ASPECTS OF
HEROISM AND EVOLUTION
IN SOME POEMS BY E. J. PRATT

by

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ABSTRACT

A study of Pratt's poetry reveals heroism as existing only in relation to an evolutionary metaphor that shows organic life progressing from an amoral environment to an ever more differentiated society. Man is heroic if he can establish, in his opposition to the environment, an order that is based on ethics and a "brotherhood of man" as well as on strong, instinctual emotions that keep him aware--consciously or unconsciously--of his evolutionary origins. If man loses this awareness he loses his sense of identification with nature and exists within the illusion that the environment can no longer seriously affect him. The cost of this illusion is destruction, because at some time man must confront his environment, and if he has no feeling for it "in the blood", he has no effective means of coping with it.

The most significant factor defining heroism is the ability to integrate uninhibited emotion with ethical compassion. Pratt's early poetry emphasizes instinctive feeling. In "The Great Feud" the anthropoidal ape only realizes the necessity of ethics based on compassion
after she has caused universal destruction. The Roosevelt and the Antince, written in 1930, demonstrates the ideal integration of feeling for the environment and compassion for other life. By 1935, however, with the writing of The Titanic, Pratt went to the other extreme, almost denying the possibility of an ideal synthesis, for the ship symbolizes a society living under an all-encompassing illusion from which only a few individuals manage to free themselves. Brébeuf and His Brethren is Pratt's most complex poem, demonstrating the greatest conflict between the extremes of instinct and civilization in its progress toward a heroic resolution. Brébeuf emphasizes the greatest contrast between these opposites as he gives the Indians "roar for roar", yet finds the source of his strength in the vision of the cross.
for barbara
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heroism in a world dominated by indifferent power structures. Most of the ideas included here have been thoroughly "worked over" in the course of our discussions and, at times, arguments, and would never have found their place here in their present form without her help. No formal acknowledgment can express my gratitude for this kind of assistance, and for the many hours spent during the many nights, helping me type, proof-read, and remain awake.
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INTRODUCTION

Heroism is often revealed, in Pratt's poetry, in the apparently straightforward struggle of man against his environment. A close study, however, shows heroism to be a complex, and often paradoxical, theme that reflects a major paradox in the poet's own life. Peter Buitenhuis states: "Pratt's belief in evolutionary theory, as well as his studies in psychology and anthropology, led him towards relativism and agnosticism; at the same time, his upbringing and his own studies in Pauline eschatology influenced him to look for final causes".¹

Pratt's poetry expresses heroism as comprising a resolution of paradoxes. Through his poetry Pratt explores the extremes of both evolution and Christian ethics, and then tries to resolve the opposites. He finds that both extremes can be equally destructive if allowed to dominate within an individual or within a society. If the polarities are brought into a state of equal tension, however, they may gradually resolve themselves in a synthesis. This synthesis is the core of Pratt's belief in heroism.

Pratt's early poems tend to emphasize the environment and evolution with regard to the lower forms of life. These poems often become allegorical in their parallels to human life. The Witches' Brew is a humorous treatment of man's "fall" from grace and the destructive power of evolution gone wrong. "The Great Feud" is a more serious exploration of evolution when directed by perverted reason. The poem reaches its climax in a scene of almost total destruction, in which all life except the female ape and her brood is annihilated. The destruction caused by perverted reason is expressed more clearly in a later poem of Pratt's, "The Submarine", and the ethical code that merely begins to emerge in the early poems finds a fuller expression in the later poem, "The Truant".

The Roosevelt and the Antinoe is Pratt's fullest expression of a heroic synthesis of opposites. The sailors of both vessels integrate an instinctual feeling for the sea with a code of ethics based on compassion and the willingness to help others. This integration of opposites also results in single deeds and decisions that are heroic. Wertanen's risking of his own life to save others, and Captain Fried's decision to risk the lives of all aboard his ship in an attempt to save the
crew of the Antinoe are both heroic because they are the result of a code based on a full synthesis of opposites.

By 1935, however, with the writing of The Titanic, Pratt had become disillusioned, not with the ideal of a heroic synthesis, but with the probability of the ideal being incorporated into actual life. The Titanic is a complex narrative that bears similarities to "The Great Feud", but has a much greater impact on the reader because the narrative is based on an actual event, and because the atmosphere of illusion is emphasized so strongly.

Pratt again moves closer to realizing the possibility of a heroic synthesis with the writing of Brébeuf and His Brethren. Although the philosophical framework of the narrative is based on a synthesis of the civilized and the savage, however, this synthesis is not fully evident in Brébeuf himself. Brébeuf exhibits both extremes with equal force, but fails to recognize the primal within himself, or to learn how to cope with it in a way that advances life. Brébeuf therefore dies, partly as a martyr, partly as an egotist, but in failing to come to a full resolution, he is the best portrait in Pratt's poetry of the complexity of man.
After Brébeuf and His Brethren, Pratt wrote two more long narratives, Behind the Log, and Towards the Last Spike. Neither of these poems, however, equals Brébeuf with regard to expressing the opposites of primal emotion and ethical compassion. Both deal with corporate heroism, and are more similar to The Roosevelt and the Antinoe than to The Titanic and to Brébeuf and His Brethren. These poems, as well as many of the shorter lyrics, have therefore not come into the scope of the present study.
CHAPTER I
THE NATURE OF HEROISM

The first responses to Pratt's publications were simply praise for the "vigorous red-blooded verse" that treated heroic deeds as everyday occurrences, and accepted heroism as a natural quality in man. More recently, Peter Buitenhuis has emphasized Pratt's belief in evolution, noting that "the evolutionary process early became and always remained the central metaphor of Pratt's work". Buitenhuis relates evolution to heroism when he praises Pratt for being "able to forge and maintain a vision of collective heroism".

Pratt's concept of evolution originated more from Herbert Spencer's writings and his coined principle of "survival of the fittest" than from Darwin's original groundwork on evolution. The recognition of evolution as a major theme in Pratt's work qualifies heroism, and

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1 "Ivanhoe" (W. T. Allison), "Lively Verse by a Newfoundland Poet," in The Winnipeg Tribune, 30 April, 1923.
3 Buitenhuis, Selected Poems, p. xxix.
4 Buitenhuis, Selected Poems, p. xiii.
forces the reader to consider and evaluate heroics according to various stages of the evolutionary development of organic life. The reader is compelled to reconcile heroics with primitive, unconscious actions, as well as with actions and emotions that have become so rationalized and refracted that actual motives become untraceable.

Pratt's interpretation of evolution resulted largely from his early identification with the sea and the landscape in Newfoundland. This environment became a major symbol in his poetry for the lower or more primal stages of evolution. In an early rhetorical statement on Pratt, W. E. Collin says,

Throughout his early years in Newfoundland where he was born, the Atlantic rolled and roared about him, hugged him in its mighty grip, sent its spirit coursing through his man's body, tempered his digestion to gargantuan revelry, till his imagination could only be nourished by the titanic and heroic.5

Collin's discussion provides a link between heroism and nature, and indicates Pratt's fascination with his environment, a fascination further attested to by E. K. Brown, Northrop Frye, and David Pitt.6


Nature is significant in Pratt's poetry on both a physical and a moral level. Physically, Pratt's heroes constantly confront a universe or a representative part of a universe that is immense, infinite, unchanging and indifferent, an environment that compels them to face their own apparent futility and insignificance. The Canadian environment in Pratt's poetry is too stark, too overwhelming to be ignored. Man not only has to survive in this environment, he also must extract his living from it. The continual struggle for existence against the forces of nature provides vast potential for either heroism or for total self-centeredness. Heroism is demonstrated through readiness to aid others in the struggle for life. A heroic deed results from an ethical choice, and consequently represents a departure from the simple evolutionary code of self-preservation.

Heroism is therefore directly related, and at the same time opposed, to both evolution and the environment. The overpowering psychological effect of the land and man's total physical dependence upon it result in extremely strong, polarized reactions in Pratt's characters. These reactions may be either heroic or selfish, but they have the common purpose of conquering the environment. Marcia Kline's statement on Francis Parkman and Audubon is equally applicable to Pratt's heroes:
Nature is vast and filled with superhuman forces, but it is still the environment that makes, and tests, the finest men. The natural world remains . . . something to be mastered—and mastered in its wild state, by sheer force of will and strength, not mastered by civilization and thus made impotent.7

In extreme situations, Pratt's heroes confront the physical environment directly, and where this confrontation results from compassion or the desire to help others, as in the rescue scenes of The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, man is almost always the victor.8

Pratt describes nature powerfully and vividly, especially in his best epics: The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, The Titanic, and Brébeuf and His Brethren. These descriptions, however, remain within a conventionally realistic framework, although Northrop Frye notes, with regard to the poem "Silences", that the world "under the sea" is not, in fact, silent.9 In this instance Pratt has chosen, as he also does in his extravaganzas and some


8 E. J. Pratt, The Roosevelt and the Antinoe (Toronto: Macmillan, 1930), p. 37. The crew of the Roosevelt finally have to "grapple... with the storm-king bodily" in order to win their contest against the environment.

of his shorter poems, to place full emphasis on the symbolic function of nature even though this emphasis may distort the physical description.

Although Pratt's descriptive scenes are realistic, the environment in his poetry is primarily important for its symbolic function. Nature is an amoral force against which man must define his own morality and ethical structure through the use of reason. The evolutionary metaphor in Pratt's poetry is that of society gradually moving toward a more ordered existence, an existence which may be oriented toward either life or death in its final significance, depending on man's reaction to nature. If man's concern is for the survival of others as well as for himself, then his response is heroic and life-oriented. If man's concern is for his own survival only, then his response is death-oriented, because for Pratt survival of mankind depends on a brotherhood in which everyone is willing to give in order to help others.

Northrop Frye's assertion that he has "long been impressed in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature" applies strongly to Pratt's work. Frye goes on to explain that

it is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature seems an unanswerable denial of those values.

The "human and moral values" to which the mind clings represent the first stages of order, and man's first separation from the environment. These values have a rational basis because they originate in the mind as man evolves from the primal unity of nature; they are his claim to individuality. Frye defines "sanity" as self-established order, and when this order is threatened by an imposing absolute against which the human mind is helpless, then sanity is threatened. The "terror of the soul" is therefore a deep fear resulting from the knowledge that nature can destroy in an instant the whole process whereby man has established his identity, a fear that the amorality of nature may too easily be reasserted within the human mind. The "terror of the soul" is an unwilling, almost unconscious, recognition that man is still inextricably tied to the law of self-preservation.

The "vast unconsciousness of nature" as opposed to any culture built on consciousness and reasoning is powerfully portrayed in "Silences":

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There is no silence upon the earth or under the earth like the silence under the sea;

There is no fury upon the earth like the fury under the sea. For growl and cough and snarl are the tokens of spend-thrifts who know not the ultimate economy of rage. Moreover, the pace of the blood is too fast. But under the waves the blood is sluggard and has the same temperature as that of the sea.

There is something pre-reptilian about a silent kill.

Away back before the emergence of fur or feather, back to the unvocal sea and down deep where the darkness spills its wash on the threshold of light, where the lids never close upon the eyes, where the inhabitants slay in silence and are as silently slain.12

This poem is Pratt's most vivid portrayal of primal nature. The "silence under the sea" represents the bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder, a total lack of consciousness or awareness. The world under the sea is based on need and instinct, not on thought or feeling. The only law that exists is the law of self-preservation, a law that is destructive for all but the strongest organisms. Frye characterizes this absolute state as comprising "a moral silence deeper than any physical silence".13


13 Frye, Literary History, p. 843.
The primal state is synonymous with an amoral state, for both preclude the recognition of any values or standards.

Frye's comments seem especially applicable to Pratt's poetry because they probe beneath the surface structure of the poems for a sub-conscious, unified core of meaning belonging to a common human experience. This applicability is deceptive, however, because Pratt and Frye are opposed in a basic way. Frye is solidly grounded in a monistic framework, basing his theories on the conviction that all literature has its basis in an early mythological structure. This allows him to place Pratt in the oral poetry tradition of medieval Europe.

Although Pratt bases his poetry on the theory of evolution which also seems to be monistic, he is in fact a dualist because his poetry represents an attempt to synthesize two opposites: the evolutionary code of self-preservation, and the Christian-oriented ethic of compassion. Heroism in Pratt's poetry consists of a synthesis of these opposites. The sailors who rescue the crew of the Antinoe are heroic because they acknowledge primal origins through their intimate feeling for the sea and its violence, but act according to an ethical, not an evolutionary law. Brébeuf seems to represent a reversal of evolution as
he gives the Indians "roar for roar", but this reversal is only a partial return to a life based on instinct in order to make a synthesis possible. He has earlier been oriented solely towards an ethical structure, and has had to rediscover primordial instincts within himself.

Frye's theory of the "garrison mentality", which claims that Canadians collectively try to combat the "terror of the soul" by adhering strictly to a rationally instituted set of norms and mores, is only partially applicable to Pratt's poetry. Frye states that the garrison often becomes sterile through its uniformity.14 The Roosevelt and the Antioch demonstrates uniformity of will and action, but a uniformity that is vital and powerful rather than sterile, and is battling against an equally vital, powerful environment. In Behind the Log Pratt explicitly stresses the need for uniformity, and though this uniformity represents a defensive "garrison", it is not defensive in Frye's sense of being a deliberate attempt to guard against the unconscious force of the environment. For Frye the conflict between the garrison and the environment remains constant, although the protagonists change in structure:

14 Frye, Literary History, p. 830.
As the centre of Canadian life moves from the fortress to the metropolis, the garrison mentality changes correspondingly. It begins as an expression of the moral values generally accepted in the group as a whole, and then, as society gets more complicated and more in control of its environment, it becomes more of a revolutionary garrison within a metropolitan society. But though it changes from a defense of to an attack on what society accepts as conventional standards, the literature it produces, at every stage, tends to be rhetorical, an illustration or allegory of certain social attitudes.¹⁵

Pratt's belief in a synthesis of opposites represents a more fluid concept than Frye's because it allows for continual progression. The anthropoidal ape of "The Great Feud" emerges heroically at the end of the narrative by recognizing that self-preservation must be balanced by ethical compassion. The Roosevelt and the Antioe shows a further synthesis of opposing forces because both compassion for one's fellow man and a feeling for the sea are naturally accepted elements of the poem. "The Truant" and "From Stone to Steel" are two short poems that demonstrate this progression to a remarkable degree. Brébeuf, through his partial return to primal origins, exhibits the greatest tension between instinct and ethics in Pratt's poetry, but this tension of opposites does not resolve itself fully into a synthesis.

A useful balance to Frye is Jack Warwick's The Long Journey. Although Warwick, dealing with literary themes

¹⁵ Frye, Literary History, p. 834.
in French Canadian literature, never mentions Pratt, his ideas are surprisingly parallel to Pratt's. The basic theme of Warwick's thesis is the quest. The theme is not a new one, but is given new vigour in its relation to, and dependence on, the Canadian environment. Like Frye, Warwick sees order as represented by civilization, in opposition to the freedom of the wilderness, but he does not view human settlements as being necessarily sterile. Nor does he accept nature as the ultimate source of life and vitality. Warwick is, like Pratt, a dualist. Nature and order are opposed to each other, as evolution and Christian ethics are for Pratt, but the value of neither can be denied. Warwick finds a synthesizing factor in the *coureur de bois*, and later the *voyageurs*, who entered the wilderness and became part of it, while at the same time furthering the purposes of the settlements, and remaining tied to them. The *coureur de bois* manifest the universal hero in quest of the Holy Grail, and become a major symbol in French Canadian literature for the individual seeking new life and freedom from established orders, but at no time do they symbolize a denial of order.

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The coureur de bois represent a continuing quest for freedom and for individuality, but this quest never raises the question, as Frye states, of being "either a fighter or a deserter". Referring to Pratt, Frye continues:

The societies in Pratt's poems are always tense and tight groups engaged in war, rescue, martyrdom, or crisis, and the moral values expressed are simply those of that group. In such a society the terror is not for the common enemy . . . The real terror comes when the individual feels himself becoming an individual, pulling away from the group, losing the sense of driving power that the group gives him, aware of a conflict within himself far subtler than the struggle of morality against evil.17

Although the societies in Pratt's poems are, as Frye says, "tight groups", they are also vital, with the exception of the society in The Titanic, and exhibit no struggle for individuality from within. The real terror in Pratt's poetry is not that of the individual feeling himself becoming an individual, but rather a terror felt by the reader as he is drawn into a realization of how dependent the human race is on primal, instinctual needs as well as on reason and ethics in order to survive and progress. Like Warwick, Pratt finds that the only hope for progress is through a synthesis of opposites by entire societies, not merely by individuals. The real terror

17 Frye, Literary History, pp. 830-831.
inherent in Pratt’s concept of nature is the fear that
societies, through a counterfeit sense of progress, will
become so distant from their environment that a synthesis
will no longer be possible. The end result of such
distance would be destruction, either by nature as in
The Titanic, or by man himself, as shown in “The Submarine”.

The Titanic is a complex example of a society that
has been lulled, through news media and other delusory
and illusory factors, into the false conviction that it
is invulnerable. This conviction seems to divorce the
ship entirely from its environment, a separation existing,
however, only in the collective mind of the society,
and not recognized by nature itself. When the Titanic
hits the iceberg and begins to sink, the counterfeit
society starts to disintegrate. The conflict between the
evolutionary code of self-preservation and the ethical
code of compassion reasserts itself, and heroism again
becomes possible:

A man clutched at the rim
Of a gunwale, and a woman's jewelled fist
Struck at his face; two others seized his wrist,
As he released his hold, and gathering him
Over the side, they staunched the cut from the ring.
And there were many deeds envisaging
Volitions where self-preservation fought
Its red Primordial struggle with the "ought",
In those high moments when the gambler tossed
Upon the chance and uncomplaining lost.18

18 Pratt, The Titanic (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935),
p. 41.
The woman’s "jewelled fist" is a testimonial to the law of self-preservation disguised by the veneer of a culture that has become decadent. Confronted with an unavoidable decision, she chooses to preserve herself at the expense of any humane feelings she may have for others. The reference to jewels suggests a jewelled hand with its connotations of refinement and gentility, but on fingers that form a fist the jewels ironically become sharp instruments of warfare which the woman uses for selfish purposes. The passage also stresses the importance of the moral choice in the many instances where "self-preservation fought / Its red primordial struggle with the 'ought'". Others in the lifeboat, as desperate as the woman, help the drowning man into the boat and staunch his cut, thus balancing the selfish greed for life of the woman with their selfless, heroic recognition of a moral code based on humane feelings.

Pratt's characters do not often recognize their primal or evolutionary origins, or experience the fear that this recognition engenders. Through their actions, however, they compel the reader to realize man's "special capacity for retroversion--for regression", to realize that "the primitive mind is, in the fullest meaning of the word, imperishable". The "jewelled fist" represents

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an evolutionary regression to a primitive stage of existence, and therefore a failure to synthesize the opposites of instinct and compassion. This instance also symbolizes an aspect of life in Pratt's poetry as terrifying as the recognition that the primal always remains in man. Although the primal may and does reassert itself, it cannot do so in the form of an amoral existence. Once a code of morality has been established, the only alternatives are morality and immorality.

The Witches' Brew pictures a symbolic "fall" from an amoral position that knows "No Reason's holy light to read / The truth and no desire to search", to a position based on moral and ethical values, one that is well "trained / To the warm arts of human sinning". Having drunk the witches' brew, the fish can no longer return to their previous, cold-blooded state. Similarly, the woman striking the man in the face is not amoral, but immoral, because she is conscious of a moral code and wilfully decides to transgress it in favor of the primal code of self-preservation.

Pratt's heroes are neither overly civilized to the extent that they lose all feeling for nature, nor entirely

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primal, although primal forces often unconsciously excite and fascinate Pratt. The hero recognizes the value of reason and order, but also has the sea, or nature, running "within the sluices"\textsuperscript{21} of his heart. The truant swears "by the Rood" that he will not join the "ballet" of a mechanistic universe, but though his oath is based on a Christian symbol, his defiance is entirely human.

Brébeuf's life ends in an emotional climax that compels the reader to realize just how "tissue-thin" the boundary is between spiritual beliefs based on morality and a primal frenzy similar to that of Tyrannosaurus Rex in "The Great Feud".

Heroic man always defines himself, as in the lyric "Newfoundland", by his life and death struggle with nature in the interests of a joint society:

\begin{quote}
Tide and wind and crag,
Sea-weed and sea-shell
And broken rudder--
And the story is told
Of human veins and pulses,
Of eternal pathways of fire,
Of dreams that survive the night,
Of doors held ajar in storms.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

Heroism for Pratt involves a long history of "broken rudder[5]", for he would rather have man blunder constantly


\textsuperscript{22} Pratt, "Newfoundland," p. 90.
than not to act at all. Pratt's heroes do not demonstrate fear of individuality, because Pratt seldom deals with the individual consciousness. His poetry is largely concerned with the "corporate man", therefore individuals seldom "come alive", and usually typify concepts.

