence Newman spoke of a 'right moral feeling' which placed "the mind in the very centre of that circle from which all the rays have their origin and range."<sup>10</sup> This intellectual disposition enabled the poet to be his own law, his own teacher and his own judge. Carlyle was of the opinion that a healthy poetic nature wanted no moral law. Newman's views on the nature of poetry depended on the contexts in which he spoke. Thus as a theologian, he wrote, 'Poetry does not address reason.'<sup>11</sup> In Nature and Grace, he remarked that poetry involved, 'human nature exerting the power of reason.' He also contended that poetry and literature "refined the mind by making it what it

was not before." <sup>12</sup> He stated poetry's function with respect to a religion of assent to be ancillary, while with respect to the religion of the gentleman it had to be primary and inclusive as it is synonymous with both religion and science. In this latter sense poetry assumed the function of religion.

The excessive rationalism of the eighteenth century made philosophy disreputable. So in the nineteenth century, poetry was called upon to defend the religious spirit which needed a reinterpretation. The new cult which arose out of poetry's support of religion was humanistic. G. H. Lewes considered the poet as the high-priest of the spirit of the age, for the artist served not only the Infinite but also the finite. Carlyle, Newman and Arnold agreed with the critics of the time that the new cult of the religion of poetry originated as the result of the synthesis of all life and that poetry must assume a religious role. They believed that poetry taking a religious role would lead man to a spiritual haven. The critics were of the opinion that literature in general, and poetry in particular, took the role of religion in a modern age of spiritual bankruptcy.

The early Victorians considered any preoccupation with rhetorical technique as a failure of the faculty of imagination. But they hardly added anything to what had been observed by Wordsworth or Coleridge. Only Ruskin among them emphasized the value of imaginative perception. Carlyle considered imagination important only as a means of insight. The Victorians looked to poetry for the expression of feeling. Both Keble and Newman depicted feeling in their poetry but showed no concern for the art of the poem. They considered the essence of poetry to be 'feeling or 'imagination' or 'expression.' As a result none achieved a technique distinctly his own. The poets found complete expression in the simple lyric form. They made use of the common speech of the time as

the diction for their poetry. With them diction received a new dignity and beauty. There was a wide variety of practice in rhyme, syllabic equivalence, stanzaic structure and prosodic abstractions but it added very little which was essential to the history of English poetry.

The early Victorians described the effect of poetry as a sort of catharsis of emotion. In a world of crumbling values, only the ideal world of imagination held the promise of a haven where the disillusioned could put their trust. So they wanted poetry to provide spiritual exaltation and consolation. Even though, like the Romantics, the early Victorian poets had a new way of looking at things, they practised a certain independence in their censure of the peculiar errors of the Romantics. But they accepted the central insight of Romantic experimentalism and recognized moral stability as the precondition for mature poetry.

The Romanticist relies upon emotion, intuition and imagination, as is seen in Wordsworth and Coleridge. With Newman, it was always Cor ad cor loquitur<sup>13</sup> — heart speaks to heart — first, and then followed by thought. Heart speaking to heart is the very essence of Romanticism. Newman sensed the heart-beat of the Divine in human souls, in the beauties of nature, and interpreted their mysteries in the light of Christian symbolism. While Newman's own preferences for the poetry of his contemporaries were often romantic and subjective, his own poetry was largely conceived in the neo-classical spirit. The Classicist uses reason, intellect, facts and restraint. Examples of it could be seen in Alexander Pope, Bolingbroke or Swift.

Newman's literary preferences showed that he delighted in the Greek and the Roman classics and owed a great debt to them. He acknowledged Cicero to be his model. The Virgilian rhythm haunted his prose. He was well acquainted with the writings

of Homer. The works of Gibbon and Hume fascinated him. Among the Augustans, Locke influenced him. The neo-Classicists whom he admired were Addison, Pope, Berkley, Cowper and Crabbe. He admired the manifestation of benevolence and the firm moral fibre in the novels, and the poems of Scott and Southey. Though Newman disapproved of Byron both as a man and as a poet, he admired the third canto of Childe Harold. He read Wordsworth with a certain approval though he was against his pantheism. Among the Victorians, he liked some poems of Tennyson, and Life and Death of Jason by William Morris. He admired Mrs Gaskell and Anthony Trollope. He appreciated Thackeray's insight into human pride and frailty in his novels. He admired the stylistic felicities of Jane Austen.<sup>14</sup>

While with the Victorians the romantic synthesis of the heart and the head broke down, with Newman it was not so. He was a reactionary against Victorian compromise where religion and morals were concerned. But as a literary artist, he was a master of compromise between two literary outlooks directly opposed to each other, the Augustan and the Romantic. He tried to strike a balance between adherence to classical precedence and untrammelled personal expression. In his attitude to books, he was truly Augustan. Eighteenth century writers imbued with the spirit of Virgil, Dante, Milton and Goethe contemplated man against a background vaster than himself. Newman was well-versed in the classics of antiquity and was familiar with the eighteenth century literature of England. He allowed his ideas to grow so as to mould men slowly into a 'perennial' philosophy. The writers of the final decades of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries whom he imitated, pointed to a period of urbane and classical elegance in writing, a time of harmony, decorum and proportion. This explains Newman's self-conscious, and self-corrective attitude. His introspection, his psychological approach, his

preoccupation with fundamentals, his urbanity, his idealism, all of these breathe something of the Augustans. His prose and poetry clearly and gracefully display thoughts with Augustan 'primness' and elegance. Thus Newman was both an Augustan and a Romantic.