Pratt's heroes incorporate the primal element within themselves in varying degrees, and portray a natural, but not often moral, fear of the environment. The moral terror is felt by the reader in response to the poetry. The reader, rather than the fictional character, feels himself "becoming an individual... losing the sense of driving power that the group gives him, aware of a conflict within himself far subtler than the struggle of morality against evil". The source of the terror lies in the difference between what Pratt's poetry shows to be a healthy reaction to nature, and what the reader himself has become accustomed to feeling is a normal, healthy reaction. In Pratt's context, the "garrison" as representative of sterility is outside of the poetry, with the exception, again, of The Titanic.

Pratt's view of evolution and ethics is directly related to a scale that demonstrates an ever greater balance of opposites in the heroic characters. The protagonist who adheres only to the dictates of needs and instincts gradually gives way to the hero who uses reason to make decisions and is aware of their importance. The anthropoidal ape in "The Great Feud" strongly emphasizes this process, as she first of all becomes aware of reason, and then of its consequences. The Roosevelt and the Antinoe represents a further stage of evolution in which the calculated risk replaces the carefree gamble, although the gambling motif remains important in Pratt's poetry throughout. Wertanen's instinctual, strongly emotional response to the crisis allows him to gamble freely with his life and lose it in an effort to save others when he finds that "the sheer / Abandon of his youth" fails to save him. Captain Fried calmly assesses all the arguments for and against the proposed effort, and then makes his gamble, risking the lives of over five hundred people as he depends upon

"... the final power of [his] engines
For had a revolution failed, --'twas either
Roosevelt or Antinoe [sic] with odds on neither."25

24 Roosevelt, p. 27.
25 Roosevelt, p. 41.
Fried's heroism is finally greater than Wertanen's, though less dramatic, because it rests first in the full realization of the possible costs of failure, and then in his proceeding in the face of almost insurmountable odds, risking all on a gamble in which the odds are heavily against him.

The hero strongly opposes the evolutionary code of self-preservation, and is willing to help others. This readiness to help, however, must result from compassion, a word which for Pratt denotes a feeling of brotherhood based on the early Christian concept of agape. As organic life becomes more and more complex, as societies develop and become more technological, the concept of heroism also becomes more complex. The straightforward individual or group gesture to aid others against an imposing environment may still be heroic, but motives for the gesture must be questioned in an attempt to determine whether the heroic deed arises from compassion or from selfish purposes. Pratt's poetry demonstrates the knowledge that man in contemporary society rarely acts out of single motives. Although the struggle of man against nature remains the central concern, increasingly complex psychological overtones often confuse and distort this basic struggle. The heroism so evident in Pratt's poetry may
at times be seen as a "display of courage . . . composed of vanity, lack of imagination and stereotyped thinking".  

Freud parallels Pratt's portrayal of heroism when he states that "the rational explanation for heroism is that it consists in the decision that the personal life cannot be so precious as certain abstract general ideals". He indicates that the decision must be a conscious one as he continues: "But more frequent, in my view, is that instinctive and impulsive heroism which knows no such motivation, and flouts danger in the spirit of Anzengruber's Hans the Road-Mender: 'Nothing can happen to me'.

Unlike Freud, Pratt believes in heroism as existing "in the blood" as well as in the more conscious decisions that result from deliberate, rational processes. For Pratt the ethical choice to help others may be either conscious or unconscious, and the distinction between the two is not always clear. Wertanen's "instinctive and impulsive" actions are heroic because they embody an ethical decision that has unconsciously been made sometime in the past. At the same time Wertanen is also open to Freud's charge of flouting danger with no thought or

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27 Freud, *Creativity*, p. 231.

28 Freud, *Creativity*, p. 231.
realization of the implications of his actions, and without ever considering that he himself might die in the attempt to save others.

Fried's decision is rational, and because reason is a primary indicator of progress, Fried represents a higher stage of evolution. He is therefore open to an even more serious charge of insincerity of purpose than is Wertanen, because the motives for his action are more complex. Had the two ships collided, the saga of the *Roosevelt* and the *Antinoe* would have been one of foolhardiness and stupidity rather than of heroism, because five hundred lives would have been lost in the effort to save twenty-five. Although Fried may have been partially motivated by the need to prove his courage and that of his men, the force of the poem as a whole, and the triumph of its finale leaves no doubt that Pratt considered the rescue venture heroic, in spite of the ambivalent overtones that accompany it.

Wertanen and Captain Fried represent the dichotomy in Pratt's evolutionary thought. Wertanen is the more primal; he acts out of simple, instinctual motives not so complicated by conscience, duty and self-image as Fried's. Fried represents the high degree of civilization that reaches its height, in Pratt's poetry, in some
of the passengers aboard the *Titanic* and in *Brébeuf*. Astor and Guggenheim appear to act on the basis of courage and compassion, but the context of the narrative, in sharp contrast to that of *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe*, strongly questions these straightforward motives. The characters themselves are not even necessarily aware of their actual motives because simple needs have been diffused into complex social mores. Abstractions like duty and idealism are comfortable receptacles for personal, egotistical needs that have been refracted and disguised to the point where they are no longer recognizable by the individual. This process of refracting and sublimating primitive needs into acceptable social patterns is necessary to evolution. When man entirely denies his natural origins and emotions, however, he can orient himself only according to the social structure which he has formed, and which may crumble instantly.

Although Pratt sees the primal and the civilized as opposed to each other, he often illustrates civilization as a sham or a veneer, rather than as progress. An apparently civilized society may consequently parallel nature. Because civilization represents man's attempt to establish order and stability in an amoral environment, order is at times merely illusive, or else extremely vulnerable: "Between the temple and the cave / The
boundary lies tissue-thin.\textsuperscript{29} When civilization becomes an illusion, heroism cannot exist, because man refuses to recognize the existence of opposite forces working within himself.

The increasing order reveals itself in both the animal and the human world, but may always be either threatened momentarily or shattered completely. Pratt's "The Prize Cat" demonstrates an instant reversal to primal nature in a pet that has been tamed and comes from a pure blood line:

\begin{verbatim}
I saw the generations pass
Along the reflex of a spring,
A bird had rustled in the grass,
The tab had caught it on the wing:

Behind the leap so furtive-wild
Was such ignition in the gleam,
I thought an Abyssinian child
Had cried out in the whitethroat's scream.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{verbatim}

The tamed cat parallels civilized man, and the purity of the blood line, always significant in Pratt's poetry, indicates that evolution has been genuine, but that a primal inheritance has been retained.

"The Ice-floes" depicts the failure of heroism through counterfeit progress that has separated man from

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} Pratt, "From Stone to Steel," in Many Moods (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932), p. 23.
\item \textsuperscript{30} "The Prize Cat," in Fable of the Goats, p. 34.
\end{itemize}
his environment. The seal hunt is undertaken by civilized man for humane reasons, "To help to lower the price of bread".\textsuperscript{31} On the ice-floes, however, the hunters suddenly revert to killing almost for its own sake: "For the slaughter was swift, and the blood was warm".\textsuperscript{32} They become so engrossed in their task that they fail to notice the approaching storm. Like the tame cat they return to a primal state:

\begin{quote}
Over the rails in a wild carouse,
Two from the port and starboard bows,
Two from the broadsides—off we tore,
In the breathless rush for the day's attack,
With the speed of hound on a caribou's track.
With the rise of the sun we started to kill,
A seal for each blow from the iron bill
Of our gaffs.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

As civilized man reverts to savagery, the rationally imposed order crumbles, and primal nature within man reasserts itself. Wanton slaughter is suddenly replaced by the realization of immediate danger, then by frenzied, unthinking fear as "some of them turned to the west, though to go / Was madness".\textsuperscript{34} The poem ends on a dull, heavy note that emphasizes man's realization that he is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} "The Ice-floes," p. 23.
\item \textsuperscript{33} "The Ice-floes," pp. 21-22.
\item \textsuperscript{34} "The Ice-floes," p. 24.
\end{itemize}
neither as civilized nor as humane as he has thought himself to be. He is sensitive enough, however, to become aware of the price he has had to pay for his illusion, and this awareness is heroic because it once again brings the opposite forces of instinct and compassion into focus:

And the rest is as a story told,
   Or a dream that belonged to a dim, mad past,
Of a March night and a north wind’s cold,
   Of a voyage home with a flag half-mast;
Of twenty thousand seals that were killed
   To help to lower the price of bread;
Of a muffled beat . . . of a drum . . . that filled
   A nave . . . at our count of sixty dead.35

The sluggish, heavy rhythm of "the muffled beat . . . of a drum . . . that filled / A nave . . ." indicates an intuitive grasp of reality. Consciously, however, the tragedy is a broken rudder that has already been pushed into a "dream that belonged to a dim, mad past", although the dream has nightmarish qualities that are perhaps more frightening than the reality of the experience.

Pratt’s ambivalent usage of "reason" is shaped largely through his portrayal of both illusion and reality. "The Great Feud" shows reason as being the most important factor in human evolution, but reason, like evolution,

may be either genuine or counterfeit. Often it merely provides the illusion of progress while actually representing an amoral technology that is not only equivalent to the reversion of civilized to primitive society, but is far more annihilating. Pratt draws an apt distinction between emotional honesty that borders on instinct, and counterfeit reason in "Cycles":

There was a time we knew our foes,
Could recognize their features well,
Name them before we bartered blows;
So in our challenges could tell
What the damned quarrel was about,
As with our fists we slugged it out.

We need no more that light of day,
No need of faces to be seen;
The squadrons in the skies we slay
Through moving shadows on a screen;
By nailing echoes under sea
We kill with like geometry.36

Technology may thus be allied with the unconscious, violent world of "Silences". Men merge their identities with the machines they operate, and the master-servant roles of man and machine gradually reverse themselves:

This creature with the cougar grace,
This man with slag upon his face.37


Although technology itself is amoral, man becomes immoral because he recognizes an ethical structure but rejects it. The immorality of man in a technological world is the most anti-heroic element in Pratt's poetry, because man allows the machine to destroy his individuality.

When man employs reason within the ethical structure that differentiates him from the code of self-preservation, he progresses or evolves toward a higher level of existence, in which he uses technology freely for his purposes, but never becomes so coldly rational that he can no longer act instinctively. Evolution, like reason, therefore has two connotations in Pratt's poetry: it may mean either "survival of the fittest", or else a progression that synthesizes the opposites of self-preservation and morality. This synthesis, or forward evolution, always incorporates human experience, the epitome of which is "Gethsemane" with its connotations of the suffering, compassion, and anguish involved in the decision to be compassionate. In "From Stone to Steel" Pratt concludes that "whether to the cross or crown, / The path lies through Gethsemane",38 and in "Cycles" he also cites Gethsemane as the source of all personal experience:

38 "From Stone to Steel," in Many Moods, p. 23.
And then before our voice is dumb,
Before our blood-shot eyes go blind,
The Lord of Love and Life may come
To lead our ebbing veins to find
Enough for their recovery
Of plasma from Gethsemane. 39

Human experience and suffering, then, is the only means
to the synthesis that comprises heroism in Pratt's poetry.

Though the cross is the symbol of humiliation,
sacrifice and glory for Pratt, Gethsemane symbolizes the
agony of knowledge and of choice. The basis of experience
remains constant for Pratt, therefore regardless of how
far man advances, he is still confronted by his human
frailty, and finally by death, which brings with it a
stark and unchanging reality:

What followed was a bolt
Outside the range and target of the thunder,
And human speech curved back upon itself
Through Druid runways and the Piltdown scarps,
Beyond the stammers of the Java caves,
To find its origins in hieroglyphs
On mouths and eyes and cheeks
Etched by a foreign stylus never used
On the outmoded page of the Apocalypse. 40

Pratt's poetry is always concerned with the human response
to the environment. If man creates his own technological

40 Pratt, "Come Away, Death," in Still Life and Other
society in response to a mechanistic universe, then he is anti-heroic. If, however, man learns to recognize and fear the destructive element within himself, then his response to the environment is positive and heroic.
Pratt's early poems, especially the early narratives, deal primarily with the environment and with the lower forms of evolution. In these poems Pratt does not always distinguish clearly between the amoral environment and higher forms of life that have some moral order. He does, however, arbitrarily characterize cold-blooded creatures as being oblivious to morality and therefore incapable of making moral decisions. Psychologically speaking, they have no psyche or individual mental qualities. The warm-blooded mammalian world, of which man is the most complex representative, has a moral and ethical structure that may be very simple or extremely intricate. As man evolves from a primitive to a more civilized position, the complexity of his psyche and his potential for individuality correspondingly increases. Even civilized man, however, retains a primal inheritance which often reasserts itself in critical situations.

Primal self-interest accompanies the cold-bloodedness that characterizes the bottom rung of the evolutionary
ladder, primal because it consists of a simple, instinctual concentration on self-preservation and has no consciousness or awareness of "self" as a unique identity. The cold-blooded world, the world of "Silences", presents a realm of ultimate silence, ultimate violence, and yet ultimate coldness and lack of feeling, because passion cannot exist without a psyche. When Pratt speaks of "no fury upon the earth like the fury under the sea"\(^1\) he refers to a fury that is, paradoxically, passionless and cold because it occurs in an absolute realm so far removed from human credibility that opposites exist side by side without apparent contradiction.\(^2\) Procreation and disintegration are virtually synonymous. They demonstrate no change in the primal world, and are unaccompanied by emotions of any kind. The business of living and dying continues, with the strong surviving and the weak dying, but with no mercy and no glory, no regret and no exultation. The only exultation is that felt by the reader as he is taken into a world that is cold


and passionless, yet somehow beautiful for its lack of feeling. No heroism exists in the primal world, because there is no sense of progression, and no system of values. In "The Truant" Pratt sees man as heroic in his defiance and rejection of an amoral universe.

The lyric called "The Shark" is in a sense more terrifying than the poem "Silences", because Pratt dramatizes the paradox of ferocity and indifference without using any value words whatever, solely through the exactness and precision of his physical description:

He seemed to know the harbour,  
So leisurely he swam;  
His fin,  
Like a piece of sheet-iron,  
Three cornered,  
And with knife-edge,  
Stirred not a bubble  
As it moved  
With its base-line on the water.

His body was tubular  
And tapered  
And smoke-blue,  
And as he passed the wharf  
He turned,  
And snapped at a flat-fish  
That was dead and floating.  
And I saw the flash of a white throat,  
And a double row of white teeth,  
And eyes of metallic grey,  
Hard and narrow and slit.

Then out of the harbour,  
With that three-cornered fin  
Shearing without a bubble the water  
Lithely,
Leisurely,
He swam--
That strange fish,
Tubular, tapered, smoke-blue,
Part vulture, part wolf,
Part neither—for his blood was cold.  

Pratt emphasizes the shark's lack of emotion by ascribing metallic qualities to it. The shark has a fin "like a piece of sheet-iron, / Three-cornered, / And with a knife-edge". His body is "tubular / And tapered / And smoke-blue", a description that Pratt later paralleled in "The Submarine". The "double row of white teeth" have a machine-like precision, and the eyes are again of "metallic grey, / Hard and narrow and slit". The fin shears the water without a bubble. Embodying the cold, precise intensity of a machine, the shark is indifferent and amoral, a being to whom all other life is too irrelevant to be considered personally. He moves lithely but leisurely, his most terrifying aspect not his ferocity, but his total indifference. Whether he snaps at a dead or a live fish is unimportant. His actions are never determined by variations of love and hate, but by simple need or impulse, an impulse so primitive that it strips man of all importance and identity. Man's heroic struggle is the struggle of an individual determined to assert himself in the face of a

power that has no psyche. The narrator of the poem is awed through his observation of the shark into the realization of how insignificant his own individuality is, compared to the absolute symbolized by the shark.

While the "pre-reptilian" world with its cold, sluggish blood and its symbolic silence forms one evolutionary extreme, man himself at times forms a parallel extreme that has vital importance in Pratt's poetry: man trying desperately to establish some kind of an identity against the amoral world of the shark. Though man's need to assert himself belongs to a primal, preservative urge, the method by which he does so gradually becomes ever more rational, and may find its fulfilment in a mechanistic universe. "The Shark" and "The Submarine" form a "before and after" sequence, the first showing a mindless ferocity, the second demonstrating the cold fury where

No tolerance befogged the reason—
The reason with its clear-swept halls,
Its brilliant corridors,
Where no recesses with their healing dusk
Offered asylum for a fugitive.4

Reason in Pratt's poetry is associated with warm, fast-moving blood, and belongs to the forces that oppose the

4 Pratt, Dunkirk (Toronto: Macmillan, 1941), p.2.
environment. Pratt distinguishes, however, between "right reason" and "wrong reason", the latter being an aberration of evolution, and therefore as coldly destructive as the primal environment. Pratt always defines this kind of reason by slim, graceful lines, or "clear-swept, . . . brilliant corridors" that exclude all cobwebs, "recesses" or the "deep places of the imagination."

The intolerance of this kind of reason is its own limitation.

The difference between right and wrong reason is always hubris, a term that connotes pride, arrogance and the will to power or omnipotence. In The Titanic man's use of reason enables him to build the ship, but his hubris causes its destruction. In Dunkirk wrong reason, compounded of purposeful technology and clinical rationalizations, lacks any human element whatever. Dunkirk represents the extreme to which man can drive himself through hubris, through the need to be all-powerful, as a substitute for being human.

Opposed to the intolerance of this kind of reason is the gruff warmth and humanity of the British in the poem,

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who, pushed to the extreme, use every type and size of craft imaginable in the evacuation from Dunkirk. They exhibit companionship, concern and grim determination, and though the warmth and humanity they display are detrimental to technical perfection, they nevertheless characterize right reason, and synthesize emotion with rational processes. Pratt's own ambivalence is evident in his attraction to the "clear-swept halls" of reason, as well as to the greater, warmer depths of humanity. This ambivalence later becomes an integral part of Brébeuf and His Brethren.

In "The Submarine", Pratt shows man symbolically identifying himself with the environment. The submarine, like the shark, combines "terror with . . . grace"; it has the "blood of tiger, blood of shark." The torpedoes, described as the "foetal young" of the submarine, are coldly, delicately beautiful and "seem . . . on the glass a tenuous feather / Of gold such as a curlew in flight / Would make with its nether wing skimming the swell." Pratt follows this lyrical passage with an opposing metaphor demonstrating the end toward which the gracefulness has been created:

The next tore like a scimitar  
Through flesh to rip the jugular;  
Boilers and bulkheads broke apart  
When the third torpedo struck the heart;  
And with what logic did the fourth  
Cancel the course north-east by north,  
Hitting abaft the beam to rut  
The exploding nitrates through her gut.7

The tearing, ripping imagery portraying the devastation caused by the torpedoes accentuates the organismic, fleshy and warm qualities of the torpedoed ship, described as a "rich-ripe mammal" and symbolic of a clumsy, vulnerable, but feeling human world. The merchant vessel has "jugular", "heart" and "gut", all of which express emotion and vitality.

Driven by his need to compete with his environment man has, through reason, developed a being more powerful than himself and has finally submerged in it the identity and self-respect he has tried to attain for himself. He has become a slave to his own creation, a creation that is identical with the cold-blooded world of "Silences". In escaping from indifference man has created his own indifference. He is anti-heroic because he becomes destructive, asserting power without compassion. The technological world of wrong or counterfeit reason still belongs with the primal environment.

so prominent in Pratt's early poetry.

But though technology is amoral, man becomes immoral. Having attained a position that demands an ethical choice, he has rejected the moral decision which would leave him vulnerable to the power of the universe. Instead, he has decided to compete with the environment on the basis of power alone, though this is an immoral action disregarding the rights of other human beings. The gradual fading of personal human contact through the use of mechanical devices, an outcome of the evolution of wrong reason, is the differentiating factor between rational, warm humanity and the cold, graceful, logical but destructive mechanical world. The young lieutenant and the commander in "The Submarine" virtually remove themselves from direct human contact with the enemy. They lose themselves in the indifference of the machine they control, and because they view the destruction of the other vessel through the impersonal radar screen, they see only the external damage to the ship, not the tearing and the suffering of human flesh.

The symbolism in the poem is important on two levels. On the first level the poem depicts an armageddon-like battle in which the mechanical world of the submarine destroys the vulnerable human world of the "mammalian" merchant vessel. The battle is not entirely final, however,
since the submarine itself must leave when it detects a destroyer approaching.

On another level, the mechanical world that man has created takes control of his very being and becomes an absolute. Man becomes more and more mesmerized by the indifferent machine because while it is similar to and seems as powerful as the environment, it is still technically under his control. This gives him a sense of uninhibited power. The lieutenant and commander concern themselves more with the efficiency of the machine they control than with human beings. Consequently, they move ever further into the mechanical vortex, away from human contact. The submarine is described as a "tiger-shark viviparous / Who, with her young grown mutinous / Before the birth-hour with the smell / Of blood inside the mother, will expel / Them from her body". This image indicates that at its most extreme and incredible end, man has expelled himself, has expelled his own humanity and morality. The machine begins, almost of its own accord, like the shark's young,

the steerage of the fin,
The seizure of the jaw, the click
Of serried teeth fashioned so well
Pre-natally to turn the trick
Upon a shoal of mackerel. 

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8 "The Submarine," p. 25.
Man identifies himself with the submarine and destruction, rather than compassion becomes his code for survival. Pratt himself remarks, in a note on the poem:

There is something terrifying in the idea that the very process of birth starts the process of slaughter. The young ones will go right after the mullet, and the point in the analogy is that the torpedo leaves the body of its submarine mother perfectly mechanized and adjusted to the task of destruction.\(^{10}\)

Although Pratt's poetry is based on the parallel evolutionary extremes of an amoral natural environment and an equally amoral technological environment, the core of his poetic vision is man as a struggling, relative being heroically establishing his unique identity against the power of these extremes. This sense of identity involves acknowledging the primal element within oneself, and trying to understand it rather than to deny it, thus making possible the synthesis that results in forward evolution. Man's struggles allow him to evolve, emotionally and ethically, toward an ever higher form of life with morality based on compassion and respect for others, rather than on the law of self-preservation.

\(^{10}\) Pratt, "Notes," to Ten Selected Poems (Toronto: Macmillan, 1947), p. 144.
In poetry that deals with civilized societies Pratt often makes sensuousness and sensuality indicative of a healthy retention of instinctual life in his heroes. Pratt himself has often been described as robust and sensual, revelling in good food and good companionship. The significance of Pratt's poetry may be severely limited and oversimplified by emphasizing his robustness, but may be equally limited by ignoring his sensuous nature. Pratt's characterization of the railroad crews in *Towards the Last Spike* strongly illustrates the retention of the primitive in modern man. He emphasizes their physical features and the organic processes that identify the men with their environment:

Oatmeal was in their blood and in their names.
Thrift was the title of their catechism.
It governed all things but their mess of porridge
Which, when it struck the hydrochloric acid
With treacle and skim-milk, became a mash.
Entering the duodenum, it broke up
Into amino acids; then the liver
Took on its natural job as carpenter:
Foreheads grew into cliffs, jaws into juts.
The meal so changed, engaged the follicles:
Eyebrows came out as gorse, the beards as thistles,
And the chest-hair the fell of Grampian rams.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) John Sutherland, *The Poetry of E. J. Pratt: A New Interpretation* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1956), p. vii. In stressing his point that critics have often limited their interpretations of Pratt's poetry by emphasizing his vitality, Sutherland says: "Roget's *Thesaurus* has been thoroughly combed by the critics for words suggestive of his vitality. He has been called robust, energetic, masculine, genial, muscular, vital, exuberant, hearty, high-spirited, . . . and redolent of good beef and whiskey."

One of Pratt's earliest poems, "Newfoundland", most feelingly conveys the sense of life as he believes it ought to be:

Here the winds blow,
And here they die,
Not with that wild, exotic rage
That vainly sweeps untrodden shores,
But with familiar breath
Holding a partnership with life,
Resonant with the hopes of spring,
Pungent with the airs of harvest,
They call with the silver fifes of the sea,
They breathe with the lungs of men,
They are one with the tides of the sea,
They are one with the tides of the heart,
They blow with the rising octaves of dawn,
They die with the largo of dusk,
Their hands are full to the overflow,
In their right is the bread of life,
In their left are the waters of death.13

By internalizing the tides of the sea into the very heart and being of civilized man, Pratt demonstrates a controlled balance of the primal and the civilized, thus integrating the opposite forces. The forces of nature in this poem are controlled by an existential consciousness of life. Rather than blowing "with that wild exotic rage / That vainly sweeps untrodden shores".

12 Pratt, Towards the Last Spike (Toronto: Macmillan, 1952), p. 3.
the winds blow "with familiar breath / Holding a partnership with life", the life that encompasses and integrates death as an essential part of itself. Pratt envisages the acceptance of both life and death, the ability of man to love and to be compassionate in the midst of death as the greatest and the only real evidence of continuing human progress:

This is their culture, this--their master passion
Of giving shelter and of sharing bread,
Of answering rocket signals in the fashion
Of losing life to save it. ¹⁴

Physical passion combined with awareness of the sufferings of others results in a fullness of experience that is heroic because it accepts death as belonging to life. The hero feels another's pain as keenly as his own, and the actual experiencing of this pain makes him want to help, even to the extent of self-sacrifice.

"The Great Feud" is an early narrative in which a sense of awareness emerges heroically from the symbolically silent world. Although the plot of the poem revolves around a great battle between pre-historic

monsters, the application is obviously meant to be human. The poem makes its impact in an oblique manner, through the manipulation of the grotesque, in the sense that "the hallmark of the grotesque becomes the 'disarming' of the fearsome, the demonic, through comedy and humor".\(^{15}\)

The ferocity of the poem is diffused through comedy, humour, and especially caricature. This decreases the direct assault of the destructive scenes on the reader's senses, but increases the prolonged effect. The mind absorbs, rather than rejects outright a truth it is unwilling to recognize, the truth that the destruction emphasized in "The Great Feud" also reveals itself in everyday life.

Pratt often identifies a malicious "fate" with the environment, portraying nature as deliberately opposing and terrorizing representatives of the higher stages of evolution, rather than remaining indifferent. He invests the volcano Jurania with the nebulous beginnings of emotion and introspection. "The snows" are described as being "blackened by the brooding dread / Outline of

a volcano's head", and the volcano in its entirety, like
the Panjandrum of "The Truant", is brought into a par-
tially human perspective, not in any moral sense, but in
the sense of malevolent animal emotion:

Her slanting forehead ancient-scarred,
And breathing through her smokey maw,
Lay like a dragon left to guard
The Isthmian Scarps against the climb
Of life that left the ocean slime,
In far adventurous design,
On footholds past the timber line.16

Jurania, associated with the cold-blooded dragon, is
malicious. She is to "guard ... against the climb /
Of life" or the progress of evolution. The indifferent
being is shown later, when Jurania erupts:

The storm flood of the lava broke.
.......

It shot a fifteen thousand feet
Straight to the sky ... then made as if to meet
Its own maternal stellar fire.17

Jurania cannot meet her "own maternal stellar fire", the
cold fire of the stars and the universe, because she is
not absolute or indifferent.

17 "Great Feud," p. 66.
Tyrannosaurus Rex, born through freakish circumstances three million years too late, is heroic in his plunge into the warm-blooded world. Tyrannosaurus, a cold-blooded reptile with "Dragon's teeth and boa's eyes", gains entrance into the higher stage of evolution through the circumstances of his birth and through the intuitive understanding gained just before his death. He comprises the primal force of the narrative because he is amoral, but this force is controlled until the day of the battle, when he slaughters land and sea creatures indiscriminately. The control externally exercised beforehand is a betrayal to his primal origins, and therefore later gives the killing orgy a frenzied element that far exceeds need or impulse. Tyrannosaurus resembles the destructive technological world that man can create, because he is controlled by reason until he becomes a wholly destructive force.

Several factors combine to give Tyrannosaurus a limited claim to morality that is, in Pratt's poetry, associated only with warm-blooded animals. He eats a "vinery of red grapes" which, fermenting within him, half-intoxicates him, and, as in The Witches' Brew, warms his blood. "Throughout the day he did not know /
Whish was his ally or his foe". However, towards the end of the day, he begins to have a sense of right and wrong:

In one swift hour when the night Was far advanced, the Saurian, By some half-blinded route, began To scent the issue of the fight.18

This slight realization, the "apprehension dim", is attained only after continuous slaughter hour after hour, and derives partially from the punishment that Tyrannosaurus himself receives. Pratt indicates that the apprehension is aided by the continual taste of warm blood, which also has an "inebriating" quality.

Through the minimal moral knowledge that he attains, Tyrannosaurus realizes his true ancestry:

Perhaps some inland desert taste During the slaughter of the camels, Taught him his kinship with the lizard, His blood-removal from the mammals, And gave him nausea at the gizzard. Perhaps in some sharp way it sprang From the reminiscent tang Of salt sea water on his muzzle, The moment that he stooped and took The narwhal's blood as from a brook With one inebriating guzzle. Somewhere in his racial birth, At variance with the things of Earth.19

18 "Great Feud," p. 59.
Pratt clouds the actual process of realization with ambiguity by beginning with the word "Perhaps", thus giving the "tidal call that beat like pain / From spinal ganglion to brain" a greater sense of the inexplicable. The call is an instinctual, unexplainable urge calling Tyrannosaurus back to the sea. Though Pratt has earlier referred to Tyrannosaurus as a saurian, the "sea-god" calls him "Ex- / Saurian of the Pleiocene", and ends by naming him "Tyrannosaurus King". Both the "Ex" and the "King" suggest that Tyrannosaurus has gained a stature that extends beyond that of the cold-blooded saurians, although he himself is cold-blooded and voluntarily returns to his origins through death.

The female anthropoidal ape introduces the ambivalence of reason into the poem. Pratt says that "faintly she had sniffed the raw / Material of the moral law" one night as she saw

The skull of an alligator cut
Open by a cocoanut
Falling from a lofty height,--
An alligator that had torn
And eaten up her youngest born.

20 Sandra Djwa, Unpublished manuscript.
Then to a corner she had crept,
And had not eaten, had not slept,
But scratched her head and drummed her breast,
And Reason entered as she wondered,
Brooded in the trees and pondered
On how the reptile was struck dead.21

The anthropoidal ape's use of reason represents the aberration of evolution that in "The Submarine" and in Dunkirk exhibits itself through the coldly technological environment. The ape manipulates reason to gain power, because power is for her the means to assert her own significance against the amoral universe. The will to power, with the use of reason as a tool, is therefore an extension of the law of self-preservation. The ape makes herself head of the land army, and leads it into battle. In her speech to declare war she uses the politician's tactics, manipulating emotions by using seemingly logical arguments, giving half-truths to arouse greater and greater indignation, and using the ideal of patriotism to ensure loyalty. Her rationalizations, like the rationalizations behind technological warfare, lead to destruction:

21 "Great Feud," p. 35.
Has come when he that slumbreth
Shall pay the penalty of death.
By right of conquest and of birth
We claim all foothold on this Earth;--
how they have been bereaved
And plunged in blackest misery
By that insane, consuming hate
Of ignorant, inarticulate
Cold-blood barbarians of the sea.
No quarter shall there be: We'll catch them,--
leaving no traces
Save of their damned annihilation.22

The ape's greed for power is a perversion of man's need to assert himself and attain a system of values and morals through introducing some form of order to oppose the indifferent universe. The order is imposed through fear and demands total conformity, but Tyrannosaurus Rex illustrates how easily this order can revert to chaos.

After an entire day of fighting, the volcano finally ends the battle by erupting and killing all but the female ape and her brood. The ape, sensing "by subtle powers that placed her head / Of land belligerents" the imminent danger of the volcano, climbs to a height and escapes. From the summit on which she rests, she sees the scene of total destruction:

And then by that which choked her breath
And dazed her brain,--the molten red
Of plain and ridge on which were spread
The incredulities of death,
Riding on tumultuously
In a gulf of fire to the sea. 23

The height of land she gains to save her life becomes symbolic of the increased consciousness she attains through her growing awareness of the suffering of others, and through the effects of the final hellish scene. Tyrannosaurus Rex had also climbed to a promontory before he committed himself to the sea. When the ape crosses to the other side of the ridge, she moves from destruction to life as

She gather[s] up her residue
Of will to blot out from her view
The awful fiction of the night,
And take [s] upon herself the strain
Of the descent. 24

Like the tragedy of the "ice-floes" that becomes a "dream that belonged to a dim, mad past", the reality of the Armageddon-like battle is also wilfully blotted from the ape's consciousness to become "The awful fiction

23 "Great Feud," p. 68.
24 "Great Feud," p. 68.
of the night". Pratt shows the greatest vulnerability of human nature to be the ease with which it pushes the most terrible and inhuman scenes into the subconscious mind, thus disguising fact with "fiction". This leaves man ever open to his next blunder, the next broken rudder.

The paradox of the tragic "feud" is that in order to progress, or even to retain her will to live, the ape must block the awful scene from her conscious mind, and "take upon herself the strain / Of the descent". She has evolved from a primal position to an aberration of evolution through the cunning use of logic for destructive purposes, and then finally to a position of heroic reason, the reason that places due emphasis on a full consciousness of self, and on an awareness of the needs and feelings of others. Pratt has stated that

philosophical and ethical insights wherever they find their way into poetry should be emotional renderings of experiences actually lived or imaginatively grasped.

Nowhere is the truth of this statement more emphatically demonstrated in his own poetry than in the closing lines of "The Great Feud", which illustrate the emergence from

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25 Sandra Djwa, unpublished manuscript.

the use of destructive reason to right reason based on awareness of responsibility and love:

There, at the hollow of a tree,
She found her lair, and brokenly
She entered in, cuddled her brood
To withered paps; and in the hush
Of the laggard hours as the flush
Of dawn burnt out the coppery tones
That smeared the unfamiliar West,
The heralds of the day were moans,
And croons, and drummings of the breast.27

This passage demonstrates reason born out of suffering and compassion. The poem ends on a quietly optimistic note through the expression of filial love and the promise of a new day which, though heralded by "moans, / And croons, and drummings of the breast", provides another opportunity for progress, a day in which the wider, deeper experience of compassionate reason may prevail.

Both Tyrannosaurus Rex and the anthropoidal ape gain their sense of awareness through an unconscious heroic process. Neither of them realize rationally what they have gained. Pratt constantly emphasizes an unconscious process of this nature: a heroism that is

27 "Great Feud," p. 68.
largely a product of the naturally evolved blood line. Tyrannosaurus and the female ape represent the first ancestors of a pure blood line that denotes heroism. Most of the heroes in Pratt's poetry boast a long, impressive ancestry to demonstrate the natural heroism that reaches its height in them through their pedigrees or pure blood lines. Carlo's dam having "mated with a Newfoundland" and the Cachalot's ancestry of "a thousand years" that has "established the mammalian lead" are necessary to establish the ancestral right of these characters to their heroic stature.

The process through which Tyrannosaurus and the ape gain their awareness seems extraordinary. Both are affected only after a full day of the most vicious, brutal fighting imaginable. Pratt seems to be suggesting, in this poem and throughout his poetry, that atavistic lapses are essential to progress. Pratt's poetry keeps the reader constantly aware of the self-preservation, or primal, instinct in higher life that may reassert itself through any crisis. The human race can never be entirely confident in its assertion of culture and civilization, for when man becomes too smug, as in *The Titanic*, the amoral universe regains its control and its destructive power, and man reverts to his inherent instinct for self-preservation.
Whereas "The Great Feud" explores the groundwork of Pratt's vision, "The Truant" arrives nearer to the heart of the poetry, demonstrating the heroic use of reason in a positive sense. Included in the 1943 collection of Still Life and Other Verse, "The Truant" states most clearly Pratt's belief in man's right to experience through his own choice the extremes of suffering and joy, of defeat and victory. By defying the mechanical universe man establishes his right to an existence that identifies him as having a will and emotional life of his own apart from his environment. This unique identity is in itself heroic. The opening reference to the "great Panjandrum" and to the "Master of the Revels" immediately places man into the context of "As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods; / They kill us for their sport". The great Panjandrum is again associated with the shark's absolute world, but like the volcano Jurania he is not indifferent. He has a distinct personality and shows emotion, but still controls a mechanistic universe.

Slowly man's "multitude of sins" becomes evident. The truant possesses, first of all, a will that places

him in opposition to a mechanically-run universe.

Having "concepts and denials" that are "not amenable to fire", he is also an "egomaniac" and, greatest of all crimes, he "sings out of key", the only discord in the otherwise perfect "harmony of the spheres". The poem shows man as an "adventurer,... an individualist and an egotist, a truant from obligations", whose "motive may be simple greed,... or that form of greed we call vanity; or greed of life". The truant is not one man but mankind, and like the adventurer he is "defined by his fight with order, and his fight with Chance". Pratt's truant will not conform to formulas another being has prepared for him, regardless of how intricate the "measures".

All this evidence points to an awareness of life and individuality, and an insistence on freedom of choice, whatever the price. "The Truant" is the best example in Pratt's poetry of man evolving to the position of not only knowing that he must make his own moral decisions, but actually demanding the right to do so, with full


30 Bolitho, Twelve Against the Gods, p. 7.
awareness of the significance and awesome responsibility that accompanies this demand.

The truant begins his rebuttal of the Panjandrum's denunciation with an arrogance and unbounded zeal that shows he is indeed an "egomaniac". He has, like the ape of "The Great Feud", reached a state of awareness in which he is at his most dangerous, because he knows just enough to make him over-confident and arrogant. Under the spell of hubris, he boasts of his power and his intellectual prowess:

We flung the graphs about your flying feet;  
We measured your diameter.31

After boasting at some length about his scientific acuity, the truant becomes less dynamic and more introspective, realizing that "pondering an eolith", "blott[ing] out a cosmic myth" and finding rational explanations for "our rising pulses and the birth of pain" involves far greater responsibility and anguish than merely "shuffling in the measures of the dance". This heightened sense of responsibility and emotional awareness subdues the truant's pride in his intellectual powers, but intensifies his

determination to be emotionally an individual, as he says with dignity and deep feeling:

We grant you speed,  
We grant you power, and fire  
That ends in ash, but we concede  
To you no pain nor joy nor love nor hate  
No final tableau of desire,  
No causes won or lost, no free  
Adventure at the outposts.32

The poem begins in flippancy and arrogance, but ends with dignity and knowledge through suffering, and, above all, with a sense of defiance and resolute determination. The truant enumerates the reasons, or rather the experiences, that have made it impossible for man to return to the universal dance:

"We who have met  
With stubborn calm the dawn's hot fusillades;  
Who have seen the forehead sweat  
Under the tug of pulleys on the joints,  
Under the liquidating tally  
Of the cat-and-truncheon bastinades;  
Who have taught our souls to rally  
To mountain horns and the sea's rockets  
When the needle ran demented through the points;  
We who have learned to clench  
Our fists and raise our lightless sockets  
To morning skies after the midnight raids,  
Yet cocked our ears to bugles on the barricades,  
And in cathedral rubble found a way to quench  
A dying thirst within a Galilean valley--  
No! by the Rood, we will not join your ballet."33

Man has experienced too much. He has fought his way out of a formulated pattern of life, and has found a way to quench his "dying thirst", to replace the fading illusion of grace with the reality of suffering. He has stepped out of formulas too far to return. The truant has discovered for himself that the "nakedest, savagest reality... is preferable to any semblance, however dignified". While the "Rood" associates the truant's suffering and endurance with Christ's ordeal in Gethsemane, the truant's expression of human defiance denies the aid of any divinity in man's struggle for self-realization.

"The Truant" emphasizes a conscious awareness or conscious heroism absent in "The Great Feud". Man is heroic in his will to be unique and independent, and in the assertion of his will to oppose the environment. Unlike the ape in "The Great Feud", who risked universal annihilation in order to gain personal power, the truant demonstrates a heroic upward surge of man as a collective unit, not as an individual. The poem portrays

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34 Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History (1841; rpt. London: Chapman & Hall, 1897), p. 206. Carlyle expresses views on heroism that seem to parallel Pratt's closely at times. Pratt's insistence on a pure blood line for his heroes emphasizes his belief in the existence of an elitist group. This resembles the "inspired soul" that Carlyle sees as necessary for a man to be a hero.
the use of reason in its broadest sense, as embodying all the higher faculties of man, especially a fierce, exulting idealism that insists on the possibility of freedom. The poem shows, also, part of the price paid for independence; the agony that accompanies the exaltation, but asserts strongly that even this agony is preferable to indifference. The truant's heroic evolving from a patterned life denies both the sterile garrison and the destructive technological structure, although the latter was hinted at during the stage at which man boasted of having harnessed the universe through his knowledge of science. In "The Truant" man has passed from knowledge and rationalizations to an honest emotional life that results from continued vital experiences.
CHAPTER III

PRIMALITY AND ILLUSION: A COMPARISON
OF THE ROOSEVELT AND THE ANTINOE, AND THE TITANIC

With The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, Pratt moves into a fully human context, dealing with his subjects directly, rather than through the medium of pre-historic and contemporary monsters. The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, written in 1930, is a straightforward narrative demonstrating the heroic and finally victorious struggle of humanity against the amoral universe. Always intrigued with power and superhuman strength, Pratt now incorporates this strength realistically into the human world, with the sea as the primal, amoral antagonist in man's struggle for life on his own terms.

The Titanic, written only five years after The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, is Pratt's most consciously symbolic narrative. The Roosevelt and the Antinoe is evidence of Pratt's most positive attitude towards humanity: a full belief that man can choose to embrace life wisely and compassionately through helping his fellow man. Only five
years later, with the writing of *The Titanic*, this confidence in the human race has disappeared, and Pratt is more pessimistic about the future of humanity than he showed himself to be in "The Great Feud". *The Titanic*, through its conscious symbolic framework, is primarily a denial, and sometimes a parody of the affirmation of life and unostentatious heroism that is dramatically displayed in *The Roosevelt and the Antioe*.