The nineteenth century witnessed what seemed to be the collapse of the traditional Christian Community with the result that there were many who were in quest of a mode of vision which would be truly Christian in its outlook on life and society. Here appeared Newman with his belief in the power of religion to 'cleanse' the sick soul without Aristotle's catharsis. The Victorian age has not been completely hospitable to the Christian vision of the world. Hence the individual must use his own subjective intuition into the meaning of creation. Such was Newman's vision. The poet became the new priest as he bestowed fresh meaning on the outworn forms of earth and of human society. Carlyle echoed the same view. For this very reason, Shelley made poets 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world,' and Coleridge linked the Secondary Imagination by analogy to the Primary Imagination, with the 'eternal act of creation in the infinite I am.' In each of these cases, the role of the poet as creator of meaning is being stressed, for the subjective approach to the meaning of the symbols places the responsibility for that meaning, directly upon the poet.

At the same time, Newman was the one man in the last two centuries who could have delivered modern poetry from the bondage of subjectivism which secular Romantic thought imposed upon it, for he was both an Augustan and a Romantic. Moreover he was a Platonist and an Aristotelian. In his theological and literary views, he was a  $\phi$  Platonist who had affinity with the Alexandrian Platonists but his epistemology was primarily Aristotelian. As a child he saw the vision whole and learnt

as he grew up how to divide it into parts. Hence he remarked: "Alas! What are we doing all through life, both as a necessity and as a duty, but unlearning the world's poetry, and attaining to its prose." <sup>15</sup> His Apologia proves emphatically that he was born a Platonist and became an Aristotelian through his education. But he chose poetry to be an expression of his staunch beliefs, his inner self and placed it at the service of religion.

The following section highlights Newman's poetic theories and the religious framework of his poetic views.

## 2.2. Evolution of Newman's poetic theories

The views Newman, the pilgrim poet held on the nature and function of literature and poetry changed from time to time. Thus we find a movement of growth in the ideas on poetry, expressed in his various essays. He spoke on poetry mainly in his essays: Poetry With Reference to Aristotle's Poetics, Prospects of the Anglican Church, John Keble; in his lecture On the Characteristics of Poetry, and in his lectures in The Idea of a University, especially in the essays on Literature, Christianity and Letters, and English Catholic Literature. These essays and lectures enable us to realize why Newman chose to be the kind of poet that he was, without conforming to the ideas of other poets, even though he was endowed with genuine poetic gifts.

The earliest essay Newman wrote on poetry was Poetry With Reference to Aristotle's Poetics. <sup>16</sup> It was written in 1828 but was published in 1829 and is usually referred to as the 1829 Essay. At the time Newman was moving away from the rationalism of the Oriel Noetics -- a group of Fellows of Oriel College noted for their extreme liberal tendencies. They considered no religious tenets important *unless* reason showed it to be so.



Newman was fearful of the usurpation of reason. At the time he wrote this Essay, he held a moralistically didactic view of poetry and this was evident in the poems of this period. It was part of his reaction against liberalism and so there is an over-emphasis on the moral element in his theory of poetry, as well as in his practice of it.

In the 1829 Essay, Newman questioned the importance given to plot in Aristotle's Poetics and ignored the Aristotelian doctrine of catharsis. He treated Aristotle's concept of tragedy in a Romantic rather than in a Classical manner. Newman changed Aristotle's objective and realistic conception of a poet's function into an inventive and idealist one. He did not agree with Aristotle's emphasis on plot. For Aristotle plot determined the excellence of a dramatic work, but Newman felt that the actual beauty of Greek tragedy did not arise from the 'correctness of the plot,' but from 'characters, sentiments, and diction.'<sup>17</sup> In his opinion, plot was but the vehicle used to introduce the persons of the drama and it was not the principal object of the poet's art, while Aristotle wanted the action to be 'of a certain magnitude,' an action which was in itself a set of symbols, Newman chose a subjective direction. There was no sense of economy in Aristotle, as Newman used the term by referring to 'the economy of the fable.' Although Aristotle was not concerned with spiritual qualities in the realm of ideas, Newman still looked for spiritual qualities in Aristotle. Newman's emphasis was upon the spirit of beauty which should permeate every part of the composition. For Newman, plot was an economical or sacramental representation of that spirit and so it had to be interpreted subjectively. In Newman's view Aristotle's treatment of dramatic composition was more an exhibition of 'ingenious workmanship'<sup>18</sup> than 'a free and unfettered effusion of genius.'<sup>19</sup> What appealed to Newman was the Romantic doctrine

of genius and inspiration. Here he was one with Wordsworth who thought of poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,' and with Coleridge whose emphasis was on character rather than on plot. Like these poets, Newman preferred suggestion, irregularity and vagueness to Greek clarity and form. Again like the Romantics, he exalted personal expression and genius over law and pattern. Newman's treatment of Aristotle's doctrine of ideal imitation was Romantic as well. He emphasized the ideal, conceived in a Romantic pseudo-Platonic fashion as a realm of perfection. He concluded that the plays which possessed the most perfect plots were not necessarily the most poetic. This idea was reinforced by his own emphasis upon spontaneous expression. These views led him to combine religious enthusiasm and lyric intensity as joint criteria for good poetry.

Newman wanted poetry to be an admixture of Aristotelianism, Platonism, Evangelicalism and Romanticism. Hence for him poetry:

. . . while it recreates the imagination by the superhuman loveliness of its views, it provides a solace for the mind broken by the disappointments and sufferings of actual life; and becomes, moreover, the utterance of the inward emotions of a right moral feeling, seeking a purity and a truth which this world will not give.<sup>20</sup>

In his view of the nature of poetry, as representation of the ideal, Newman took the stand of the Christian Platonist. He would have none of the profane muse; thus making poetry the utterance 'of a right moral feeling,' and 'seeking a purity and a truth,' beyond what this world could give, Newman Platonically rejected the world of the senses. In his opinion, a poetical mind would create eternal forms of beauty and perfection,'<sup>21</sup> in contrast to the common place conceptions

of ordinary minds. At this time, Newman's Evangelical upbringing did not encourage poetry that would be simple, sensuous and passionate, with no moral fibre. Yet his letters at this time were full of delightful descriptions of the beauties of nature.

In Newman's opinion, the poet was in a 'right moral state of heart,' <sup>22</sup> when actual grace was granted to him by God. The work of art recognized the correspondence between man and God. Keble too wanted poets to be concerned with unchanging universal truths. It was for this reason that Newman considered the end of poetry was to give pleasure to the imagination by 'the superhuman loveliness of its views' and to provide consolation to those disappointed by the sufferings of life. In this function, poetry became the expression of the inward emotions of a right moral feeling, which would result in a purity and truth which were not of this world. This was Newman's version of the Aristotelian catharsis. This reminds us of Arnold's demand for consolation from poetry. This view of Newman was typical of the early Victorian period.

It was because the poet approximated to Divine perfection, that the poetical mind was one that was full of the eternal forms of beauty and perfection. Such a mind would have empathy with what was great and splendid in the physical and moral world. In this shift from poetry to 'the poetical mind,' Newman repeated the Coleridgean distinction between the Primary and the Secondary Imagination. For Newman the artist selected the 'great and splendid' and transformed them into a higher substance. For him if art was to be true, it had to convey the dignity of the ideal in the physical world. This emotional-moral conception of art led Newman to form the view that poetry was founded upon 'correct moral perception.' As good poetry delighted in eternal things, it spoke the language of dignity, emotion and refinement. <sup>23</sup> Further, for Newman,

'A moral state of heart' was 'the formal and scientific condition of a poetical mind.'<sup>24</sup> Thus he tried to determine the quality of a poem in relation to the moral character of the poet.

Newman considered poetic talent, "the originality of right moral feeling," which he defined as "the power of abstracting for oneself, and is in thought what strength of mind is in action."<sup>25</sup> According to him 'originality' would activate the world of beauty, grace, purity, refinement and good feeling<sup>26</sup> and thus reconstruct the world. Here he emphasized the synthetic power of the Secondary Imagination. In Newman's view, 'originality' was a qualitative power which enabled the poet to transform ideas and sensations, and reshape them into expressions, concomitant with his moral character. According to Coleridge's theory of Imagination, 'originality' was the vitalizing power of the Secondary Imagination. Poetic talent was the power to abstract the correct moral stimuli. Newman was of the opinion that moral stimuli could be ideally perceived and if so originality and poetic talent would be one.

When Newman wrote this 1829 Essay, he had already studied Butler's Analogy of Religion from which he derived the idea of analogy and the doctrine of probability. The argument from analogy led Newman to view Nature as a symbol of spiritual reality. So in the Apologia, he spoke about 'the Sacramental system,' which was the doctrine that the material phenomena were both types and the instruments of real things unseen.<sup>27</sup> Keble expressed this same doctrine in The Christian Year. A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The Sacramental system appeared to be the central important ingredient in Newman's conception of poetry. Thus his poetic theory, with its emphasis on correct moral perception was developed analogically as correspondence between man and God.

He further spoke of the special grace of the writers of the New Testament and of those who had absorbed their spirit. Thus it was evident that Newman regarded poetry in a manner that was meant to approximate the mystery of the Sacrament. The emphasis upon grace suggested the idea of the mystery which was attached to the creation of great poetry, wrought through supernatural inspiration. This accounted for the particular nature of revealed religion and the 'peculiar grace of mind' of the Biblical authors. His conception of poetry was also an elaboration of the traditional idea of divine inspiration. Yet he related inspiration to grace in terms of the mystery of the Sacrament in Christ and the Church. Thus God gave supernatural assistance through divine inspiration.

It was because of its nature that 'actual grace' enabled man to perform spiritual actions. Hence Newman felt that an immoral man could still write moral poetry just as the moral state of a priest does not affect the efficacy of the sacrament. The 'virtuous and divine nature' to which he referred was the strength of actual grace and due to this the poet was in a 'right moral state of heart.' However, the work of art was not a tool of Divine Power. It was a way of recognizing the correspondence between man and God. It was for this reason that the artist, through his art, recreated the imagination by its superhuman loveliness. Because of its supernatural nature, poetry provided comfort to minds weighed down by the disappointments and the sufferings of this earthly life.