The *Roosevelt* is a freighter operating under the business code demanded by "the credit balance that must never fail / The ledgers of Hoboken Lines",¹ as well as under an ethical code that externally attempts to enforce the equality of man within the business sphere:

In the Commissioner's room it was agreed
Between the Master and the mariners,
That as the men received per month or run
Their wage in dollars and were guaranteed
By statutes of the State that they might draw
Their scale of rations—bread and meat and water,
Lemon and lime and such prescribed by law,
With means of warmth in weather; they, the crew,
Should pledge themselves to conduct, faithful, true,
And orderly, in honest, sober manner;
At all times in their duties diligent;
To the Master's lawful word obedient,
In everything relating to the vessel—
Safety of passengers, cargo and store,
Whether on board, in boats, or on the shore.²

² *Roosevelt*, pp. 9-10.
The verbal contract by means of an oath resembles Frye's garrison, an external uniformity enforced and accepted in order to adequately combat the amoral forces of nature against which the ship and crew are pitted. But whereas Frye's garrison often results in sterility, the code enforced by Hoboken Lines remains constructive. It is the external expression of an internal morality. The literal code is later revealed as internal heroism that transcends, but never denies the external controls:

in such a sea
And cause the order needed no command,
Only the heart's assent unto the hand.3

The Titanic is a pleasure ship rather than a freighter, and her passengers recognize no code except that of human power and superiority. The narrative is primarily one of over-confidence and awesome disaster, rather than of heroism. John Sutherland, however, views The Titanic as heroic in its affirmation of life, and while recognizing an element of terror in the poem, he states that its "final pages are dominated by a sense of great exaltation". He also notes this sense of exaltation in other of Pratt's epic narratives:

3 Roosevelt, p. 25.
In the conclusion of the Feud and The Cachalot we encounter the same paradox of an exaltation that rides above but does not cancel out a persistent image of terror. 

Sutherland feels this "exaltation that rides above . . . a persistent image of terror" forms the core of Pratt's creative philosophy, which he describes with a quotation from William James:

"Religious happiness is no mere feeling of escape. It cares no longer to escape. It consents to the evil outwardly as a form of sacrifice—inwardly it knows it to be permanently overcome."

Sutherland defines exaltation as a passive acceptance of evil that is made possible through knowledge of good. Pratt's emphasis on heroic action in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, and his stress on the theme of illusion in The Titanic, with the resultant tragedy, seem the strongest possible arguments against this view.

The environment, and the human response to the environment are essential elements in both narratives. The response to nature may be either emotionally honest or dishonest. An honest or heroic response demands a re-

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cognition of both the awesome force of nature, and the resulting, comparative frailty of man. A dishonest response such as that demonstrated in "The Great Feud" results in the cloaking of reality or awareness with illusion and with unwarranted rationalizations, a process that can only end disastrously. In a comparison of The Roosevelt and the Antinoe with The Titanic, the significance of nature must first be established for each narrative, before the honesty of the human response can be considered.

The environment depicted in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe is forthright and openly antagonistic, forcing man into the state of conflict in which human nature is most effectively portrayed and studied. Although the suddenness with which the storm strikes may be a surprise, the sailors are allowed no illusions about its strength and duration:

The charts traced not a cyclone's come-and-go,— The fury soon begun and as soon ended— But those broad areas on which storms grow, Northern and Oceanic, where each hour, Feeding on the one before, transmits In turn its own inheritance of power Unto the next until the hammer hits A hemisphere. 6

6 Roosevelt, p. 11.
The storm gathers in violence and force: man to match its impetus, leading to the final climax where humanity is forced to compete against the culminated fury of the waves. Nor is the storm the only element seeking man's destruction, for

never--it was claimed--had tides so climbed
A slope of shoal from such a depth to feed
The tumult of the upper waves; so timed
Direction with their volume and their speed,
To meet both wave and wind that all might lock
In foam above so high a line of rock.?

Against these forces, man's dominance is reduced to futility. The passage he has navigated and used is an "arrogated highway", one that has been presumptuously claimed without due regard for the liberty taken. The "warning light" of the "Cape's revolving beacon" becomes "as sick / As the guttering limit of a candle-stick". Throughout the narrative Pratt uses the metaphor of man-made light and its insufficiency to demonstrate the futility of the human condition in contrast to the forces of nature.

Pratt's emphasis on nature as a primal, formless entity is reinforced in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe

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7 Roosevelt, p. 12.
8 Roosevelt, p. 12.
9 Roosevelt, p. 12.
by his repeated references to the "void", symbolic of both a physical and a spiritual state, as illustrated in the Bible: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep". Vincent Sharman emphasizes the importance of the "void" in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, stating that the sea is "the universal void, in which man is nothing".10 The void is absolute chaos, a constant threat, but is so openly recognized and accepted by the sailors of both vessels that its impact, or the fear it engenders, gradually assumes a greater physical, rather than moral significance.

The human senses can no longer distinguish the sea from the other elements:

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The sea itself was gone save when it hurled
The body of a wave across the bow;
Soon even this was lost to the bridge, and now
Behind the weather-cloth it seemed the world
Was carried with a last gust to the void.11
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With the senses unable to identify their antagonist because of the storm's fury, the metaphor of the void swallowing humanity becomes entirely realistic, but the matter of fact acceptance with which the seamen undertake


11 Roosevelt, p. 13.
their rescue mission proves them an adequate, not a totally helpless protagonist.

The void is used to demonstrate space as well as to deny the immediate facility of the senses. The Antinoe's call for help is carried by "magnetic messengers"

beyond all navigated regions,
Exploring every cranny of the night,
Reaching out through dusky corridors
Above the sea to uninhabited shores,
Or taking undecoded human cries
Below the keel to the Atlantic crypts.
And millions undulated to the skies,
Through snow and vapour and the cloud eclipse,
Past day and night and the terrestrial air,
To add their wasted sum to a plethora
Of speed and power in those void spaces where
Light-years go drifting by Andromeda.12

The consciousness of the vast, empty void combines with the paradoxically claustrophobic feeling of being shut in, unable to penetrate the opaque uniformity, to give a sense of total isolation and complete vulnerability to the people aboard both ships. The void is both physical and moral, but because the men have already made their choice, the moral significance pales in face of the physical. The question is not whether man will exhibit compassion or whether he will save only himself. This question has already been decided. What remains is to discover

12 Roosevelt, p. 15.
whether or not his heroism is sufficient to combat the violence of the storm, and the costs involved in this heroism. While the moral void is symbolically evident, it serves primarily to highlight the heroism that is rooted in a strong moral code. The heroism in this instance is virtually unconscious, because the sailors accept the necessity of aiding the other vessel as a simple, unquestionable, fact of life. They never once hesitate in their willingness to help, although their ability to help is constantly challenged by the sea itself.

Further emphasizing the heroism of the Roosevelt's crew members is the iron and animal imagery used to describe the storm, linking it to descriptions of the submarine and its "foetal young", the whale of "The Cachalot", and later the iceberg in The Titanic. In each case these descriptions suggest a similarity between the technology which man has evolved and the amoral destructiveness of nature. In The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, however, this imagery merely emphasizes the heroism of men who dare to combat the amoral forces through feeling rather than through sheer power, even while they acknow-

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ledge the sea as a "grey, unplumbed precipice and grave".\textsuperscript{14}

The imagery describing the rise and fall of the waves closely resembles that used for the torpedoes in "The Submarine":

\begin{quote}
Below, like creatures of a fabled past,
From their deep hidings in unlighted caves,
The long processions of great-bellied waves
Cast forth their monstrous birth which with grey fang
Appeared upon the leeward side, ran fast
Along the broken crusts, then coiled and sprang
For the boat impatient of its slow descent
Into their own inviolate element.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Again Pratt exults in sheer, animalistic power, destructive though it may be. He loves the vastness of the void, the strength of the "inviolate element" and the grim starkness of the sea with its "iron-alien mood, / Its pagan face, its own primordial way".\textsuperscript{16} He also compares the ocean to "the confusion of a great stampede"\textsuperscript{17} and to a "shifty pugilist, / Watching for some slight turn of luck to slay / The rescuer with an iron-knuckled fist",\textsuperscript{18} both images of animalistic ferocity, the former showing

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Roosevelt, p. 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Roosevelt, p. 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Roosevelt, p. 31.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Roosevelt, p. 34.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Roosevelt, p. 37.
\end{itemize}
total mindlessness, and the latter a calculated will to destroy. Pratt thus unites both the amorality of nature and the destructive rationale of perverted reason in his descriptions of the storm.

The ambivalence in Pratt's poetry lies not only in his recognition of the psychological implications of the similarities so often found between human power and primal nature, but also in the zest with which he describes both. His poetry evidences a strong belief that life and death, as well as the lowest and the highest forms of evolution, must constantly be kept in a state of tension to keep life vital, or even interesting. This tension may be resolved in a synthesis, but immediately reasserts itself at a higher stage of evolution, otherwise an evolutionary regression sets in, or life becomes stagnant, as shown in *The Titanic*. Even compassion is more admirable when seasoned with a strong dose of the gambler's emphasis on luck and style:

We saw that beauty once—an instant run
Along a ledge of rock, a curve, a dive;
Nor did he count the odds of ten to one
Against his bringing up that boy alive.

This was an arch beyond the salmon's lunge,
There was a rainbow in the rising mists:
Sea-lapidaries started at the plunge
To cut the facets of their amethysts.
But this we scarcely noticed, since the deed
Had power to cleanse a grapnel’s rust, transfigure
The blueness of the lips, unmat the weed
And sanctify the unambiguous rigour.

For that embrace had trapped the evening’s light,
Racing to glean the red foam’s harvestings:
Even the seagulls vanished from our sight,
Though settling with their pentecostal wings.19

A deed combining compassion with daring is the most
deserving of "pentecostal" significance.

The surface narration of The Titanic, which like
most of Pratt’s poetry dramatizes the evolutionary
struggle of man against nature, is qualified by under-
lying levels of symbolism that transform an apparently
straightforward, heroic narrative into an ironic, am-
biguous and often paradoxical poem. Only by examining
carefully these underlying levels of meaning can one
obtain a valid concept of the scope of Pratt’s vision.

The environment of The Titanic is much more complex
and ambiguous than that of The Roosevelt and the Antinoe,
for while asserting primal or amoral nature, it also
reinforces the aura of illusion that pervades the entire
narrative. The most dominating single aspect of the
environment is the iceberg, which is again described as

19 Pratt, "The Deed," in The Collected Poems of
E. J. Pratt, 2nd ed., ed. by Northrop Frye (Toronto:
being both animalistic and metallic:

Calved from a glacier near Godhaven coast,
It left the fiord for the sea—a host
Of white flotillas gathering in its wake,
And joined by fragments from a Behring floe,
Had circumnavigated it to make
It centre of an archipelago.
Its lateral motion on the Davis Strait
Was casual and indeterminate,
And each advance to southward was as blind
As each recession to the north. No smoke
Of steamships nor the hoist of mainsails broke
The polar wastes—no sounds except the grind
Of ice, the cry of curlews and the lore
Of winds from mesas of eternal snow;
Until caught by the western undertow,
It struck the current of the Labrador
Which swung it to its definite southern stride.
Pressure and glacial time had stratified
The berg to the consistency of flint,
And kept inviolate, through clash of tide
And gale, facade and columns with their hint
Of inward altars and of steepled bells
Ringing the passage of the parallels.
But when with months of voyaging it came
To where both streams—the Gulf and Polar—met,
The sun which left its crystal peaks aflame
In the sub-arctic noons, began to fret
The arches, flute the spires and deform
The features, till the batteries of storm,
Playing above the slow-eroding base,
Demolished the last temple touch of grace.
Another month, and nothing but the brute
And palaeolithic outline of a face
Fronted the transatlantic shipping route.
A sloping spur that tapered to a claw
And lying twenty feet below had made
It lurch and shamble like a plantigrade;
But with an impulse governed by the raw
Mechanics of its birth, it drifted where
Ambushed, fog-grey, it stumbled on its lair,
North forty-one degrees and forty-four,
Fifty and fourteen west the longitude,
Waiting a world-memorial hour, its rude
Corundum form stripped to its Greenland core. 20

The berg, "calved from a glacier", shows the "brute /
And palaeolithic outline of a face" with a "sloping spur
that tapered to a claw", making it "lurch and shamble
like a plantigrade" until "Ambushed, fog-grey, it
stumbled on its lair". Images such as these place the
berg directly into the frame of reference used in "The
Great Feud".

Like the ocean in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, the
berg also has metallic qualities, but where these qualities
merely emphasized the straightforward heroism inherent
in the former narrative, they form an identifiable bond
between ship and berg in The Titanic. The berg has
achieved the "consistency of flint" and like the ocean
in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, has been "kept inviolate".
The same passage later describes the berg as a "rude /
Corundum form stripped to its Greenland core". The
central image unites animal and machine:

20 Pratt, The Titanic (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935),
p. 5-6. Pratt may have drawn this picture of the berg
from a short poem, "The Sea-Cathedral", published in
Many Moods (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 10-11,
which resembles the description of the berg in The
Titanic closely.
But with an impulse governed by the raw Mechanics of its birth... it stumbled on its lair.

The birth and movements of the berg are governed by "raw / Mechanics", and while the Titanic's structure and movements are determined by extremely sophisticated mechanics, the fatal effect of the collision with the berg is described in animal imagery as the ship's "visceral wound of death". Sutherland attaches enough importance to the identification between the berg and the Titanic to state that the ship sails to its own doom in the face of ill omens and warnings of disaster, as surely as if it were impelled by some deep wish for its own destruction. It is the psychological meaning that grows more important as the poem develops, and the relation between ship and iceberg is made quite explicit. We see that the destructive base of the iceberg, with its 'claw' lying hidden in the water, merely reflects the subconscious impulse which carries those who sail and travel on the ship to their own destruction.

Both the berg and the ship are "titans", and seem destined to meet.

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22 Sutherland, Poetry of E. J. Pratt, p. 35.
The concept of a destiny, or the "web of fate" as Pratt calls it, has an important function in the environment of The Titanic. The fate evident in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe in a mocking way through the "shriek and whistle from the shrouds" that "broke through, / Blending with thuds as though some throat had laughed / In thunder down the ventilating shaft", is shown to be much more purposeful and effective in The Titanic. The movements of the berg are "casual and indeterminate" until it "struck the current of the Labrador / Which swung it to its definite southern stride". Fate seems at times to be nothing more than the central force of the scientific laws controlling the movements of the universe, but at other times it includes the planning and staging of events. The berg’s drifting is pre-meditated, for it is "waiting a world-memorial hour" at a very detailed location. The ship, too, seems compelled towards the impact through the carelessness and over-confidence of the captain, and the hubris of everyone on board.

24 Roosevelt, p. 29.
As well as the ambiguity of the metal imagery identifying berg and ship, the berg emphasizes the illusion that has already become an inseparable element of the Titanic. The berg has been "kept inviolate, through clash of tide / And gale, facade and columns with their hint of inward altars and of steepled bells / Ringing the passage of the parallels". When it moves south into a warmer current and warmer weather, the "sun which left its crystal peaks aflame / In the sub-arctic noons, beg[ins] to fret / The arches, flute the spires and deform / The features, till the batteries of storm / have ... Demolished the last temple touch of grace". The ship is surrounded with the illusion of invincibility, the berg with the illusion of divinity, an image also present in some of Pratt's shorter poems, most notably in "The Mirage":

Complete from glowing towers to golden base,
Without the lineage of toil it stood:
A crystal city fashioned out of space,
So calm and holy in its Sabbath mood,
It might constrain belief that any time
The altars would irradiate their fires,
And any moment now would start the chime
Of matins from the massed Cathedral spires.
Then this marmoreal structure of the dawn,
Built as by fiat of Apocalypse,
Was with the instancy of vision gone;
Nor did it die through shadow of eclipse,
Through clouds and vulgar effigies of night,
But through the darker irony of light.25

The berg as part of the environment is also identifiable with the volcano Jurania in "The Great Feud". Jurania cannot meet "her own maternal, stellar fire,"26 the stars, with their distance, their cold fire and their aura of the absolute. The iceberg too is part of a distant, white absolute where

No smoke
Of steamships nor the hoist of mainsails broke
The polar wastes — no sounds except the grind
Of ice, the cry of curlews and the lore
0 winds from mesas of eternal snow.

The "maternal stellar fire" of "The Great Feud" and the "polar wastes" of The Titanic comprise the very lowest or most basic stage of evolution in Pratt's environmental schema, a state that is totally indifferent and absolute, and is most emphatically revealed in the poem "Silences". Neither the volcano nor the berg are absolute, since both are subject to disintegration processes.

The sea and the weather conditions also comprise an essential part of nature in The Titanic, and like the berg they add to the illusory effects of the poem. As in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, however, sea and sky again merge

into one indistinguishable unit, inseparable to the human senses:

The sky was moonless but the sea flung back
With greater brilliance half the zodiac.
As clear below as clear above, the Lion
Far on the eastern quarter stalked the Bear;
Polaris off the starboard beam — and there
Upon the port the Dog-star trailed Orion.
Capella was so close, a hand might seize
The sapphire with the silver Pleiades.
And further to the south — a finger span,
Swam Betelgeuse and red Aldebaran.
Right through from east to west the ocean glassed
The billions of that snowy caravan
Ranging the highway which the Milkmaid passed. 27

In *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe* sea and sky merge into an opaque void, leaving the *Roosevelt* as the microcosm of a formless world. The *Titanic* is also a microcosm and nearly as closed-in as the *Roosevelt*. Sea and sky are identical because both are equally calm, and the reflection of the stars on the water makes the elements indistinguishable. The absence of the moon makes the stars appear brighter by comparison, again an illusory effect since the watch cannot spot the iceberg until the collision is unavoidable. The very clearness of the air becomes claustrophobic because it makes the stars appear within arm's reach, but where this claustrophobia is feared by the crew of the *Roosevelt*, it is welcomed by those aboard the *Titanic* as an increase of the

27 *Titanic*, p. 18-19.
womb-like security. The Roosevelt points her lights outward in an attempt to penetrate the storm, whereas the Titanic concentrates all her lights on the interior of the ship.

The constellations also symbolically emphasize the tragedy that awaits the Titanic. The lion stalking the bear is almost an allegorical excerpt for the description of the shambling "plantigrade ... stumbling on its lair". The "dog-star trail [ing] Orion" also suggests a reversal of the conventional roles of ship and berg.²⁸ The portrayal of the ship's wake increases the sense of isolation, or distance from reality that the Titanic symbolizes so strongly:

Over the stern zenith and nadir met
In the wash of the reciprocating set.
The foam in bevelled mirrors multiplied
And shattered constellations. In between,
The pitch from the main drive of the turbine
Emerged like tuna breaches to divide
Against the rudder, only to unite
With the converging wake from either side.²⁹

The ship alone in the immensity of the universe has no double.
The wake, dividing the universe into symmetrical halves and then closing, further emphasizes the concept of the ship as

²⁸ S. Djwa, Unpublished Manuscript.
²⁹ Titanic, p. 20.
an ephemeral element that briefly disturbs the precision of the universe, then disappears. This is again an omen of the *Titanic*'s final descent into the water, and the berg's seeming unchangeability:

> And out there in the starlight, with no trace
> Upon it of its deed but the last wave
> From the *Titanic* fretting at its base,
> Silent, composed, ringed by its icy broods,
> The grey shape with the palaeolithic face
> Was still the master of the longitudes.30

The only sign of the ship's existence is, like its wake, a last Wave "fretting" at the base of the iceberg.

The human response to nature differs radically in the two poems. The captain and crew of the *Roosevelt* respond in a straightforward, compassionately heroic manner as they carry out their rescue operations. In the context of *The Titanic*, however, nature by its very calm does not seem to require a response, a situation that is deceptive, and in which the moral significance predominates.

The necessity of choice does not exist in *The Roosevelt* and the *Antinoe* as it does in *The Titanic*, where "self-preservation fought / Its red primordial struggle with the 'ought'".31

The choice for the crew members of the *Roosevelt* has been made

30 *Titanic*, p. 42.
31 *Titanic*, p. 41.
before the opening lines of the poem, a choice reflected externally in the oath they recite. When the distress signal from the Antinoe is heard neither captain nor crew show any reluctance to undertake rescue operations, and throughout the crisis they show no tendencies towards self-preservation at the Antinoe's expense. The only qualifying factor in the response to the crisis seems to be quantitative rather than qualitative, with special mention given to those who volunteer freely to risk their lives in order to save others. The narrative is almost dedicated to a natural, unconscious heroism. The question involved concerns the means and possibilities for rescue, rather than any unwillingness to come to the aid of the disabled vessel:

\[
\text{to win a race}
\]
\[
\text{For a crew's life with the storm laps in advance;}
\]
\[
\text{To outstare Death to his salt countenance,}
\]
\[
\text{Made up the grim agenda on his [Fried's] face.}\]

The struggle is one of survival or self-preservation, but survival in terms of mankind rather than individuals. The Antinoe is a picture of man at his most futile, able only to signal for help, and finally even that contact with others is

\[32\]
\[\text{Roosevelt, p. 24.}\]
broken. The Roosevelt is man living under the severest pressure, but still able to function adequately and morally. "The men answer . . . the summons with a will", sublimating the oath they took at the beginning of the trip into an internal heroism.