When he spoke of 'A moral state of heart' as 'the formal and scientific condition of a poetical mind,'<sup>28</sup> Newman transferred to the heart the moral judgement which he had previously reserved for the mind and the imagination. Because of the divine nature within him even a bad man could write a moral poem because even motives that were not the purest could lead to good actions. Newman seemed to maintain that there was

a moral universe behind the poem and the poet, regardless of the moral character of the poet. Thus he found a moral value in some poems even when the poet was destitute of correct moral perception. Despite these possibilities the poetry of a vicious mind would be debased while poetry founded upon right moral feeling, would be centred at that point from which all good proceeded. <sup>29</sup>

Newman did not approve of Byron's moral state of heart and felt that the incidental beauty of his poems did not redeem their 'unworthy' substance. In his opinion, poems were immoral when 'unworthy' substances were introduced into their subject matter. Like Arnold after him, Newman too indicted Lucretius for his moral incompetence. <sup>30</sup> Victorians as a whole did not approve of Byron and Tractarians generalized the character of poets on the basis of their writings. Newman considered that Hume and Gibbon had 'unpoetical minds,' <sup>31</sup> and deplored the 'unpoetical end' in Dryden's "Alexander's Feast."<sup>32</sup> For Keble and Newman the term 'poetic' stood for what was imaginative, aesthetic, mythic and moral. In Newman's opinion, Spenser, Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth and Southey approximated to this moral centre. <sup>33</sup> To Keble, the true object of poetry was to raise men above the state of sin and to recreate the ideal and he tried to awaken the poets to this task. Hence he disapproved of Byron who lingered over passion and vice.

Being well-versed in Greek literature, Newman was aware of the two views held by the Greeks as to the proper end of poetry. The traditional view was that poetry had a direct moral purpose. Hence the primary function of a poet was that of a teacher. Homer was thought of as the great teacher, who laid down rules needed for the conduct of life rather than as an inspired poet who charmed the imagination. Obviously Newman took his place along with Homer, in his passionate commitment to right conduct in human life. Aristotle for the first time

attempted to separate the theory of aesthetics from that of morals. He severed himself from the older and more purely didactic tendency of the Greeks. Though he did not altogether cast off the earlier influence, he did not allow the moral purpose of the poet and the moral effects of his art to take the place of his artistic end. If the poet failed to produce aesthetic pleasure, he failed in the specific function of his art.

The Aristotelian doctrine, handed down to modern times, often took a tinge of Roman thought which combined both the ethical and the aesthetical aspects. Thus in his Apologie for Poetrie, Sir Philip Sidney stated that the end of poetry was 'delightful teaching,' following the Ars Poetica of Horace, rather than that of Aristotle. The Elizabethans in general, concurred with Sidney's view. In the course of time Dryden brought about a change in this view when he wrote in the spirit of Aristotle that he considered delight to be the chief end of poetry and that it instructed only as it delighted. Arnold attempted to judge poetry by its moral content rather than by its technique and form. But Newman was concerned also with the moral character of poets. In this essential link between art and morality, between the character of the artist and the worth of his art, what was most evident was the Tractarian tone. These were fundamental positions both of the Tractarian and of the Victorian poetics as a whole. Keble wanted a poet to choose his subject worthily, and to be courageously and consistently loyal to it. The poetical pleasure was to awaken a moral feeling by way of association. Newman appreciated Southey's portrayal of characters, keeping in mind 'the doctrine of future life.'<sup>34</sup> Newman's delight in poetry revolved round those aspects of life which would endure, and his efforts were directed towards letting men see the transitoriness of life, set against eternity.

In the 1829 Essay Newman placed poetical talent in a religious frame of reference. Hence he considered the Bible as a literary product specifically founded upon correct moral perception. In his opinion Christianity was poetical as it unfolded a world of revelation full of symbols to delight the mind and enkindle emotion. Here his religious and poetic theories merged into one. He spoke of 'Revealed Religion' as especially poetical, because its disclosures would engage the intellect and present a beauty to satisfy the moral nature.<sup>35</sup> These disclosures provided ideal forms of excellence in which poetical minds delighted. They transported us to a realm of sublime views and pure feelings. Thus Newman found an intimate relation between right moral feeling and true poetry. Hence his assertion that religion itself was the truest poetry. In his opinion, 'With Christians, a poetical view of things' was 'a duty.'<sup>36</sup> Newman's poetic sensibilities and mystic vision brought home to him the supernatural beauty of Christianity. It placed before men sublime views, divine favour and a noble mission. These would require the practice of Christian virtues which were poetical, qualities such as meekness, gentleness, compassion, contentment, modesty, along with other humane virtues.<sup>37</sup> Here Newman equated great poetry with the kind of inspiration he found in Christianity. He formed a theory of writing in which the poetry should express the deep religious, moral and Platonic feelings of the subconscious.

The Bible, the early Fathers of the Church, the Prayer Book, the Church Liturgy and the Sacraments exercised a great influence on Newman's mind. These had a better cleansing effect for Newman than the catharsis/Aristotle had spoken of. Newman's poems and writings reveal the intimate hold the Bible had on him. He found the poetry of the Bible most moving. The books of the Bible were inspired by a pure and lofty faith and they in turn inspire the same noble sentiments on its readers.



In his opinion even ordinary human beings were no longer imperfect men, but beings endowed with divine favour. Keble also considered poetry and religion to be one in essence.

Newman's vision of the world was that of a Christian Platonist. The Christian conception pointed him to a higher life and a spiritual universe. Platonism taught the view that the visible world was a veil which held from our view the invisible world which was real and unchanging. The invisible world called us to its hidden presence as would a pale reflection in a mirror. Thus Platonism was similar to the Christian conception which discerned and contemplated the spiritual universe at the very heart of the concrete reality. Newman's spiritual outlook was deeply affected by these concepts and they inspired his poems, sermons and writings. To Newman, the present life with all its attractions was fundamentally deceptive because it veiled the only reality that mattered to him. Hence like Shelley in Adonais, Newman would have said: "Life, like a dome of many coloured glass, / Stains the white radiance of Eternity, . . . ." Finally, the only crowning presence which dwelt in the world was that of God. Like a sage, Newman tried to lead men to that world of invisible realities which lay at the deeper level of experience. With the help of religion and with his extraordinary sensitivity, insight and genius for reflection, Newman communicated his experience in a totally unique way.

In the 1829 Essay on Poetry, Newman also explicated his views on the technical and practical side of writing poetry. Newman and the Tractarians considered a concern for technique indecorous. They were exponents of reserve and were not concerned with apparent superficialities. The outward forms of poetry were only important to Newman, in so far as they revealed a deeper meaning. Using a telling metaphor he wrote of poetic technique as a 'metrical garb'<sup>38</sup> which was but the

outward expression of the music and harmony which the poem contained. In his opinion the poet's nature led to contemplation rather than to communication. According to him the obscurity in his lyric utterance could spring from the contemplative nature of the poet, the intensity of his feeling, the originality of his perceptions and his disregard for genius.<sup>39</sup> This would account for a certain want of accuracy and for a certain obscurity in Newman's own practice as a poet. He was also aware of the fact that obscurity could also spring from defects in the power of clear and eloquent expression. Newman belonged obviously to the former group of poets. The true poet was never interested in language for its own sake and so the language would be simple and concise. The early Victorians never approved of eloquence in poetry. The Tractarians wrote mostly lyrical poetry which were examples of the poet's contemplative habit of mind. This would require a certain sympathy in the reader. At the same time Newman admitted a need for technical skill and the power of illustration in literary composition.<sup>40</sup>

In Keble's opinion, the poet unburdened himself of profoundly religious impulses by the exercise of imagination. But in communicating religious knowledge, the poet should use 'due religious reserve' because of the sacredness of the subject. He wanted veiled modes of utterance to prevent outpourings from being vulgar, profane and merely emotional. He considered self-control to be the proof that the poet was mastered by a Higher Power. He thought that modesty, reserve and consistency were trustworthy tests of true and genuine feeling in the poet. In his opinion poetry served as a 'safety valve' for pent up feelings. Reserve could be practised by the laws of cadence and rhythm. Keble found that the allegorical forms in Shakespeare and Spenser suited the true reserve a poet ought to feel.

Newman found the power of expressing meaning in a logical manner important. The poet had to have a command of language in order to convey the exact shade of meaning to his readers. Newman like Wordsworth before him, scorned the idea of diction as external embellishment. Skills in the art of composition were to be nurtured only as a means to an end. Newman gave due credit to Pope for combining the grace of 'an inward principle of poetry' which supplied him with 'the beautiful and splendid to work by.'<sup>41</sup> Virgil's style was identified with his conceptions and 'the harmony of the verse' and Milton echoed 'the inward music' of his thoughts.<sup>42</sup> In Newman's opinion Moore's style was ornamental, Cowper's and Walter Scott's 'slovenly,' while Sophocles wrote without studied attention to style. He considered Homer's poems 'manly, simple,' 'energetic and varied.'<sup>43</sup>

Newman lived in an age beset with the temptation to obtain the approval of the public. Yet he held to his views that poetry must satisfy the moral nature and that talent for composition was "no essential part of poetry, though indispensable to its exhibition"<sup>44</sup> and that revealed religion was especially poetical. A firm Christian morality was essential in Newman's scheme. Hence he stood apart and sang in a strain all his own, those truths which he believed in and experienced and which he hoped for in a world to come.

The view of poetic inspiration held by Newman and Keble indicated their desire to enlist great literature in their attempt to rekindle the ethical and religious imaginations of their contemporaries. It was Romanticism with a difference. Yet he conveyed much of the Romantic spirit into his remarks on the classics in his Essay. When literary and religious issues met, there was a strong moral tone in his judgement.

Though the 1829 Essay lacked a fresh outlook on poetry, Newman occasionally passed pronouncements of literary insight

unusual in his day. For example, though Byron's prestige as a poet was at its height when he wrote the Essay, Newman was ahead of many of his contemporaries in regarding the poetry of Byron for the most part as eloquent rhetoric. He considered it a fault of the day that it mistook eloquence for poetry.<sup>45</sup> At the same time he regarded poetical eloquence, in the technical sense of the term as more or less necessary and explained what it consisted of. He considered 'image' as the basic element in poetry which expressed intense emotions and feelings of the heart.