A major difference between The Roosevelt and the Antinoe and The Titanic is in the approach toward mechanical and technological devices. The attitude demonstrated throughout The Titanic is one of over-confidence in instruments to the greatest degree, an over-confidence that proves fatal. In The Roosevelt and the Antinoe the sailors use instruments and mechanical devices to gain a fuller understanding of the odds against them, and also to help actively in their struggle for survival.

The first mention of the "void" is immediately counterbalanced by "Fried stepp [ing] inside the Pilot House to get / Another reading from the aneroid". The radio that fails so miserably for the Titanic because she has ordered the ship nearest to her off the air, is a vital means of rescue for the Antinoe, both in making other vessels aware of her dilemma, and in allowing the Roosevelt to trace her

33 Roosevelt, p. 13.
position by means of the increasing strength of the radio waves. The Roosevelt, on the other hand, depends on the "direction-finder" and the compass to locate the Antinoe.

Although the inventions made possible through reason are used freely and to the best advantage in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, the basis of the narrative remains strongly and consistently the human being as individual and as a group, or corporate body. Mechanical devices are controlled and altered by man, and when no longer useful they are discarded. Where the nucleus of "The Submarine" is the machine itself, in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe man remains central in the struggle for the survival of his species:

Somewhere far-off in that unwavering gloom,  
Cramped in the quarters of a wireless room,  
A boy was seated, tapping at a key.  
Water ran along the floor; his knee  
Was braced against a table to resist  
The dangerous angle of a starboard list.34

Pratt marvels at the radio, with its power to penetrate the void in all directions, but reserves greater admiration and empathy for the boy who in the desolation and danger of his surroundings retains the will to act courageously and constructively.

The poem even exhibits a certain skepticism concerning instruments, in spite of their undeniable worth. Although the weather conditions become so critical that "judgement and will [are] warped by doubt"—again a welcome exhibition of the human element—the fullest faith remains in the human judgement. The sailors finally feel "within their blood", an "elemental trust / In bulkheads".\(^{35}\) When the Antinoë's radio fails, the Roosevelt has "Nothing but log and the dead reckoning" to guide her,

Nothing but these and the wheel's luck to trail her,—
Unless there might be added to the sum
Of them an unexplored residuum—
The bone-and-marrow judgment of a sailor.\(^{36}\)

In the final instance, also, when all other methods of rescue have failed, the crew of the Roosevelt is compelled—and Pratt suggests that this is inevitable—to battle against the sea personally:

The hour had called for argument more rife
With the gambler's sacrificial bids for life,
The final manner native to the breed
Of men forging decision into deed—

\(^{35}\) Roosevelt, p. 21.
\(^{36}\) Roosevelt, p. 22.
Of getting down again into the sea,
And testing rowlocks in an open boat,
Of grappling with the storm-king bodily,
And placing Northern fingers on his throat. 37

The ultimate dependence on their own resources, "felt within the blood", is the basic link of the sailors with their primal origins, and with the environment. They still feel the tides of the sea as "a lusty stroke of life /
Pounding at stubborn gates, / That they might run / Within the sluices of men's hearts". 38 They have transcended their primal origins without trying to deny them, and have therefore developed a healthy tension between feeling and reason.

Pratt's concept of the primal existing within rational man did not change by the time he wrote The Titanic in 1935, but his confidence in man's desire and ability to attain an acceptable balance of the rational and the primal had suffered a severe setback. The most startling aspect of The Titanic is the virtually total lack of response to the environment. The entire narrative is permeated with the sense of misplaced security to such an extent that the vast majority of the characters are completely unaware of the seriousness of the situation until the very end. This strong, dominating

37 Roosevelt, p. 37.

38 Pratt, "Newfoundland," in Newfoundland Verse (Toronto: Ryerson, 1923), p. 87.
sense of illusion—much of it commonplace enough not to seem extraordinary, but resulting in total disaster—makes the narrative so splendidly ironic. As Pratt himself says:

The spectacle of the world's greatest ship slowly sinking to her doom in perfectly calm water, in weather ideally suited for the lowering of lifeboats, under a clear sky, sinking to the accompaniment of joyous music, was not only tragic but grotesque.39

The delusionary concept of the Titanic as a symbol of security is undercut by various premonitions of disaster, and by the consciousness of a malevolent fate. Some of the strange phenomena are discernable to the observers on the shore watching the Titanic leave on her fatal voyage, and all the omens are, of course, evident to the reader.

The premonitions of disaster begin at the launching of the Titanic, with the "fears" that "Stalked with her down the tallow of the slips".40 Although these fears "Were smothered under by the harbour cheers", they remain as a future reminder that the launching was not fully light-hearted. The collision is foretold in the boasting about the "bulkhead doors . . . That in collision with iceberg or rock / Or passing ship . . .

39  Pratt, Ten Selected Poems, p. 133.
40  Titanic, p. 3.
could survive the shock, / Absorb the double impact".41 The berg is later referred to as "Corundum", rock, and flint, lending greater emphasis to the double reference of "iceberg or rock".

As the Titanic leaves Southampton harbour, a "double accident" occurs, significant to the "Old sailors of the clipper decades, wise / To the sea's incantations",42 but disregarded by the crew and passengers of the Titanic. Both the New York and the Teutonic are drawn into the suction caused by the departing Titanic, causing the New York's "seven mooring ropes to break at the stern / And writhe like anacondas on the quay".43 The description of the broken mooring ropes writhing like snakes reintroduces the animal imagery that has been used to describe the berg, and is immediately balanced with the mechanical description of the "tugs and fenders" who "answered with collision / Signals with such trim margin of precision".44 The reference to "suction or fatality" as the cause of the accident gains greater significance when the "sunken barge on the Southampton bed . . . is dragged through mire eight hundred yards

41 *Titanic*, p. 4.
42 *Titanic*, p. 6.
43 *Titanic*, p. 6.
44 *Titanic*, p. 6.
ahead, / As the Titanic passe[s] above its grave". 45

Suction is most strongly identified with both death and illusion in the fear of the lifeboat crews of the suction caused by the sinking Titanic. This fear, and the desperate effort to get away from the sinking ship help dispel the air of illusion somewhat near the fatal climax.

The New York's "seven mooring ropes" that "writhe like anacondas on the quay" are more than coincidentally important in light of Pratt's thesis on Demonology in which he discusses the relationships of demonic spirits and supernatural beings to primitive man. He states that the lower orders of spirits in Egyptian mythology had the faculty of embodying themselves in serpents and other repulsive animals. In certain of the Incantation texts, specific references are made to a group of seven spirits which were credited with unusual power even to the causing of an eclipse. The number seven had a sacred content for those primitive nations. It was used symbolically to represent an indefinitely large or an infinite number. 46

45 Titanic, p. 7.

The ropes, pictured as snakes, and the number seven are later identified with the Titanic through her seven decks of steel and her "passengers, / The fourteen hundred--seven hundred packed / In steerage--seven hundred immigrants!" The sophistication of the Titanic's society is consequently severely undercut by the allusions to primitive man and the demonic power inherent in the number seven.

The opinions of the old sailors, with their knowledge of the sea and their Mother Carey eyes, become doubly important in the context of the preceding portents. The wary superstitions of these old-timers is the closest Pratt comes to approaching the "elemental trust" so obvious in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, and this superstition is placed in opposition to the general over-confidence in the infallibility of the Titanic. Sea-gulls are an ambivalent symbol in Pratt's poetry, sometimes indicating purity or divinity, and sometimes chaos and destruction. The sea-gulls that follow the Titanic out of the harbour, are another portent of evil to come, because, like the "Spithead smoke" and "mists of the Isle of Wright", they are seen as "clouds" that

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47 Titanic, p. 7.
obscure the departure of the ship on her maiden voyage, and separate it from the wise old seamen on the shore.

Two other premonitions of the disaster are the stoker's face appearing in the dummy smoke-stack of the Titanic, and the Egyptian mummy that forms part of the cargo, especially in view of the conversation later taking place between three men on deck, revealing that "an ancient curse / Was visited on all the violators"\textsuperscript{48} of the mummy, and that others have already been destroyed through association with it. The continual emphasis on the potency of superstitions further polarizes the primitive and the civilized elements comprising The Titanic.

Both illusion and hubris are important elements in The Titanic. Hubris consists of pride and over-confidence that can only lead to illusion. A discussion of illusion necessitates a differentiation between illusion and delusion, both of which are very evident in the narrative. An illusion may be physically apprehended in the sense that either a real or imaginary object appears as something other than its true nature. Illusions may,

\textsuperscript{48} Titanic, p. 14.
however, also be ideological or social misconceptions. A firm belief in an ideological or social framework that misrepresents the ideals it claims as its basis constitutes an illusion. Delusion may be defined more actively and narrowly in terms of an individual either convincing himself or allowing himself to be convinced, with regard to specific issues, by invalid arguments. A deluded individual has allowed some parts of his mind to be coerced, but a delusion does not usually have as great an impact as an illusion, and is not as all-encompassing.

In *The Titanic* the delusionary elements consist primarily in the mass of apparent evidence that seems to prove the ship invulnerable. The newspapers and folders aid in blinding the gullible populace to even a remote possibility of the big ship sinking:

No wave could sweep those upper decks—unthinkable! No storm could hurt that hull—the papers said so. The perfect ship at last—the first unsinkable. Proved in advance—had not the folders read so?49

The categorical refusal to consider even the possibility of the *Titanic* sinking is apparently due to the excellence of its modern technical equipment, in which man places his

49 *Titanic*, p. 4.
complete faith, and which later fails to justify his faith at the vital hour. Most important of the technical advancements is the communications system, comparable to a controlling pattern of nerves:

Levers and telegraphs and valves within
Her intercostal spaces ready to start
The power pulsing through her lungs and heart.50

The importance of communications remains paramount throughout the narrative, but though the transmitter proves the greatest aid in the rescue of the Antinoe, it becomes almost useless in The Titanic through sheer negligence.

So strong is the faith in instruments that "Even the judgment stood in little need / Of reason".51 This is again in marked contrast to the Roosevelt where "Judgment and will were warped by doubt".52 The tragedy underlines the necessity of using reason. When man's faith in instruments makes him over-confident and careless, he is checked by the hard indifference of physical nature, and made to realize his fallibility. All the "Levels and lights, meter or card or bell / To find the pressures, temperatures,

50 Titanic, p. 4.
51 Titanic, p. 11.
52 Roosevelt, p. 21.
or tell / Magnetic North within a binnacle", 53 fail to justify their existence when the Titanic goes down. Even "The new Marconi valve" which "made the sea as safe as land" 54 is finally useless, since the Titanic has ordered the Californian, the only ship close enough to answer her distress signals, off the air:

Say, 'Californian', shut up, keep out, You're jamming all my signals with Cape Race. 55

For Pratt, communication is always a human process, and communication systems are extensions of man's knowledge either good or bad, for human minds must monitor the calls. The young boy transmitting the distress signal from the Antinoe is the greatest possible reproach to the Titanic. In the greatest crises human speech again curves "back upon itself / Through Druid runways and Piltdown scarps, . . . To find its origins", not in the "wireless hieroglyphs that / Would . . . rock / The pillared dollars of a railroad stock" 56 as exemplified in The Titanic, but "in hieroglyphs / On mouths and eyes and cheeks". 57

53 Titanic, p. 11.
54 Titanic, p. 16-17.
55 Titanic, p. 19.
56 Titanic, p. 10.
57 "Come Away, Death" in Collected Poems, p. 96.
The aura of illusion that pervades the *Titanic* has its origins in ideology, although the illusion is both suggested and symbolized by the mass of delusory effects given off by the ship. The illusion consists in man's belief in his own invulnerability, and his smugness in the conviction that he has attained the height of civilization. Like any ideological belief, this conviction is all-encompassing, and becomes the very basis of life aboard the *Titanic*. The belief is so far removed from reality that man appears to have lost all recognition of instinctual urges emotional honesty. Actions are motivated by the belief in the absolute stability of the world--the ship--and the assurance that the future promises only greater power and achievements:

And this belief had reached its climax when,  
Through wireless waves as yet unstaled by use,  
The wonder of the ether has begun  
To fold the heavens up and reinduce  
That ancient hubris in the dreams of men,  
Which would have slain the cattle of the sun,  
And filched the lightnings from the fist of Zeus.  

The society of *The Titanic* lives under "precepts which are not the expression of instinctual inclinations, [lives],

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58 *Titanic*, p. 4.
psychologically speaking, beyond its . . . means, and might objectively be designated . . . hypocrytical".59 The ship, with its rows of lights, its bulk and solidity on calm water, and the lively music played by the band, symbolizes the illusion which at some time must come into contact with reality in the form of the amoral environment. The serenity of the physical environment heightens the sense of illusion and adds greatly to the ironic effects of the poem.

The Titanic also resembles Northrop Frye’s description of the garrison, a description eloquently expressed in a similar context by D. H. Lawrence:

Upon the vast, incomprehensible pattern of some primal morality greater than even the human mind can grasp, is drawn the little, pathetic pattern of man’s moral life and struggle, pathetic, almost ridiculous. The little fold of law and order, the little walled city within which man has to defend himself from the waste enormity of nature.60

The "primal morality" of the iceberg does not recognize the struggling and often hypocritical morality of man, and unless man can recognize and somehow cope with this primality, there exists little hope for his survival.

59 S. Freud, "Thoughts on War and Death" Creativity and the Unconscious, p. 217.
The collision with the berg is hardly felt, and those who do notice it are soon reassured by all the signs of obvious security, and return to sleep. The ship has struck an iceberg and is sinking, with none of the passengers even aware that anything unusual has occurred:

So suave the fool-proof sense of life that fear
Had like the unforeseen become a mere
Illusion-- vanquished by the towering height
Of funnels pouring smoke through thirty feet
Of bore; the solid dock planks and the light
From a thousand lamps as on a city street;
The feel of numbers; the security
Of wealth; the placid surface of the sea,
Reflecting on the ship the outwardness
Or calm and leisure of the passengers

... the silhouettes
Of men in dinner jackets staging an act
In which delusion passed, deriding fact
Behind the cupped flare of the cigarettes.61

Security is measured in terms of light, wealth, and the apparent calm of prominent passengers. When the first lifeboat is lowered, Pratt mentions that "Full noon and midnight by a weird design / Both met and parted at the median line".62 The median line is the line of the lights from the portholes, and as the lifeboat passes these

61 *Titanic*, p.27.
62 *Titanic*, p.29.
lights it enters the darkness of the water beside the ship. This dichotomy of light and darkness is significant, for the people in the lifeboats become immediately aware of their precarious situation when they reach the sea:

"Pull like the devil from her--harder--row!
The minute that she founders, not a boat
Within a mile around that will not follow.
What nearly happened at Southampton? So
Pull, pull, I tell you--not a chip afloat,
God knows how far, her suction will not swallow."

The passengers remaining on board the ship, however, remain under the illusion of security. Those who have descended in the lifeboats, cut off from the lights, the music, the solidity of the Titanic's decks under their feet, and the apparent assuredness of fellow passengers, are forced to rely on themselves, and can therefore appreciate the actual dangers which they face. Separated from the comfortable world of the ship, they are also finally faced with the moral choice of how to respond to their natural environment, as opposed to the illusion they have been living under. Whereas one woman strikes out with "jewelled fist" at another passenger trying to get into the lifeboat, "two

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63 Ten Selected Poems, p. 136. In his "Notes" to The Titanic, Pratt says of this image: "As the boat lay level just before being lowered, the brilliancy of light from the port-hole of the ship might be contrasted with the blackness of the sea observed from the starboard gunwale of the boat.

64 Titanic, p. 32.
other seize . . . his wrist" and help him over the side, without regard for their own safety.

The life and death struggles on the water reinforce the significance of the Titanic as symbolic of the imagination, or the illusion and delusions through which men escape the realities of life for their entire existence. In psychological terms the ship represents a schizophrenic, or fantasy world, that serves as a barrier to protect its passengers from reality, and at the most basic level, to protect them from the struggle for survival. Some of the life-and-death struggles so much in evidence on the water are, however, also noticeable on board the ship, as in the case of the stoker who tries to tear a life preserver from a fellow crew member, and is promptly hit with a wrench by Murdoch. For the most part, however, the passengers seem extremely reluctant to leave the Titanic in favor of the lifeboats. Almost all the boats leave only partially full, for the Titanic represents the strong illusion of light, security and vitality:

Even yet the spell was on the ship; although
The last lifeboat had vanished, there was no
Besieging of the heavens with a crescendo
Of fears passing through terror into riot--
But on all lips the strange narcotic quiet
Of an unruffled ocean's innuendo.
In spite of her deformity of line,
Emergent like a crag out of the sea,
She had the semblance of stability,

The miracle of day displacing night
Had worked its fascination to beguile
Direction of the hours and cheat the sight.
Inside the recreation rooms the gold
From Arab lamps shone on the burnished tile.
What hindered the return to shelter while
The ship clothed in that irony of light
Offered her berths and cabins as a fold?65

The ship, "clothed in that irony of light", is a fold or womb, the ultimate in security, for her passengers who are ironically betrayed into destruction through the highest faculties they possess, their reason and imagination, as represented by the brilliance of the lights aboard the Titanic. The concept of the ship as symbolic of man's world of illusions is based only on the light, the music and the rock-like structure of the Titanic, although these are highly significant. The idea of a play within a play, masking or masquerading, and acting other than real-life parts is stressed more than once in the narrative. A "Masquerader's Ball" with hundreds attending takes place the first night of the ship's voyage, at midnight, when reality according to

tradition should replace the world of fantasy. Two lovers later inhabit their own world outside of that occupied by the rest of the passengers:

First act to fifth act in a tragic plan,
Stage time, real time-- a woman and a man,
Entering a play within a play, dismiss
The pageant on the ocean with a kiss.
Eleven-twenty curtain! Whether true
Or false the pantomimic vows they make
Will not be known till at the fifth they take
Their mutual exit twenty after two.66

The confusion between reality and unreality is indicated more strongly here than anywhere else in the narrative. The lovers' world, in spite of the stage effects of the narrative at this point, may be the world of an ultimate, imaginative and feeling reality placed within the context of the illusory world of the Titanic, which is itself opposed to the primal reality of the passengers in the lifeboats struggling for survival. The reflection of the zodiac upon the surface of the water, with the lion stalking the bear, and the dog-star following Orion, is another play within a play, and the language in which Pratt describes the sending up of the distress flares again suggests a similar drama:

66 Titanic, p. 19.
A fourth sped towards the sky . . .
more a parody
Upon the tragic summons of the sea
Than the script of unacknowledged fears
Known to the bridge and to the engineers. 67

Nor is The Titanic the only poem in which the
theme of illusion plays a basic part. In "Myth and
Fact" Pratt states:

We had outgrown the dreams, outrung the knells
Through the voodoo, amulet and prayer,
But knew that daylight fastened on us spells
More fearful than Medusa's hair. 68

The illusions and delusions of adults are more serious
than those of children because they are diguised by
social conventions, are continuous, and end so disas-
tursively. Again the "darker irony of light", or know-
ledge, is the source from which these illusions grow,
a suggestion reinforced by "a Prairie Sunset":

And when, like a belated funeral rite,
The last pale torch was smothered by the night,
The mind's horizon like the sky was stripped
Of all illusion but a fable told
Of gods that died, of suns and worlds grown cold,
In some extinct Promethean manuscript. 69

67 Titanic, p. 28.
69 "A Prairie Sunset," in Many Moods, p. 11.
In *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe*, "Epic and drama ris[e] to illume / Disaster--now the call and now reply".\(^70\) For one of the sailors in *Behind the Log*,

the ocean was a place of travel,
A blue-green oriental boulevard
Round unknown continents--up to this year;
And even to last night the illusion stayed,
When for his benefit the Borealis
Staged a rehearsal of the Merry Dancers
Before the blood-red footlights till it paled
The myth upon a tracery of starshell.\(^71\)

Again, as in *The Titanic*, the illusion is induced through a boulevard-like stability, artificial lights, and through the drama of the Northern Lights, an indication that the illusion is a total masking of reality. As in *The Titanic*, this implies an illusion caused by man's misconceptions of himself and is reinforced symbolically by universal phenomena, in this case the Northern Lights.

The illusion of security in *The Titanic* predominates until the very end. The music ceases and the lights go out only moments before the ship sinks:

And now that last salt tonic which had kept
The valour of the heart alive--the bows
Of the immortal seven that had swept

\(^{70}\) *Roosevelt*, p. 32.

\(^{71}\) *Pratt, Behind the Log* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1947), p. 34.
The strings to outplay, outdie their orders, ceased.
Five minutes more, the angle had increased
From eighty on to ninety when the rows
Of deck and port-hole lights went out, flashed back
A brilliant second and again went black.72

Immediately afterwards the engines tear loose from their
foundations "with a roar / Which drowned all cries upon
the deck".73 No cry is heard that might indicate a final
comprehension, or return to reality.