In the 1829 Essay, Newman did not accept the Romantic doctrine of man as essentially good. He did not agree with Rousseau's view of the noble savage, with potentials for improvement until an earthly paradise was attained. In Newman's view, nothing short of revealed religion could change man or the world. So feeling the tremendous stress of reality at the heart of things, and in his search for a warmer and deeper understanding of man, he moved away from the philosophy of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century England. He incorporated a philosophy quite distinct from the former and modified his view of literature as well as that of religious truth. Unlike the extreme Romanticists, Newman broke away from neither the Classical nor the Christian traditions but tried to recapture both in his search for truth.

With his ever developing intellectual and religious outlook, Newman moved away from his early Romantic literary ideals. Thus, though he retained some of his early views, at a later time he did admit those who lacked correct moral perception to the circle of poets. His definition of poetry as something ideal was not only neo-Platonic and Coleridgean but it also echoed the taste of the eighteenth century school. The 1829 Essay with its serious and persuasive tone, its independent and disrespectful attitude towards old authority,

its enthusiasm for originality, imagination and its tendency to assimilate all poetry to the quality of the lyric, is a good example of early Victorian criticism.<sup>46</sup>

In his sermon of 1831, on The Danger of Accomplishments, Newman deplored the tendency of poetry and literary composition to make men 'trifling and unmanly' by separating feeling from acting.<sup>47</sup> He wanted feeling and action to go hand in hand. Hence what he did not accept was 'the mere literary ethos' and 'the mere poetry.' He always made clear his commitment to religion over literature. In The Idea of a University he stated that knowledge in itself was never enough and that only religion could cure the radical diseases of the human heart. He also distanced himself from an Arnoldian reliance upon 'culture' alone to overcome the moral anarchy.

Newman wanted poets to be seers and to confront the agents of error and sin. In the essay of 1839, Prospects of the Anglican Church,<sup>48</sup> the poetry he espoused was one in which the quest for an 'inner paradise' was given Romantic expression. To him the measure of his religion and his poetry was 'the spiritual awakening of spiritual wants,'<sup>49</sup> and not the inherited forms in which the spirit expressed itself in the past. As a result, his poetry moved away from the traditional language of English Christian poetry. He believed truth to be constant and he also believed that it dwelt in our conscience and heart, while its manifestations changed with the changing times.

In this essay on Prospects of the Anglican Church, he declared that poetry was mysticism, for in his view the mysticism of the ancients and poetry of the moderns penetrated below the surface of things. It had the power to transport men from the material to the invisible world.<sup>50</sup> Thus both mysticism and poetry served the same religious purpose. In this essay he gives due credit to Coleridge for instilling a higher philosophy into inquiring

minds, to Walter Scott who, through 'fantastic fiction' and Wordsworth who through 'philosophical meditation,' appealed to the same high principles and led their readers in the same direction.

Wordsworth, Coleridge and Newman were Romantics but Newman's Romantic outlook differed greatly from that of his predecessors. Newman did not accept Wordsworth's concept of Nature. He accepted the doctrine of economy as the divine mode of revealing sacred truths and thus joined the group of the neo-Platonists. Both Wordsworth and Newman saw with the 'inner eye' the deeper core of truth. But what mattered to Wordsworth was the visible world and the world of physical sensations. Newman found the unseen world as real to him as were natural surroundings to Wordsworth. To Wordsworth the life of Nature and the life of sensations were essential to 'see into the life of things.' For Newman these worlds were psychological and theological. Nevertheless, Newman shared with Wordsworth some qualities of a 'childhood visionary.'

Newman did not approve of the claims of the poetic imagination Wordsworth and Coleridge advocated, neither did he trust their concept of symbolism. For Newman Christianity was more than a set of symbolic truths. Newman found in Christ and the Church the 'Object Correlative.' This phrase of Newman was later taken up by T. S. Eliot.<sup>51</sup> Newman tried to control the subjective inner world and established a connection between the desiring mind and what he termed the true 'Object Correlative' or the reality to those inner needs. For Newman, religion became his poetry. It satisfied completely his intellectual, emotional and aesthetic needs.

The mystical strain in Alexandrian philosophy and Romantic poetry brought Wordsworth, Coleridge and Newman in parallel directions in the quest for an 'inner paradise.' They reacted against a secularized philosophy in the Church, against <sup>n</sup>Bethamism and political economy in the society. Hence both the Romantics and Newman turned to mysticism which had the power to enable men to reach the invisible world. In his quest for an 'inner paradise,' Newman

turned to Christianized Platonism which nourished his belief in the autonomy of conscience. But Wordsworth and Coleridge accepted a secularized Christianity that placed less emphasis upon ethical imperatives and upon the knowledge of God. Coleridge's neo-Platonist idealism was similar to Newman's Christian idealism. They both believed in the division between the visible and the invisible world. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Newman looked for the subjective experience of the mind, that 'serene and blessed mood' in which the husks of things dropped away and nature was transcended. Thus they focused their attention on 'the living mind' as the 'cornerstone of belief.'