Sutherland's assertion that the final pages of The
Titanic are dominated by a great sense of heroic exaltation
loses validity because almost all the passengers aboard
the ship remain unaware of their danger to the last mom-
ent. Men do yield first place to the women on the life-
boats, even stepping back from the lifeboat onto the ship
with "the grace / And air of a Castillian courtesy",74 but
these actions must be examined in light of the illusion
that is such an all-encompassing feature of the brightly-
lit vessel. Although fear exists, and panic threatens
at times, the passengers are

rallied to attention on the verge
Of flight as if the rattle of a drum
From quarter faint but unmistakeable

72 Titanic, p.42.
73 Titanic, p.42.
74 Titanic, p.36.
Had put the stiffening in the blood to check
The impulse of the feet, leaving the will
No choice between the lifeboats and the deck. 75

Pratt frequently refers to the sound of the drum in his
poetry, a sound that puts the "stiffening in the blood", similar to the "elemental trust / In bulkheads" felt
"within the blood" of the sailors on the Roosevelt. In
The Titanic, however, this courage or will is balanced by the conviction that the situation is not really crucial.

The ship, with its blazing lights and womb-like
security offers the strongest argument against the validity of the apparently heroic and sacrificial gestures
that Sutherland emphasizes so strongly. The passengers are, for the most part, reluctant rather than eager to
enter the lifeboats. Ida Strauss decides to stay aboard the Titanic with her husband, but her biblical intonation
of "Whither you go, I go" 76 sounds too affected to be convincing. The "boy of ten" giving up his seat for a
Magyar woman and her child has "piled / The inches on his stature", 77 but apart from being a gesture born of pride rather than compassion, the action is that of a boy too

75 Titanic, p. 37.
76 Titanic, p. 36.
77 Titanic, p. 37.
young to realize the implications of his decision. The boy signalling for help with the wireless in the Antinoe is also young, but is alone in a cramped space with waves continually beating the ship, so he has to support himself against the table. He is fully cognizant of how crucial his plea for help is for the entire crew, and therefore his action is heroic, but the boy on the Titanic is in the midst of adults who seem to feel little or no panic, and are themselves in no hurry to leave the ship in favor of the lifeboats.

Some of the most prominent passengers, however, appear to appreciate the danger, and accept it calmly, showing neither fear nor excitement:

The men who had in the world's run of trade, Or in pursuit of the professions, made Their reputation, looked upon the scene Merely as drama in a life's routine: Millet was studying eyes as he would draw them Upon a canvas" Butt, as though he saw them In the ranks' Astor, social, debonair, Waved "Good-byes" to his bride— "See you to-morrow", And tapped a cigarette on a silver case; Men came to Guggenheim as he stood there In evening suit, coming this time to borrow Nothing but courage from his calm, cool face. 78

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78 Titanic, p. 37.
Significantly, though, these men "looked upon the scene / Merely as drama in a life's routine." Although they offer the appearance of calm in the face of a precarious position, they treat the crisis in a conventional manner, giving first priority to appearance rather than feeling. Their calm is a parody of the active, straightforward bravery exhibited in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, for while they are partially conscious of danger, their passive stance is motivated by their self-conscious awareness of their station in the social and the business world rather than by compassion.

Astor's "social, debonair" manner and his tapping a cigarette "on a silver case" is consciously controlled to prove his ease, but the tapping also suggests nervousness and some fear, controlled only by the consciousness of his social position as affirmed by the silver cigarette case. Guggenheim is calm and impassive, giving no indication of nervousness, and both men inspire calm in others. This however, like the musicians playing lively music, adds to the illusion rather than lessens it. Pratt has carefully and conscientiously built up the illusory element from the beginning, and has stressed it over and over throughout the poem to the extent where it is virtually
impossible to dispel, therefore no action, however chivalrous or sacrificial, can be evaluated without balancing it against the air of illusion.

This is not to say that there is no element of sacrifice or of bravery in these actions. Pratt's complexity is demonstrated in his realization that people act out of more than single motives. Therefore, although pride and illusion must be carefully considered, they do not necessarily exclude sacrifice. Some acts of heroism undoubtedly have a sacrificial nature, the more remarkable, perhaps, for being less evident. These are acts that directly counteract the carelessness, the willingness to take risks for insufficient reasons, and the over-confidence that led to the fatal accident. Blatant inefficiency characterizes the lowering of the lifeboats, but a stoker's quick, unthinking reaction compensates for this inefficiency:

The crew groped for the link-releasing gear; The lever jammed; a stoker's jack-knife ripped The aft ropes through, which on the instant brought her With rocking keel though safe upon the water.79

79 Titanic, p. 30.
The stoker has a clear-sighted, realistic view of the situation, and his quick-wittedness and instant action balances the ineffectuality of crew and equipment. The captain of the *Carpathia*, in his race to rescue the *Titanic*'s passengers, takes daring risks in his desperate effort to reach the sinking vessel in time. He demonstrates the "Decision of a captain to redeem / Errors of brain by hazards of the heart", and ironically again, the risks taken by the Cunard *Carpathia*'s captain are to rescue the White Star *Titanic* which has taken similar, but unnecessary risks for the superficial, egotistical desire to win the speed title from Cunard Lines. The conductor of the band shows a great deal of courage and heroism in keeping the music playing until the very end in order to prevent panic, even though fully aware of the seriousness of the situation.

Lastly, there is an account of heroism that must be vindicated from all traces of pride and illusion:

The engineering staff of thirty-five
Are at their stations; those off-duty go
Of their free will to join their mates below
In the grim fight for steam, more steam, to drive
The pressure through the pumps and dynamo.
Knee-deep, waist-deep in water they remain,
Not one of them seen on the decks again.81

80 *Titanic*, p. 33.
81 *Titanic*, p. 32.
Working below decks in knee-deep and waist-deep water there can be no illusion of security, and to be willing to remain there until the ship goes down demands courage and fortitude far greater than pride. Their effort to save the ship is a voluntary self-sacrifice and genuine heroism that opposes the general atmosphere of illusion, and faces the implications of the environment directly. Pratt considers heroism and sacrifice of this nature as the ultimate human attribute, regardless of the progress has made technically his is the heroism he speaks of when he refers to "eternal pathways of fire, ... Of doors held ajar in storms".

There is, then, heroic exaltation in the final pages of The Titanic, but not the exaltation of the whale's proud, dying paroxysm of rage in "The Cachalot", or the exaltation of violence evident in "The Great Feud" or The Witches' Brew. Nor does Sutherland's interpretation of exaltation through sacrifice apply, because he bases his conclusion on the obvious heroic actions that the aura of illusion so strongly questions. A quiet sense of exaltation through genuine sacrifice does alleviate the tragedy of The Titanic, but this is mixed with a tremendous horror for the hundreds who have been destroyed through an illusion and without ever recovering from their illusion.
CHAPTER IV
SAINT AS HERO
BRÉBEUF AND HIS BRETHREN

Brébeuf and His Brethren stands as the culmination of Pratt's achievement as a poet. The ambivalences and ambiguities of the poem again lie in the close association of civilization and savagery, as well as in the obscuring of reality and illusion. The seventeenth-century setting also adds to the complexity of the poem. Although Pratt tries to narrate consistently from the seventeenth-century viewpoint, overtones from the nineteenth-century sources from which he took much of his material, and from the twentieth-century, at times give the narrative multiple meanings that qualify heroism through ironic effects of which the poet himself is not always aware.

Although Pratt must have realized, through reading Francis Parkman and the writings of the Jesuits,¹ that

¹ Henry Wells and Carl Klinck, in their study of Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and His Poetry (Toronto: Ryerson, 1947), pp. 51, 53, 91, show that Pratt read the Jesuit Relations thoroughly. Pratt himself also states, in his "Introductory material for a reading of Brébeuf and His Brethren," E. J. Pratt Manuscript Collection (Toronto: Victoria Univ. Library), Box 3, No. 24, pp. 1-2, that he has read both Parkman's history of the Jesuits in North America, and the Jesuit Relations.
the priests were extremely rigid in their beliefs, and could be ruthless in their determination to evangelize new territories "for the greater glory of God", his introduction to Brébeuf and His Brethren is unalteringly enthusiastic:

The winds of God were blowing over France, Kindling the hearths and altars, changing vows Of rote into an alphabet of flame. The air was charged with song beyond the range Of larks, with wings beyond the stretch of eagles.2

The order of events in Pratt's narrative of the Huron missions parallels the order in Parkman, and in places Pratt takes phrases directly from Parkman's works and fits them into his poem. He drew the account of Brébeuf's first three years among the Hurons (1626-1629) from Pioneers of France in the New World.3 Another history by Parkman, Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century,4 supplied material for the bulk of the poem, although this was interspersed by passages


4 Parkman, Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century (Boston: Little, Brown, 1871).
taken from the Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, and Loyola's own Spiritual Exercises.

Parkman patronizes the Jesuits, but nevertheless provides some useful insights into their philosophy from a more objective viewpoint than that revealed in the Relations.

The Jesuit is no dreamer; he is emphatically a man of action; action is the end of his existence.

It was an arduous problem which Loyola undertook to solve,—to rob a man of volition, yet to preserve in him, nay, to stimulate, those energies which would make him the most efficient instrument of a great design. To this end the Jesuit novitiate and the constitutions of the Order are directed. The enthusiasm of the novice is urged to its intensest pitch; then, in the name of religion, he is summoned to the utter abnegation of intellect and will in favor of the Superior, in whom he is commanded to recognize the representative of God on earth. Thus the young zealot makes no slavish sacrifice of intellect and will; at least, so he is taught for he sacrifices them, not to man, but to his Maker. No limit is set to his submission; if the Superior pronounces black to be white, he is bound in conscience to acquiesce.

Parkman goes on to say, "No religious order has ever

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5 Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896).

6 Ignatius Loyola, Manresa: or the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (1914; rpt., London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, n.d.). Because numerous translations of the Spiritual Exercises exist, it is difficult to determine which was used by Pratt. The present translation was chosen because it was in print before 1940, easily accessible, and commonly used.

7 Parkman, Jesuits, pp. 9-10.
united in itself so much to be admired and so much to be detested".  

Nor does Parkman spare the Jesuits throughout his book, as he shows them running from lodge to lodge, using various ruses to circumvent watchful, superstitious Indian parents in order to baptize dying children, thus "rescuing them from the flames of perdition, and changing them . . . 'from little Indians into little angels'".  

Parkman's most provocative comment on the Jesuits is added as a footnote, when he says that "the truth is, that, with some of these missionaries, one may throw off trash and nonsense by the cart-load, and find under it all a solid nucleus of saint and herc".  

Despite the influence of Parkman, Pratt refers to the Jesuits' evangelizing missions as "The winds of God".  

He expresses enthusiasm for the Counter-Reformation, the beginnings of the "Company of Jesus" and the re-awakening to full-bodied spiritual life of the saints and martyrs on whose blood the church was built. The saints are revitalized and come back "in their incarnate

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8 Parkman, Jesuits, p. 13.
9 Parkman, Jesuits, p. 64.
10 Parkman, Jesuits, p. 392n.
11 Brébeuf, p. 1.
forms":\textsuperscript{12} St. Augustine returns in spirit, and is once again "busy with his plans,--Reshaping for the world his City of God\textsuperscript{13}; Kempis' \textit{Imitatio} is rejuvenated and new heroes find their identity and purpose in the examples of their predecessors. The very words and phrases, the momentum and lyricism of the passage, echoes the zeal and drive of the Jesuits.

A study of \textit{Brébeuf and His Brethren} requires an examination of why, with their obvious deficiencies regarding breadth of tolerance and a liberal, questioning mind, Pratt found the Jesuit martyrs as heroic as he portrays them. The reason lies, as is usually the case with Pratt, in his interest in opposite extremes. Pratt regards the priests not only as individual heroes, but also as comprising a heroic period in Canadian history. In his introductory notes to the poem he says:

\begin{quote}
The story of the Jesuit missionaries to Canada is not only a great act in the national drama; it is a chapter in the history of religion; it is a saga of the human race.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Brébeuf}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Brébeuf}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{14} Pratt, "Introductory material," p. 1.
Pratt views the story of the Huron missions on three, or actually four levels: as religious history, national history, human history, and as the heroism of outstanding individuals. The qualities of the heroes which he most admires, and labels as "expressions of the human spirit", are "courage, faith, self-effacement, endurance--that sheer holding on at solitary posts in the darkness of an approaching catastrophe which had all the marks of material failure".

Pratt admires the courage and endurance of the Jesuits, but at times seems to be trying to convince himself that the motive is worth the sacrifice involved. The issues in Brébeuf are not as clear as in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, in which Pratt's belief in a strong, unified brotherhood predominates, and the heroic actions performed undeniably result from compassion. In Brébeuf, the missionaries come to save "souls", a mission that in itself is not as humane as saving lives, because the concern expressed is for a spiritual state rather than for individual people. Evangelizing missions can

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easily be construed as arising out of a sense of duty rather than out of compassion for others, and where duty is the primary motivation, hubris is not far distant.

Bébeuf and His Brethren again demonstrates Pratt’s own ambivalent feelings: he admires both the Christian, compassion-oriented ethic and the display of strength and endurance for its own sake, which is associated with primal, instinctual emotion. Pratt experiences equal admiration for the physical power and the spiritual strength exhibited by Bébeuf, therefore, though the polarities are easily identifiable, a synthesis of the two becomes almost impossible, because synthesis demands some compromise on both sides. Heroism is therefore demonstrated more by a tension between opposite forces in Bébeuf than by a synthesis. The value of the poem lies, however, in the constant struggle to achieve a synthesis of opposites under circumstances that are much more complex than in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, and even in The Titanic.

Pratt’s ambivalence is stronger in Bébeuf than in any of his earlier poems, and he dramatizes both extremes equally. Pratt as artist is also more personally involved in the creation of this poem than in others, for he is
dealing with issues that become more ambiguous and more complex as he delves into them further. He is convinced that the heroism of the Jesuits is superior to the heroism of pilots dying a fiery death while fighting for their country, and far superior to the heroism described by Joseph Conrad when he speaks with obvious wonder of the risks taken by men, particularly sailors, on the ordinary routines of trade.

... thousands of men in hundreds of ships ... go around the world, get sick and die, or suffer cold and heat, fight storms, get wrecked and drowned for the sake of carrying home cargoes of pepper—enduring such struggle and loss and death for pepper. 17

Pratt says the Jesuit martyrs were ultimately heroic because

they had one interest only—the religious salvation of the Huron Indians by means of the rites and mysteries of their church. That the motive was sacrificial, materially disinterested, based upon absolute conviction and sincerity both Catholic and Protestant historians attest... . . . It was enough for men like Brébeuf, Lalemant and Joques to know that the orders of their Superiors had been obeyed, letter and spirit, and that the seal of Christ had been placed upon their labours. 18


18 Pratt, "Introductory material," p. 2.
Pratt sees vitality in Brébeuf as embodying courage, endurance, strength and, as Parkman says, the "impression of power". Faith, on the other hand, implies an ultimate motive for suffering, and represents the total and unyielding conviction that one is doing what is right and good. Faith implies a sacrificial motive, "materially disinterested, based upon absolute conviction and sincerity".

The heroism of "some fighting plane falling in a trail of fire to the ground as the result of a daring magnificent gamble" is comparable to Wertanen's instinctive gamble. In The Roosevelt and the Antelope Pratt does not explicitly state that Wertanen's action is not as heroic as Fried's, but in his notes on Brébeuf he does state that a war pilot's gamble is not sufficiently disinterested and inspired to be as heroic as the Jesuit martyrs are.

The Jesuits are a prime example of a society so divorced from its origins that it no longer recognizes

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19 Parkman, Jesuits, p. 392n.
20 Pratt, "Introductory material," p. 2.
a primal inheritance. They are totally "ethic-oriented". According to Parkman's writings, Loyola's "letter of Obedience" and the Spiritual Exercises, the Jesuits' goal on earth is a total negation of ego or self, "the utter abnegation of intellect and will in favor of the Superior". Loyola says that perfect obedience means not only to obey one's superior, or even to obey willingly, but always to coincide one's will and understanding with that of the superior:

What the superior enjoins is the command of God our Lord and His holy will... Make every effort to attain... Obedience by a glorious victory over yourselves, vanquishing the loftiest and most difficult part of yourselves, your will and understanding.  

The total subjecting of volition and personal desires results in a Nirvana-like existence that denies heroism because it denies any personal initiative or individual will. Pratt's poem does not express as much admiration for the goal the Jesuits try to attain as for the heroic human qualities they demonstrate in their

23 Ignatius Loyola, "To the Members of the Society in Portugal," in Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola, trans. by Wm. J. Young (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 287-295. Although the publication date of this translation is 1959, earlier translations existed, which Pratt would have had access to.

24 Parkman, Jesuits, pp. 9-10.

25 Loyola, Letters, p. 294.
efforts to attain it. The process, rather than the end, becomes relevant to heroism. Paradoxically, the Jesuit priests in Pratt's poem place themselves into a primal environment in order to demonstrate the submission of their instincts. This environment allows them to move, finally, closer to the primal position that acts out of instinct, rather than entirely away from it.

Pratt introduces hubris into the narrative of Brébeuf in a softer, less disastrous form than in The Titanic. The priests, and Brébeuf in particular, are especially susceptible to pride because their goal is so extreme and so beyond the reach of human attainment. Pride in suffering compensates for a will that cannot totally subject its individuality. The will of a dominating character like Brébeuf is shown to be is impossible to subdue completely, and especially so because Pratt himself admires strength of will power. The Brébeuf of Pratt's poem necessarily suffers from hubris because this imperfection according to Jesuit standards, makes him more acceptable as a personality in the poem.

The portrait of Brébeuf that emerges from Parkman's writings and from the Jesuit Relations is especially important for a full understanding of the priest's character in Pratt's narrative, for the inconsistencies
between the sources and the poem indicate Pratt's preference for Brébeuf as a man rather than as a passive martyr. Pratt's awareness of the illusory element in the Jesuits' idealism brings the poem into a twentieth-century perspective and adds significant ironic implications to the surface narrative.

The first reference to Brébeuf is ironic because Pratt is aware of the psychological implications in the portrayal of the young neophyte who while

rapt
In contemplation saw a bleeding form
Falling beneath the instrument of death,
Rising under the quickening of the thongs,
Stumbling along the Via Dolorosa. 26

Brébeuf's character is largely delineated by the following lines:

No play upon the fancy was this scene,
But the Real Presence to the naked sense. 27

Brebeuf, "rapt / In contemplation", may be participating in the mass, performing part of the Spiritual Exercises, or else meditating by himself. In any of the instances

26 Brébeuf, pp. 2-3.
27 Brébeuf, p. 3.
mentioned, the Spiritual Exercises as outlined by St. Ignatius would be in his mind, either consciously or unconsciously, because they were so strongly emphasized in Jesuit monasteries. The vivid application of the senses required by the exercitants might easily convince Brébeuf that the vision was a "Real Presence", or an actual personality whom he could see and communicate with.

An examination of one of the exercises, the "second Exercise on the Passion of our Lord", indicates the strong psychological reactions the Spiritual Exercises are calculated to induce in the neophytes. Like all the exercises, this one begins with a "preparatory prayer" which, though not set forth by St. Ignatius, usually adheres to a context very like the following:

O my Lord, enlighten my mind that I may . . . feel vividly the matter I am going to consider—the Mystery I am going to contemplate. Inflame my heart that I may love Thee more ardently. Strengthen my will that I may the better regulate my whole life according to Thy most holy Will.


This prayer is followed by the "First prelude":

Recall . . . Jesus . . . crowned with thorns in the judgment-hall; finally loaded with His cross and led to Calvary, there to undergo the last suffering. . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Consider-- . . . What He (Christ) suffers in His body. Represent to yourself the cruel scenes of the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the crucifixion. Contemplate the sacred body of our Lord torn by the scourgers . . . His head pierced by sharp thorns, which the soldiers make more painful every moment by striking Him; . . . His feet and hands nailed to the cross, with horrible torture to the nerves, and all His body suspended and, as it were, sustained by His wounds. 30

The text of the Spiritual Exercises repeats over and over again, "Represent to yourself", with special sections devoted to "The application of the senses" in which the exercitant is urged to see, feel, hear and smell the tortures of the damned and the pleasures of the just alternately. This total dominating of the imagination by the will to the extent where the individual believes he sees, feels, smells and hears without using his senses, is at least a plausible psychological explanation for the many visions the Jesuits claimed to have had.

30 Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, pp. 180-183.
From his narrator's point of view, however, Pratt has categorically stated that the vision of Christ was a "Real Presence", not a "play upon the fancy". Pratt's attitude here, and throughout the poem, is ambivalent, allowing for different levels of meaning in the poem. The actual narrator is a devout Jesuit, not Pratt himself. But the Pratt of *The Titanic* also hovers about, warning against too ready acceptance of an obvious explanation for the vision, and urging the reader to a more objective critical stance. The vision is therefore a "Real Presence" within the surface context of the poem and the reader's "willing suspension of disbelief", but also adds depth to the portrayal of Brébeuf from a more objective psychological viewpoint.

The passage is also important because it is evidence of Brébeuf's susceptibility to the Jesuit mold. His vivid imagination demonstrates its forcefulness again in the passage immediately following the description of his vision. Voices speak "unto his ear / And to his heart" of life "per ignem et per aquam" (by fire and by water), and he then sees

```plaintext
Forests and streams and trails . . .
The painted faces of the Iroquois,
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The stories of those northern boundaries
Where in the winter the white pines could brush
The Pleiades, and at the equinoxes
Under the gold and green of the auroras
Wild geese drove wedges through the zodiac.31

This image, in turn, is rudely shattered by Brébeuf's
statement: "I shall be broken first before I break them."32

The violent extremes of imagination, from a contemplation of the broken body of Christ to the idyllic Canadian scene and then to the picture of one's own body being broken seem incongruous, but are perfectly compatible to the Jesuit mind, because it is trained to represent pictures of such diversity to itself as vividly and lucidly as possible. Parkman is wrong when he says "the Jesuit is no dreamer; he is emphatically a man of action; action is the end of his existence".33 The Jesuit is a "man of action", but the action is the result of a totally dominating, otherworldly dream that can only culminate in physical death. Pratt is trying to grasp or conceptualize this dream when he asks himself how these men could stay at their posts, endure all their suffering and, when released, always come back to suffer more.

31 Brébeuf, p. 3.
32 Brébeuf, p. 3.
33 Parkman, Jesuits, p. 9.
Brébeuf's declaration that "I shall be broken first before I break them" seems unnaturally extremist and even egotistical. A self-centered morality "motivated by a wish for reward is egotistical and no less so if the reward comes in another world instead of this." Brébeuf's commitment is partly selfish because he is convincing himself that he can and will accomplish his own end, as well as pledging obedience and devotion to his master. Christ referred to his own body as being broken, and the term has consequently become part of the celebration of the Eucharist, but Brébeuf speaks of breaking as well as of being broken, and his terminology contradicts, rather than enhances, the beauty of the preceding passage. Although the statement seems incongruous when compared to Christ's prophetic utterance concerning his death, it must again be viewed against the background of the militant Jesuit Order, in which the continual struggle between good and evil, or God and the Devil, is so highly personified that it becomes part of everyday life. The terminology in this context becomes more understandable, because Brébeuf is not even

necessarily referring directly to the Indians, but may be referring to the demons he firmly believes to be existing within them.

Despite its compatibility with the religious code in which Pratt deals, however, Brébeuf's utterance remains ambiguous from a contemporary viewpoint, both because of its vehemence and because Pratt seems to have no exact source for it.36 The significance of Pratt's poems often lies in the small departures and changes that he makes from his sources, because these changes emphasize his own feelings and philosophy in contrast to the source material. Brébeuf's statement is so narrow and emphatic

36 Although Brébeuf's statement in the poem is not a direct quotation from the Relations or from Parkman, Le Jeune, in his relation of 1648-1649 quotes a later vow of Brébeuf's that is similar, and which Pratt may have used as his basis for Brébeuf's statement. Le Jeune quotes Brébeuf as saying:

"... I make a vow to you never to fail... in the grace of martyrdom... I bind myself to it in such a way that I intend that... it shall no longer be a lawful thing for me... to avoid opportunities of dying and of shedding my blood for you... And when I shall have received the stroke of death, I bind myself to accept it from your hand with all pleasure, and with joy in my heart... I offer to you... my blood, my body and my life" (Jesuit Relations, Vol. 34, pp. 165-169).
that it becomes exceptional in the poem; it uncovers a variety of possibilities with regard to his character that must be kept in mind throughout, possibilities which include elements of sado-masochism, narcissism and the will to omnipotence. Although Pratt portrays Brébeuf, like Wertanen in The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, as definitely heroic within the context of the poem, the priest is nevertheless not free from pride and human weakness. Though Brébeuf's first and greatest desire in the poem is to serve God, he also wants recognition for himself, and attains this recognition, in part, by punishing his own body and by torturing the Indians with visions of Hell. These were common characteristics of the Jesuit, however, and can be assigned special significance in relation to the poem only when they become very pronounced in individuals.

Pratt characterizes Brébeuf more fully by emphasizing his adherence to the Jesuit program:

He knew by heart the manual that had stirred
The world--. . . On the prayers,
The meditations, points and colloquies,
Was built the soldier and the martyr programme,
This is the end of man--Deum laudet,
To seek and find the will of God, to act
Upon it for the ordering of life,
And for the soul's beatitude. This is
To do, this not to do. To weigh the sin;  
The interior understanding to be followed 
By the amendment of the deed through grace;  
The daily practice of the counter virtues. 37

The passage is important because it also indicates Pratt's own interpretation of the Jesuit code. Essentially the code, built, as Pratt says, on "the soldier and the martyr programme", is destructive when regarded from a finite viewpoint, because it is based on the necessity for struggle and self-destruction. The belief in another world after death, however, orients the Jesuit code toward life, although not physical life.

Again the extremes to which otherworldliness is carried becomes significant. Pratt, or Brébeuf in Pratt's context, says "This is the end of man-- . . . / To seek and find the will of God, to act / Upon it for the ordering of life, / And for the soul's beatitude". St. Ignatius repeats over and over again, in his Spiritual Exercises: "Man was created for this end; to praise, reverence, and serve the Lord his God, and by this means to arrive at eternal salvation". 38 Pratt refers to a process, "to seek and find", whereas Loyola speaks of

37 Brébeuf, pp. 3-4.
38 Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, p. 21.
an accomplished fact, that "Man was created for this end ..." For Pratt the "end" or purpose of man is undefined. Loyola, however, clearly outlines man's purpose on earth, and the retreat for which the Spiritual Exercises was written is designed to help man discover this purpose. Despite Pratt's close adherence to his Jesuit sources, then, and despite his narrator's role being that of a devout Jesuit, Pratt is still firmly lodged in the everyday world of struggle and uncertainty, rather than in a fixed dogma that defines life after death in categorical terms. His placing of the word "act" at the end of the line adds to the significance of the passage, because it suggests that actions may at times be more significant than motives "for the ordering of life, / And for the soul's beatitude". Ending the line with a strong verb like "act" also reinforces the sense of physical strength that is as integral to the poem and to Pratt's concept of heroism as is ethical determination.

The next lines, "This is / To do, this not to do, / To weigh the sin; / The interior understanding to be followed / By the amendment of the deed through grace", follow closely the context of Loyola's own words:
first, a full knowledge, a true detestation of our sins; then a reformation of ourselves. Under the pressure of desolation: Divine grace remains to us.

By describing the actions, but not giving fully the reasons for these actions, Pratt at times makes the Jesuit code sound more negative than it really is. He talks about "The abnegation of the evil thought / And act: the trampling of the body under; / The daily practice of the counter virtues" without making his readers aware that the purpose of these actions is to gain in humility and to suffer with Christ after the manner of a Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. Ignatius says, in reference to a metaphor of St. Paul, that "these three degrees of humility suppose the abasement and, as it were, the annihilation of the old man within us". The "old man" is, in early Christian terminology, the sinful self who predominates until the soul is purified through belief in Christ. The whole concept of self-flagellation practiced by the Jesuits is then a quite literal attempt to subject the sinful self in order that purity may be

39 Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 53.
40 Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 233.
strengthened. These lines in the poem again suggest a double context, since the thoughts occur in Brébeuf's mind while at the same time being Pratt's rephrasing of the Jesuit manual. They show Brébeuf as pre-occupied with the actions of flagellation as well as with the motives governing the actions. Pratt acknowledges negative qualities in the Jesuit code, but still finds enough individual heroism in the men themselves to set them up as models of an ideal.

The three lines following the section of the poem quoted above again signify a departure of Pratt's poem from the directions stressed by St. Ignatius:

"In time of desolation to be firm
And constant in the soul's determination
Desire and sense obedient to the reason." 42

Because Pratt puts the passage into quotation marks, he obviously intends it to mean that Brébeuf is either quoting part of the Spiritual Exercises to himself, or else making a vow. The "Rules of Penance" in Manresa: or the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, provide Loyola's closest parallel to Pratt's passage:

42 Brébeuf, p. 4.
Exterior penance... serves as an excellent satisfaction for past sins; it exercises man in conquering himself and in submitting the inferior part of himself, his senses, to the superior part, or the reason; finally, it solicits and obtains those gifts of Divine, grace which we desire—for example, lively contrition for our sins, abundant tears for them, or over the cross of Jesus Christ, the solution of a doubt that has troubled us, etc.\(^{43}\)

Although much of Pratt's passage on the Jesuit manual was influenced by this extract, the reference to desolation was likely obtained from the following pages on the "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits", in which Loyola talks about grace, patience and constancy. Brébeuf's statement about "Desire and sense obedient to the reason" seems in complete accord with Loyola's "submitting the inferior part of himself, his senses, to the superior part, or the reason", but the connotations attending the two remarks differ widely. Reason for Loyola always means employing the mind to understand the reasoning of one's superior, in order to obey him more fully:

obedience though it is a perfection proper to the will (which it makes ready to fulfill the will of the superior), yet it must also, as

\(^{43}\) Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 230.
has been said, extend to the understanding, inclining it to agree with the thought of the superior, for it is thus that we proceed with the full strength of the soul--of will and understanding--to a prompt and perfect execution. 44

In Pratt's poetry, this kind of reason bears similarities to the "counterfeit" or "wrong reason" characterized by a destructive technological world like that of "The Submarine", and in its more primal stages, the perverted reason exemplified in "The Great Feud".

Brébeuf's usage of the word "reason" is conventional in Jesuit terminology, but also connotes a desire for self-control, and a subjugation of the senses that becomes an end in itself, rather than a process of purification. For Pratt the term "reason", placed at the end of the passage with no qualification attached to it, opens up an entirely different perspective for the poem because it forces the reader to consider the various connotations the word can have. If counterfeit reason is considered, then illusion also becomes important to the poem.

Hubris, too, follows from the ambiguous use of the word "reason", and qualifies Brébeuf's heroism through the

44 Loyola, Letter, p. 293.
ironic implications that are again possible because a narrative written in the twentieth century is put into a seventeenth-century setting. During his first year in Canada, which he is forced to spend at Quebec because of Indian trouble and the murder of the Recollet friar Viel, Brébeuf hardens "his body and his will". No physical hardship is too much for him, no humiliation too great. His tremendous physical vitality begins to emerge, all seemingly part of the "soldier and the martyr programme". Unconsciously, however, his physical strength is also the first indication of a partial going back to primal origins. Through his physical vigour he moves to a position closer to the primitive Indian society, and toward a heroic synthesis of opposites. Brébeuf moves toward this synthesis, but simultaneously suffers from hubris in the form of pride. He prides himself on his ability to compete with the Indians and endure hardships as well as they do.

Continually forcing his body and his external pride to endure, Brébeuf becomes known as the "iron Brebeuf" by the other priests, and the Indians later call him "echon", or "he who pulls the heavy load". Omitted by Pratt in his poem, but contained in his introductory notes and in a footnote in Parkman, is Brébeuf's
own punning reference to himself as an ox, "fit only to bear burdens".\textsuperscript{45} Parkman comments on the statement: "This sort of humility may pass for what it is worth; but it must be remembered, that there is a kind of acting in which the actor firmly believes in the part he is playing".\textsuperscript{46} Although Pratt does not explicitly comment on this element in the priest's character, he does suggest \textit{hubris} in Brébeuf's unquestioning rigidity and almost coldly purposeful stance towards life and death. Pratt in fact shows Brébeuf to be colder and more rigid than either the \textit{Relations} or Parkman do, an indication that a significant gap exists in the poem between Brébeuf's self-image as a compassionate missionary, and Pratt's portrayal of him as a colder man, totally devoted to an ideal that is not necessarily based on compassion, nor devoid of pride.

Parkman offsets Brébeuf's less likeable qualities by showing him to have a very genuine and warm concern for the Indians' welfare, whereas Pratt seems deliberately to quote vows and passages from the \textit{Relations} which favor grim determination to humane feelings. Brébeuf

\textsuperscript{45} Parkman, \textit{Jesuits}, p. 392n.

\textsuperscript{46} Parkman, \textit{Jesuits}, p. 392n.
instructs his fellow priests to

". . . sincerely love the savages
As brothers ransomed by the blood of Christ.
All things must be endured. To win their hearts
You must perform the smallest services.
Provide a tinder-box or burning mirror
To light their fires.

Carry
Your load on portages. Always appear
Cheerful—their memories are good for faults.
Constrain yourselves to eat their sagamite
The way that they prepare it, tasteless, dirty."\(^{47}\)

Although these instructions were important in winning the Indians' favor, and therefore necessary for a successful mission, they were at best instructions, and dealt with mechanical details more than with consideration and compassion in the sense of genuinely liking the Indians, and wanting to help them. The Relations depict Brébeuf as being much more genuinely concerned with the welfare of the Indians than does Pratt, for whom Brébeuf's character at this stage becomes representative of power more than of humanity. The poem shows Brébeuf as more rigid in his attitude than Parkman does.

The strongest sense of hubris in the narrative arises from the conviction that while Brébeuf physically

\(^{47}\) Brébeuf, p. 18
moves toward a more primal position, he simultaneously identifies himself more and more closely with Christ, an identification that in itself is not surprising in view of the Jesuits' strong emphasis on the re-enactment of the suffering and torture of Christ. From the time of his first vision of Christ stumbling along the Via Dolorosa, and his vow to be broken first before he breaks them, Brébeuf emulates Christ and his martyrdom. Back in France, comparing Rennes, "the Jesuits' intellectual home", to life among the Indians, Brébeuf contemplates the broken bodies of both Host and priest which he envisions as his future in Canada. Although the identification of "host" and "priest" is again not extraordinary in light of the priest being God's chosen representative on earth and symbolically sacrificing himself at every mass, the constant reiteration makes the comparison extraordinary. Brébeuf goes on to vow:

"Lord Jesus! Thou didst save me with thy blood; By thy most precious death; and this is why I make this pledge to serve thee all my life In the Society of Jesus--never To serve another than thyself. Hereby I sign this promise in my blood, ready To sacrifice it all as willingly As now I give this drop."\(^{49}\)

\(^{48}\) Brébeuf, p. 9.

\(^{49}\) Brébeuf, p. 10.
Brébeuf's actual desire for martyrdom, expressed so often, reinforces the impression of his desire to die like, with, or even as, Christ. This constant reiteration suggests a longing to usurp Christ's position, a longing absent, or at least not as noticeable, in the other priests.

Again Brébeuf vows, after he has opened the *Imitation of Christ* "without design" and read the chapter "concerning the royal way of the Holy Cross":

"My God, my Saviour, I take from thy hand
The cup of thy sufferings. I invoke thy name;
I vow never to fail thee in the grace
Of martyrdom, if by thy mercy, Thou
Dost offer it to me. I bind myself,
And when I have received the stroke of death,
I will accept it from thy gracious hand
With all pleasure and with joy in my heart;
To thee my blood, my body and my life."\(^{50}\)

Identification with Christ is seen again, finally, as Brébeuf performs his last mass, with the full realization that it will be his last. Christ's preparation for death took the form of an earnest plea for life: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me".\(^{51}\) Brébeuf's preparation seems more dramatically self-conscious, and

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\(^{50}\) *Brébeuf*, p. 26.

his own symbolic sacrifice as host becomes doubly meaningful as he intones:

" Unto me 
  Restore the stole of immortality. 
  My yoke is sweet, my burden light. 
 Grant that 
  I may so bear it as to win thy grace." 52

In his prayer and in his mind he sees himself as Christ, sacrificing himself as Christ did, and deserving of the same honor and respect:

"Graciously receive 
  My life for His life as he gave His life 
  For mine . . . 
  This is my body. 
  Take ye and drink--the chalice of my blood." 53

As well as demonstrating humility, the prayer may be construed as an indication that Brébeuf has long seen himself as Christ, perhaps from the time of his "vision" at Bayeaux, and has waited for his opportunity to play the part in actuality. The thoughts that run through his mind--"not by his pen / Would this be told"--are Pratt's suggestions that Brébeuf does want the story to be told. Parkman infers that the Jesuit Relations owe

52 Brébeuf, p. 59.
53 Brébeuf, p. 60.
their existence to a code of obedience that is strongly reinforced by pride, "otherwise, humility would have concealed them forever".\textsuperscript{54}

In contrast to the priests, the Indians in \textbf{Brébeuf} and \textit{His Brethren} are portrayed as combining a primitive, uninhibited way of life with the evolving of wrong or perverted reason. Pratt compares the Indians to the fully primal position of "A winter pack of wolves" hunting a stag:

\begin{quote}
There was no waste of time between the leap
And the business click upon the jugular,
Such was the forthright honest in death
Among the brutes.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

The Indians, however, have "learned the sport / Of dallying around the nerves to halt / A quick despatch. A human art was torture, / Where Reason crept into the veins, mixed tar / With blood and brewed its own intoxicant".\textsuperscript{56} Pratt consciously casts the Indians into a role similar to that of the anthropoidal ape in "The Great Feud". They use the limited reason they have attained for negative purposes only, in this case a

\textsuperscript{54} Parkman, \textit{Jesuits}, p. 392n.  
\textsuperscript{55} Brébeuf, p. 21.  
\textsuperscript{56} Brébeuf, p. 21.
wilful intensification of pain, and pleasure in seeing others suffer.

Like the Jesuit priests, the Indians can be partially placed into the context of Frye's garrison, although at a very low stage of evolution. They act more instinctively than rationally, but use reason in a destructive, rather than a constructive, manner to assert their order in opposition to the environment. This use of reason parallels that of "The Great Feud". The Hurons torture captives in order to reinforce their own self-established order. Their admiration for stoicism and bravery leads them to artificially produce conditions more conducive to the exhibiting and testing of these qualities. Although the ritual of the torture is a mockery on the surface, the captive is truly a sacrifice, although in an anti-heroic way, because his death ensures or confirms the collective mode of life. Pratt shows his realization of this sacrifice by ironically identifying the Indian with Christ through the images he uses. The "crude unconscious variants / Of reed and sceptre, robe and cross, brier/ And crown" are as genuinely indicative of sacrifice as is Christ's death, but the sacrifice is to further the perversion of reason rather than to establish a reason based on compassion.

57 Brébeuf, p. 20.
The most striking feature of the scene in which the young Iroquois is tortured by the Hurons, is the impassive calm with which the captive accepts his ordeal. He is "forced to state / His willingness to die",\textsuperscript{58} even though that acceptance is couched in the completely ironic form of the entire ritual:

\begin{quote}
"See how your hands Are crushed You cannot thus desire to live.
No.
Then be of good courage--you shall die.
True!--What shall be the manner of my death?
By fire.
When shall it be?
Tonight.
What hour?
At sunset.
All is well."\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

Brébeuf is both repelled and fascinated by the torture. He speaks of "passions" that can not be "altered over-night", without realizing that these passions also exist within himself. The greatest paradox of the poem is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Brébeuf, p. 20.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Brébeuf, pp. 20-21.
\end{itemize}
that the priests, who seem utterly divorced from any instinctual life because they act only according to ethics, are actually moving toward a more primal position while the Indians, representing the primordial instincts, are moving toward a more ordered existence that is no longer amoral. The dichotomy of the primal and the civilized remains, but confusion at times arises as to who is the civilized and who the primal, or, as Pratt suggests in his title, who Brébeuf’s "brethren" really are. This confusion intensifies the need of a synthesis, in only to clarify the issues, but also makes the heroic synthesis much more difficult.

Brébeuf's death is initially characterized by unrestrained violence and fury, rather than the more controlled agony of the Iroquois captive. The Indians are goaded into a frenzy in response to Brébeuf's stoicism and endurance, a frenzy that originates from fear. Brébeuf's defiance represents a threat to their way of life, and again the threat may be that of either civilization or primality:

capping the height of the passion,
... was offered the rite of the font. On the head,
The breast, the loins and the legs, the boiling water!
At their faces like shards of flint from the arrow heads--
"We baptize thee with water..."
To Heaven... That thou mayest be led
To that end we do anoint thee.
We treat thee as a friend; we are the cause
Of thy happiness; we are thy priests; the more
Thou sufferest, the more thy God will reward thee.
So give us thanks for our kind offices."

The fury of taunt was followed by fury of blow.
Wy did not the flesh of Brebeuf cringe to the scourge,
Respond to the heat, for rarely the Iroquois found
A victim that would not cry out in such pain--
The fire was on the wrong fuel. 60  yet here

The reason that gives the Indians their measure of
control earlier is lacking, and religion almost seems
to become irrelevant. Brebeuf has become such a figure
commanding fear and authority to the Indians that they
feel, in Frye's terms, a "terror of the soul" which drives
them to a frenzy while torturing him, a frenzy that