The objective of Tractarian aesthetics was to establish a strong link between poetry and religion. Coleridge who defined Imagination in religious terms and likened it to the Infinite act of creation was an early influence on Tractarian poetics. Like Coleridge, the Tractarians regarded religion and aesthetics as kindred fields. This was the basis for a religiously developed Tractarian aesthetics. Coleridge contributed to Newman's 'spirit afloat' in bringing together aesthetic and religious concepts and terminology. Thus the Tractarians were the recipients of a Romantic aesthetic heritage which concerned itself with the nature of artistic creativity and the nature of the artist. But the Romantics did not emphasize the role of religion as much the Tractarians and especially as Newman did.

Newman found the teachings of the Church and every aspect of nature an occasion for worship. This urged him to use his talents in religious pursuits which included the writing of poetry. Thus his understanding of religion made his poetics inextricable from worship. God speaking and urging within was Newman's view of the inner power of the religious poetic impulse and in him it was expressed in suppressed intensity. Hence, Newman combined Biblical and religious allusions to convey his message.

In 1846, in his essay on John Keble,<sup>52</sup> Newman expressed

views similar to those expressed in his 1829 Essay on Church and her poetry. In the essay on John Keble, written shortly after his entrance into the Catholic Church, Newman's own logic became poetical, in the reference to the rituals of the Church. To him the Church herself was 'the most sacred and august of poets' and her discipline of 'the affections and passions,' her ordinances and practices a 'cleansing' of the sick soul, in the Aristotelian sense.<sup>53</sup> In the Church he found a poet, full of music 'to soothe the sad and control the wayward.'<sup>54</sup> The story of the Church and her saints would feed the imagination of the Romantic, and was rich in symbol and imagery. For him the Church and her liturgy were "a fulfilment of some dream of childhood, or aspiration of youth."<sup>55</sup> The Church inspired the poets born to her to write hymns and to compose chants and thus for Newman the aesthetic unity of poetry was analogous to the divine unity of the Church. It was she who inspired him to write hymns, compose chants, and poems in her honour, and to guide her people to serve her and to live a life worthy of her. In this essay on John Keble when he commented that poetry was the refuge of those who had not the Catholic Church to repose upon,<sup>56</sup> he made clear that he had no use for Matthew Arnold's substitution of poetry for religion.

In the lecture of 1849, On the Characteristics of Poetry,<sup>57</sup> Newman spoke of poetry as the science of the beautiful which refined and cultivated the mind. He did not approve of Milton poeticizing evil and making Satan the hero in Paradise Lost; neither did he approve of Byron's attractive portrayal of Cain.<sup>58</sup> The Romantic leaning in him accepted the view that poetry was the perception, and the poetical art the expression of the beautiful. He wanted the beautiful to consist of harmony, proportion and poetic justice. He did not approve of tragedy as he found no poetic justice there, for evil was not adequately punished. He desired poetry to move the



affections, as the saints were moved by the beauty of the Supreme Being. For him, sublimity and imagination were the great ingredients of poetry. In a Platonic consideration of artistic beauty, he praised Southey's Thalaba.<sup>59</sup> Like Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, he sought a more emotional and imaginative conception of poetry. According to him true poetry partook of gentleness, simplicity, sweetness and even playfulness. Newman felt that though melancholy could exist, misanthropy had no place in true poetry.<sup>60</sup>

Three decades after his 1829 Essay, there was a remarkable change in his attitude towards poetry. The lectures of 1855 and 1858 published in The Idea of a University contain his later views on poetry and literature. His lecture on Literature<sup>61</sup> contains the most mature expressions of his literary theory. By this time he had arrived at a clear and consistent point of view. Many of his earlier points of view were thoroughly assimilated into his general theory. The early influences of Johnson and even Plato were discarded, bringing him closer now to Coleridge and Mill. He learnt from them and made their ideas his own and developed them consistently with his own philosophy. At this time, in his opinion, the author of a creative work had to have two points to consider. First of all, he had to have something to say and secondly he ought to know how to say it. He had to be master of them both, with the result that in the work of art they were inseparable.<sup>62</sup>

In this lecture, Newman placed inspiration above mere 'workmanship.' Giving examples of great poets like Homer, Shakespeare and others, he showed how inspiration brought forth poetical outpourings from the core of their hearts.<sup>63</sup> He considered poetry "the fire within the author's breast which overflows in the torrent of his burning, irresistible eloquence; it is the poetry of his inner soul."<sup>64</sup> What he tried to show was that literature expressed not objective but

subjective truth. Hence it was essentially personal, for thoughts and ideas belonged to the person, and the symbols conveyed these thoughts. According to him scientific study was 'objective' because it dealt with 'things' and not 'thoughts' and it took the external world as an end in itself and not as a vehicle for invisible ideas.<sup>65</sup>

In place of Aristotle's emphasis upon plot, Newman preferred a subjective or 'poetic' treatment in which the plot was a sacramental representation of 'the fire within the author's breast,' instead of a 'thing' possessing its own objective value. According to Newman, poetry transcended things and passed on to that moment when the light of the senses was suspended. For him, the purpose of literary symbols was to convey what lay in the mind of the poet just as the purpose of religious symbols and of the whole natural order was to convey economically what lay in the mind of God. For both of these devotional poets, Keble and Newman, poetical forms of thought and language were channels of supernatural knowledge to mankind. Poetry was a gift of great importance to religion, for it was the poetic mode of vision which made it possible for man, while still on earth, to reach the knowledge of God. Hence they felt that poetry was indeed mysticism.