represents the total collapse of what order they have attained.

The scene is characterized by "fury of taunt" and
"fury of blow". Brebeuf's own "thundering reproof to
his foes, / Half-rebuke, half-defiance, giving them
roar for roar" 61 is a measure of how far he too has
returned to his first origins. The two lines are Pratt's
own, unbacked by any of his sources, and are therefore

60 Brebeuf, pp. 62-63.
61 Brebeuf, p. 63.
especially significant to the poem because they represent his own view of Brébeuf's character. Brebeuf is baptized, with boiling water, into an elemental union with the Indians.

The passage to this point has been an expression of uncontrolled feeling, indicating that both Brébeuf and the Indians have reached a plane of emotional intensity that allows for no hesitation or deliberation. Brébeuf gains the height of his power in a stoic endurance that utterly defies death, and because of the hate and fear he has engendered in the Indians, he drives their fury to an unequalled extreme. They are no longer "gleeful", but simply savage; they no longer use reason to prolong his torture as they do with Lalemant, but revert entirely to instinct.

As the torture scene reaches its greatest intensity, Pratt suddenly turns from the naked emotions of the protagonists to the calm deliberation of the devout Jesuit narrator who then interprets the scene. This change from narrating to interpreting prevents overdramatization by balancing feeling with thought, as the interpreter searches for the source of Brébeuf's strength:
Was it because the chancel became the arena, Brébeuf a lion at bay, not a lamb on the altar, As if the might of a Roman were joined to the cause Of Judaea?... Where was the source Of his strength, the home of his courage that topped the best Of their braves and even out-fabled the lore of their legends?" 

These questions lead up to and give body to the interpreter's final answer, that the source of Brébeuf's strength lay in

the sound of invisible trumpets blowing Around two slabs of board, right-angled, hammered By Roman nails and hung on a Jewish hill."

Pratt thus polarizes uninhibited emotion to the image that symbolizes a conscious decision to sacrifice oneself. Brébeuf's martyrdom scene becomes fully significant only with the realization that the Indians have returned from an order based on perverted reason to a solely instinctual existence. Brébeuf, too, goes back in evolution to a more primal position, but simultaneously, relies on the "sound of invisible trumpets" for the source of his strength. Pratt combines the primitive, instinctual

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62 Brébeuf, p. 63.
63 Brébeuf, p. 64.
power and the Christian-oriented reliance on ethics in Brébeuf, but cannot emphasize both extremes simultaneously. He therefore narrates Brébeuf's instinctual response to the Indians' torture, and integrates this response with ethics through the following interpretation of the scene. Brébeuf thus becomes a synthesizing element for the polarities represented by the Indians and the priests, but this synthesis is not entirely satisfactory, because both extremes remain heroic in their own right. Brébeuf's instinctual urges and ethical ideals are never really resolved, and he remains unaware of the forcefulness of his identification with his primal environment, personified in the Indians. He identifies himself with them unconsciously, however, and also remains a priest by means of his capacity to envision a religious concept that has an absolute code of justice for its basis. This vision can never be made practicable in human terms without being debased by "the vast blunders of the forest glooms", but the very possibility of its existence in the human mind and imagination is evidence of a civilization far beyond the grasp of the Indians. Brébeuf is not heroic because he resolves the extremes of the primitive and the

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64 Brébeuf, p. 2.
civilized within himself, but because both extremes find
their fullest expression in him.

The spiritual ideal that Brébeuf embodies does not
only emerge suddenly at the end of the poem. The sincerity
of his religious belief as a human as well as an ethical
ideal expresses itself at times with pure simplicity,
as in part of his letter calling for new recruits from
France:

"Wherein the gain, you ask, of this acceptance?
There is no gain but this—that what you suffer
Shall be of God: your loneliness in travel
Will be relieved by angels overhead;
Your silence will be sweet for you will learn
How to commune with God: rapids and rocks
Are easier than the steeps of Calvary."

Perhaps the most emotionally perceptive passage
of the entire narrative is that in which Brébeuf, being
marched to St. Ignace with the full realization of his
imminent death, allows his mind to reflect on the past,
not on great events, but on minor threads of memory which
have become part of him:

His mind a moment throwing back the curtain
Of eighteen years, could see the orchard lands,
The cidreries, the peasants at the Fairs,
The undulating miles of wheat and barley,

Gardens and pastures rolling like a sea
From Lisieux to Le Havre. Just now the surf
Was pounding on the limestone Norman beaches
And on the reefs of Calvados. Had dawn
This very day not flung her suñlices
Around the headlands and with golden fire
Consumed the silken argosies that made
For Rouen from the estuary of the Seine?
A moment only for that veil to lift--
A moment only for those bells to die
That rang their matins at Conde-sur-Vire.66

Pratt shows his greatest strength as a poet in passages
like these, because they momentarily illustrate a depth
of feeling as great as the climactic moments in his
poetry, but not dependent on direct action for their
impact.

In contrast to Brébeuf usual grim determination,
the other priests are often acutely aware of their
frailties, and because of their weaknesses they sometimes
emerge as more realistic heroic portraits than Brébeuf
does. De Noue, who cannot understand the Indians or
be understood by them, finally returns to Quebec, where
he is content to

labour with the colonists,
Travelling between the outposts, and to die
Snow-blind, caught in the circles of his tracks
Between Three Rivers and Fort Richelieu.67

66 Brébeuf, pp. 61-62.
67 Brébeuf, p. 7.
Garnier, "the gentlest of his stock", resolves

To seek and to accept a post that would
Transmit his nurture through a discipline
That multiplied the living martyrdoms
Before the casual incident of death. 68

Parkman says "Brebeuf was the lion of the Huron mission,
and Garnier was the lamb; but the lamb was as fearless
as the lion". 69 Chabanel, with his "timid nature", was
fully cognizant of his weaknesses and, like Garnier,
resolved that they would in no way prevent him in his
service to God. Consequently he vowed

To stay forever with the Huron Mission,
According to commands of my Superiors.
Therefore I do Beseech Thee to receive me
As Thy perpetual servant and to make
Me worth of so sublime a ministry. 70

Bressani's simple but eloquent statement, "I could not
have believed it to be possible / That a man's body
was so hard to kill" 71 expresses more than most people
like to contemplate.

Joques, of all the priests, seems to have had the
greatest moments of indecision concerning what he ought

68 Brebeuf, p. 11.
69 Parkman, Jesuits, p. 4071
70 Brebeuf, p. 12.
71 Brebeuf, p. 46.
or ought not to do, and his letter to the French Governor also demonstrates the greatest warmth and compassion, although he has been tortured by his captors day after day. He earnestly solicits the aid of prayer, being, he says,

among a people barbarous
In birth and manners, for I know that when
You will have heard this story you will see
The obligation under which I am
To God and my deep need of spiritual help. 72

His pride in his right to echo Job 73 and the apostle Paul 74 adds pathos to the scene, in contrast to Brébeuf's pride in his strength of conviction. Joques' humility shows itself in his "readiness / To execute his tasks, unmurminating", and his courage comes to the fore when he plunges "into a river / To save a woman and a child who stumbled / Crossing a bridge made by a fallen tree". 75 His letter to Governor Montmagny indicates his compassion for the Indians:

72 Brébeuf, p. 37.

73 Brébeuf, p. 39. "A long time / Indeed and cruelly have the wicked wrought / Upon my back with sticks and iron rods". See also Job 16:10-16.

74 Brébeuf, p. 40. "I will glory in the things / Concerning my infirmity, being made / A spectacle to God and to the angels, A sport and a contempt to the barbarians". See also I Corinthians 4:9-13.

75 Brébeuf, p. 41.
"Who in my absence would console
The captives? Who absolve the penitent?
Encourage them in torments? Who baptize
The dying?76

When his fate with the Indians becomes absolutely certain, however, he does consent to escape, after a night of soul-searching to "satisfy his conscience, / Lest some intruding self-preserving thought / Conflict with duty".77 Jogues is not determined to be a martyr as Brébeuf is, and therefore clings to life as long as this does not conflict with his sense of duty. He is not free from hubris or false humility, but Pratt's poem shows this as tempered and dominated by compassion, whereas in Brébeuf the ambivalence of self-gratification and compassion is stronger. Brébeuf's service in the Society does not suffer, however, and possibly profits a great deal, by his hubris, because the Indians respect strength more than compassion. Brébeuf's determination and sheer will power draw the admiration and envy of the Indians as no amount of compassion or good will could have done, for they gave to him "that strange nimbus of authority" that was "in some dim way related to their

76 Brébeuf, p. 42.
77 Brébeuf, p. 42.
The full impact of this statement is thought-provoking in view of the ambiguity related to the title of the narrative, because it again identifies the priest with the savage, and the civilized with the primitive.

Although Brébeuf himself reflects a tension of opposites more than a synthesis, Pratt does establish a synthesis in the symbolic framework of the narrative. The identification of primitive instincts with Christian ethics is reinforced throughout the poem by the symbols for Christianity and savagery. Pratt chose the cross as the primary symbol for the poem:

The central idea to me was to get hold of a symbol which at the time of the Crucifixion represented the very limit of shame in the eyes of the pagan world, but later became the transcendent glory of the Christian theology and experience, namely, the Cross. I had to end on that note.

The cross unites the contradictions of shame and glory, and leads to a transcendent vision. During Brébeuf's vision at Bayeux his fingers close and tighten on a crucifix, an indication that he is unconsciously, if not consciously, embracing the shame and the glory, the

78 Brébeuf, p. 34.

life and the death that are all suggested by the symbol which, a few lines earlier, had already been referred to as "the instrument of death". The "crown", the "stake" and "fire" become associated with the cross as Pratt introduces Gabriel Lalemant,

who would share the crown
With Jean Brébeuf, pitting the frailest body
Against the hungers of the wilderness,
The fevers of the lodges and the fires
That slowly wreathed themselves around a stake.

Gradually Pratt interweaves images relating to the lowest and the highest forms of evolution. The "crown" and the "stake" are opposites incorporated into the most meaningful symbol, the cross, and constantly associated with them is the idea of fire and of wind. The poem begins and ends with the "winds of God", but in between burns a holocaust that belies warmth and friendliness, the flames fanned by winds of savagery, rather than of grace. These symbols form a pattern determined by the progress of the Huron missions and the atmosphere of the poem at various stages of the mission. The poem gradually builds up to its first climax in the torture

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80 Brébeuf, p. 2.
81 Brébeuf, pp. 10-11.
and death of Jogues and the capture of Bressani. A quiet, beautiful interlude follows, during which peace with the Iroquois seems to be at hand and the missions flourish, before the final, swift-moving culmination brings the Huron missions to an end.

The symbolism of the poem, with the cross always predominant, is built around this progress from building violence to the dream of peace and then to the final frenzy preceeding the conclusion. Brébeuf, watching the preparation for the torture of the young Iroquois, sees "the crude unconscious variants / Of reed and sceptre, robe and cross, brier / And crown",\(^82\) all the symbols of humiliation and glory brought together. He later speaks of "a consolation in the cross that far outweighs / Its burdens",\(^83\) but the crosses placed on each bastion of the mission built at Sainte Marie again demonstrate the ambivalence of hope and terror. During his visit to the Neutrals, Brébeuf sees

\[\text{a moving cross,}\]
\[\text{Its upright beam arising from the south--}\]
\[\text{The country of the Iroquois: the shape}\]
\[\text{Advanced along the sky until its arms}\]
\[\text{Cast shadows on the Huron territory,}\]
\[\text{"And huge enough to crucify us all."}\(^84\)]

\(^{82}\) \textit{Brébeuf}, p. 20.
\(^{83}\) \textit{Brébeuf}, p. 25.
\(^{84}\) \textit{Brébeuf}, p. 36.
Later Jogues, having "reached the shores of Lake Superior, /...planted a great cross, facing it west". The cross always portrays the opposites of suffering and hope, death and life, savagery and Christianity, as well as a continual comfort in times of stress, and worship in times of plenty. Brébeuf finds the source of his strength

in the sound of invisible trumpets blowing
Around two slabs of board, right-angled, hammered
By Roman nails and hung on a Jewish hill.

The absence of the actual word "cross" in this all-important image adds vigour to the symbolism, because it is expressed in original phrases to which the reader has not yet become accustomed. While the reader is shocked into greater concentration, the symbol without the word also makes the passage more ambiguous. Preceeded by Brébeuf's violent response to torture as he gives the Indians "roar for roar", the symbol cannot be restricted to an orthodox Christian interpretation.

The final image in the poem is one of comple unity, and emphasizes the final synthesis of the poem. The cross and the hatchet are buried in the earth, and united, give rise to a new birth:

85 Brébeuf, p. 37.
86 Brébeuf, p. 64.
Near to the ground where the cross broke under
the hatchet,
And went with it into the soil to come back at
the turn
Of the spade with the carbon and calcium char of
the bodies,
The shrines and altars are built anew; the Aves
And prayers ascend, and the Holy Bread is broken. 87

This image, at the very end of the poem, indicates that
Brébeuf does not comprise the totality of Pratt's vision
in the poem. Ragueneau, cautious, meditative and seemingly
indecisive, forms a very necessary balance to Brébeuf's
forthright, often bull-headed commitment to a line of
action. Ragueneau has been called the real hero of
Brébeuf and His Brethren 88 because he relies on reason
to reach a decision, and is aware of the fallibility
of man's rational mind in determining a course of action.
He walks undecidedly "To and fro--from altar to hill/
From hill to altar". 89 Ragueneau parallels Christ
much more closely than Brébeuf does. Like Christ in
Gethsemane—a recurring image in Pratt's poetry—Ragueneau
watches and prays for deliverance, and his offering the

87 Brébeuf, p. 66.
88 P. Jane Munro, "Seas, Evolution and Images of
Continuing Creation in English-Canadian Poetry" (Simon
89 Brébeuf, p. 64.
fort instead of himself as a sacrifice is a further indication of his humility, and his feeling of responsibility for others. He too feels "the pride / Of his Order whipping his pulse", but is wise enough to resist any impulsively dramatic gesture.

In many ways Ragueneau offsets Brébeuf's dramatics and unthinking idealism with his own willingness to face issues as realistically and as responsibly as possible. Brébeuf's whole life focuses on martyrdom as the culmination of his mission, while Ragueneau can accept responsibility for others as well as for himself, and makes calculated, rational decisions for the benefit of all. In the last twenty-three lines of the poem Pratt commends Jogues and Brébeuf as martyrs whose "seed" has ripened in the three hundred year interval. The "ashes of St. Ignace", where they died, "are glowing afresh", but it is "out of the torch of Ragueneau's ruins" that "the candles / Are burning today in the chancel of Sainte Marie".

In the final passage Pratt also brings the poem into a contemporary, more liberal scope with highways

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90 Brébeuf, p. 64.
91 Brébeuf, p. 66.
replacing trails. Sainte Marie emerges as the major symbol of synthesis in the poem. The fort embodies a sense of timelessness and full life that incorporates the cross and the hatchet, and represents, finally, a spirit of humane compassion that is heroic in its imperviousness to man's frailties and short-comings.
CONCLUSION

A study of Pratt's poetry has revealed heroism as existing only in relation to an evolutionary metaphor. Organic life progresses from an amoral environment in which no sense of the "self" or psyche exists, to an ever more differentiated society that attains its identity through its conflict with the amoral environment. Man is heroic if he can establish, in his opposition to the environment, an order that is based on ethics and a brotherhood of man as well as on strong, instinctual emotions that keep him aware of his evolutionary origins. If man loses this awareness, he loses his sense of identification with nature and exists within the illusion that the environment can no longer seriously affect him. The cost of this illusion is destruction, because at some time man must confront his environment, and if he has no feeling for it "in the blood", he has no effective means of coping with it.

The most significant factor defining heroism is the ability to integrate uninhibited emotion with ethical compassion. Pratt's early poetry tends to
emphasize instinctive feeling. In "The Great Feud" the anthropoidal ape only realizes the necessity of ethics based on compassion after she has caused universal destruction. The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, written in 1930, demonstrates the ideal integration of feeling for the environment and compassion for other life. By 1935, however, with the writing of The Titanic, Pratt went to the other extreme, almost denying the possibility of such an ideal synthesis completely, because the ship symbolizes a society living under an all-encompassing illusion from which only a few individuals manage to free themselves. Brebeuf and His Brethren is Pratt's most complex poem because it demonstrates the greatest conflict between the extremes of primal passion and civilized compassion in its progression toward a heroic resolution. Much of this conflict is unconscious, for, from a seventeenth-century point of view, the narrative shows the priests only as totally devout and willing martyrs in their efforts to evangelize the Hurons "for the greater glory of God". Viewed from a twentieth-century perspective, however, the priests, and Brébeuf especially, show an evolutionary regression toward a more instinctual way of life that at times parallels that of the Indians more closely than that of French
society. The priests themselves are unaware that while they fulfil their vows to God and their superiors, they also move closer to an integration of primitive and civilized life. Brebeuf emphasizes the greatest contrast between these opposites as he gives the Indians "roar for roar", yet finds the source of his strength in the vision of the cross.

The ambivalences expressed in Pratt's poetry are largely the result of paradoxes in his own life. Son of a Newfoundland minister, and himself a minister for a short time,\(^1\) Pratt was rooted in the Christian ethical code. At the same time he also saw and felt the forcefulness and the destructive power of the environment on the coastal villages of Newfoundland. His poetry represents a gradual progression toward a synthesis in his own life between the extremes of power and ethics.

The poet's ambivalence regarding the two extremes is evident in the clear distinction between the intellectual force and the emotional force in his poetry. Frye has stated that Canada's cultural inheritance is based largely on religion and on the "arguing intellect" that

\(^1\) For biographical information on Pratt one of the best sources is Henry Wells and Carl Klinck, Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and His Poetry (Toronto: Ryerson, 1947).
Protestant religions in Canada fostered. He says "the effective factors in Canada were doctrinal and evangelical, those that stressed the arguments of religion at the expense of its imagery". Pratt's poetry shows this inheritance strongly in poems like "The Truant", "From Stone to Steel", and "The Highway", which are largely philosophical, outlining his thoughts more than his feelings about the future of the human race. Pratt's concentration on groups rather than on individuals is also philosophically oriented, because it allows him to talk about impersonal forces rather than depicting the emotional life of the individual consciousness.

In the narratives Pratt demonstrates passion and physical power as dramatically as possible whenever he can fit it into his philosophical framework. "The Cachalot" moves toward a climax that is fully emotional:

All the tonnage, all the speed,
All the courage of his breed,
The pride and anger of his breath,
The battling legions of his blood
Met in that unresisted thud,
Smote in that double stroke of death.3

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"The Great Feud" has Tyrannosaurus Rex as its figure of power, and The Roosevelt and the Antinoe has the sea, or the void, which demonstrates unrestrained fury. The Titanic is an exception to the rule in Pratt's poetry, not in theme, but in its lack of overt emotion. The berg communicates the feeling of power, but in a passive, unimpassioned way. As a result the impact of the poem lies in the reader's gradual awareness that life has been destroyed with very little knowledge gained. Most of the passengers aboard the ship never realize their danger until the vessel sinks. The reader is left with the clear knowledge of just how devastating an illusion can be.

Pratt himself identifies most closely with Brébeuf, because Brébeuf incorporates the opposites of reason and feeling most dramatically. Although the closing lines of the narrative and much of the narration throughout fits into a philosophical framework in which Brébeuf's unconscious struggle for an integration of passion and ethics merges into the same conflict between priest and Indian on a wider scale, the greatest moments of the poem are those in which Brébeuf's physical strength predominates. Pratt himself said Brébeuf was his favorite poem because "Brébeuf, as the martyr, is one of
the most dramatic and ineffaceable characters of history". Commenting on Sutherland's interpretation of his poetry, Pratt said, "Personally, I derived more exaltation from the dying moments of Brébeuf than from anything I ever selected as a subject".

The effectiveness of *The Titanic* is that it allows for no emotional release or catharsis, either for the poet or his readers. The climax is quiet and tragic, and the poem reaches no final resolution in a sense of awareness, except for the awareness brought to the reader as he is forced to realize how easily societies can both exist and disintegrate without dispelling the illusion that separates them from their environment, and therefore from a life that is based on emotional relationships with other people.

Pratt's own ambivalence of reason and passion is therefore parallel to the ambivalences revealed in his poetry. *The Roosevelt and the Antioch* is not a fully satisfying poem because the basic resolution has been arrived at before the narrative even begins. There is no conflict of feeling and ethics within the men themselves: the poem becomes a straightforward narrative of courage and physical heroism. If the rescue attempts had not been successful, man would still have been heroic.

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for trying to save others. The Titanic also shows very little conflict, except in a few instances. In Brébeuf, however, the two extremes are forcibly brought together with no final resolution. The narrator himself asks whether Brébeuf was a "lion at bay" or a "lamb on the altar". The poem provides an emotional release in the final torture scene, but this release is counter-balanced by the realization that opposites can exist within an individual without ever being synthesized. Pratt finds a heroic synthesis in the philosophical framework of the poem, but Brébeuf stands as an individual too complex to placed into a philosophical pattern. He escapes categorization because he reflects so closely Pratt's own ambivalences, and by showing that these ambivalences cannot be resolved he is, perhaps, the greatest example of heroism.
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