Aristotle considered the poet to be a 'maker,' and his poem 'a thing made,' but for Newman, speaking in his lecture on Literature, poems were 'born, not framed;' they were 'a strain rather than composition.'<sup>66</sup> The Dream of Gerontius, more than any other of his poems, exemplifies the genesis of poetry which wells up in free flowing inspiration, uncrafted, yet fully developed. When Newman felt that he might die soon and would attain that Beatific Vision for which his soul always longed, the insatiable desire of his heart for that lasting union with God gushed forth in unparalleled poetical eloquence in his poem The Dream of Gerontius.

There was still a touch of moralism about the conception of poetry, as expressed in his lecture. Through the words of the poets were expressed what was common to the race of man. Poets brought mankind together and became spokesmen and prophets of the human family. But this was far from the earlier rigid moral purpose demanded of the poet in the 1829 Essay. In a note added to this Essay in 1874, Newman confessed that he had outgrown his idea of poetry. He now recognized that the 1829 Essay had omitted one of the essential conditions of the idea of poetry, namely, its relation to affections. Now for him, poetry was the gift of moving the affections through the imagination, and its object was the beautiful. Thus the poet while conveying his message or vision ought to move the affections of men.

In The Idea of a University, Newman stated that to be fully aware of the poetic beauty around us, like children we had to be aware of the immeasurable, the impenetrable and the mysterious around us and gaze at it, without imagining that we could comprehend it. Thus for him, poetry was an experience of the imagination and the affections, an intimation from a Platonic supersensible realm of being. This view was limited as it left out much genuine poetry. It was only one way of conceiving poetry and poetic experience. In contrast to Newman's view, Arnold's Preface of 1853, looked to poetry for an experience of those perfections which the world could not give. On the whole, Newman denied to literature that power of grasping universal and objective realities which Matthew Arnold saw in the great writers. For Newman reality was absolute knowledge and that lay beyond the power of literature, which was the record of 'sinful man.' Literature according to him, cultivated one's taste, strengthened one's judgement, imparted poise and grace to one's mind and released one from prejudice. But for him, only the Church could give insight into

the real nature of the world and its destiny, into religious objectives and experiences.

In course of time Newman came to hold the opinion that literature was the untutored movement of the reason, imagination, passion and affections of the natural man, "the noble, lawless savage of God's intellectual creation."<sup>67</sup> Hence literature could also express the sinful condition of man, the beauty and the fierceness, the sweetness and the offensiveness of the natural man. In the 1829 Essay, Newman had stated that revealed religion and the Christian virtues were especially poetical. So the maturity of his views is evident here. At this time, he wanted literature to embrace human nature in its manifold character and did not exclude works of genius for moral reasons. This could be due to a fusion of the Augustinian view of human nature and his reflection on the problem of inspiration and its relating<sup>o</sup> to the doctrine of grace. Though Newman was of one mind with Shelley on many points in the 1829 Essay, the main difference between them lay in their doctrines of inspiration. While Shelley equated poetic genius with inspiration, Newman had held the view that exercise of the poetic imagination was a natural function, which could be linked to personal purity or personal profligacy.

Imagination was not that strong a word for Newman when he wrote his 1829 Essay, but it was so by 1870, when he wrote the book The Grammar of Assent. By that time imagination had become for him the prime instrument of religious perception. In this work we find Newman reacting against mere Platonism. It was not the 'notional' but the 'real' that seemed right to him now, because the former involved an act of the theological intellect while the latter involved the religious imagination which spoke through images and symbols, and affected not only the intellect but also the emotions and

thus the whole person.<sup>68</sup> Newman had developed the Romantic theological tradition of Wordsworth and Coleridge with sensitivity, skill and brilliant reasoning. Yet he did not want to be a poet in the sense that they were and to make use of the gift of a myth-making capacity. Newman considered his poetic work to be of a sacred nature and emphasized the importance of imagination in coming to a belief in Christ. He wanted this to be the highest function of the imagination and after that was accomplished, it could devote itself to poetry.

Newman's opinion of literature was in keeping with the whole Greek and Christian view of man. His view was also Romantic, religious and other worldly, but his view of prose and his practice were both Classical. In fact he synthesized in himself the best in these various outlooks and thus stands out not only among his contemporaries but even among writers of twentieth century. The ruling idea of his literary works is the Christian conception of man but the conclusions he drew from this traditional view were clearly his own. Newman's contribution was a view of literature which is the blended might of humanism and religion. Realizing the need for this blended might in his own day, he worked whole heartedly to create an atmosphere in which it could be achieved.

Hence Newman's works echo the nobility and saintliness of his character and they aim at guiding men by the same 'Kindly Light' which he followed with a rare singleness of purpose. Every artist has a unique vision. This he expresses while the other vision he overlooks. The vision that Newman had was Christian Platonic. As a result, his text was the World Beyond. The main objective of his works was to help men to follow the light of his vision which was to live a noble Christian life in this world, that it might prepare them to be worthy heirs of the world which lay behind the visible reality. The world of today stands in need of humanism and religion in its own

legitimate place, for at present culture makes but a poor show without its counterpart religion.

The following chapter attempts to throw light on the poetic traits of the pilgrim.

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