

Arthur Hugh Clough  
The Poetry of a  
Questioning Spirit

# Victorian & Edwardian Studies

Edited by Francesco Marroni  
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Vol. 6

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Bibliographic information published by die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche  
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet  
at <<http://dnb.d-nb.de>>.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data: A catalogue record for this book  
is available from The British Library, Great Britain

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016960135

Cover picture: Portrait of Arthur Hugh Clough by Samuel Rowse, National Portrait  
Gallery, London

ISSN 1664-2104 pb.

ISBN 978-3-0343-2418-2 pb.

ISBN 978-3-0343-2421-2 MOBI

ISSN 2235-5693 eBook

ISBN 978-3-0343-2419-9 eBook

ISBN 978-3-0343-2420-5 EPUB

This publication has been peer reviewed.

© Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern 2017

Wabernstrasse 40, CH-3007 Bern, Switzerland

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Printed in Switzerland

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## Preface

Arthur Hugh Clough remains one of the most elusive figures of the Victorian age. Despite being ranked among the major poets of his lifetime, his reputation declined during the twentieth century and, besides a brief, albeit intense, critical revival from the 1960s till the early 1970s and a slighter resurgence of interest during the early years of the present century, he is still largely unread. If he is known by anybody at all today, it is most likely within the context of marginal or specialist interests. This is particularly ironic in view of the recent proliferation of studies on Victorian life and culture, including aspects of the most minor and marginal nature. Like his friend Matthew Arnold, Clough has virtually disappeared from the literary map. Yet, for any reader today who discovers his verse there is the inevitable praise and astonishment at its versatility and modernity. So why the critical neglect? Especially since Clough's hypersensitivity, so profoundly in opposition to the temperament of the intellectual and artistic climate of his time, should in itself be grounds for an interest in his poetry.

Clough was drawn to people who had the courage of their convictions as well as the quality to be leaders. Arnold, Newman, Carlyle, Emerson, Mazzini, Nightingale, all of them, in their different ways, were highly independent-minded figures and perfect role-models for a man whose psychological traits were a composite of double-mindedness and doubt. What Clough lacked was a sense of his own worth as a man and an artist. Yet these two dimensions were at opposite poles. As a man, he could be almost exasperatingly indecisive about his social obligations. As a poet, however, he found himself free to scrutinise the most disparate epistemological, moral and spiritual aspects of human existence without displaying the typical Victorian need to draw definite conclusions about them. This indeterminacy – which is ultimately the strong-point of his questioning spirit – points to a poetry of fragmentation, the dialogical and multiple perspectives of which are very different in effect to the kind of psychological dramatisation that characterises Browning's

monologues. For Clough does not so much stage a scene as explore the thresholds between morality and immorality, belief and unbelief, innocence and experience. The fact that the questioning voice of his poetry exposes the deep-rooted uncertainty and scepticism of a fractured conscience is precisely why his works are still so relevant and appealing for readers today. For Clough's temperament anticipates the moral and psychological transformations that would characterise the cultural climate of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, and, although his dilemmas were those of many of the young Victorian intellectuals of his generation, he clearly understood their universal significance. The dilemmas he tirelessly sought to confront in his best poetry remain as elusive now as they did then.

This study has been long overdue. I have had the fortune to benefit from the ever-generous and profoundly inspirational guidance of Prof. Francesco Marroni. Without his encouragement this book would have been even longer in the making. I am grateful to colleagues and scholars with whom I have engaged in lively and stimulating discussions on Clough's poetry down the years. These include, Ilaria Malozzi, Alan Shelston, Norman Page, John Chapple, Allan C. Christensen and Roger Ebbatson. I wish also to thank the curators at the Balliol College Archives of Oxford University for permission to consult Clough's manuscripts and the staff at the Arts and Social Services Library at Bristol University for their kindness and help.

Finally, I dedicate this book with love and affection to my wife Tatiana, our children Maria and Nikolay and, last but not least, Ignazio.

Bristol-Pescara, January 2016



# Chapter 1

## Rugby Verses

*I don't know which to think the greatest, the blessing of  
being under Arnold, or the curse of being without a home*  
(Clough to J. P. Gell, Nov 15 1835<sup>1</sup>).

### 1.1 Childhood, Rugby and Thomas Arnold

The religious uncertainty and moral scepticism that pervades the poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough has its foundation in the displacement and social alienation that marked the early years of his life. He was only four years old when his family emigrated to Charleston, South Carolina in 1823 in order for his father, James Butler, to pursue his successful cotton trading business. With the industrious Butler frequently away from home, Arthur Hugh was left largely in the care of his mother, Ann Perfect, who, in line with the family's isolationist standpoint as English émigrés,<sup>2</sup> took on herself the responsibility for her children's education. It was under her influence that Clough developed an early passion for European literature which included the novels of Walter Scott and Pope's translations of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Frederick L. Malhauser (ed.), *The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1957, Vol. 1, p. 24, Henceforth referred to as *C* followed by volume and page number.
- 2 Anthony Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life*, London, Continuum, 2005, p. 3: "The family refused to join in prayers for the president in St Michael's church; on the other hand, they celebrated the fourth of July even after their return to England".
- 3 See *The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. Blanche Smith, London, Macmillan, 1869 (Vol. 1), pp. 4–5.

On the family's return to England in the summer of 1828 Clough was sent to a school in Chester for a year before being registered at Rugby School whilst the rest of his family returned to the United States<sup>4</sup>. The psychological and emotional repercussions of this abandonment, which would have a significant effect on his intellectual and artistic development<sup>5</sup>, were partially alleviated by the charismatic presence of Thomas Arnold who, as headmaster of Rugby School, also came to represent a sort of surrogate father-figure<sup>6</sup>. During the period Clough spent at Rugby (1829–37) Arnold not only closely monitored the boy's progress but also sought to make him an outstanding example of his new educational programme. In a society in which the church had become "a temple in ruins", Arnold, influenced by the spirit of the late-Eighteenth century Evangelical revival under George Whitefield and John Wesley, felt it his special vocation to make what good use he could of the "vestiges of it still left"<sup>7</sup>. With a shrewd combination of tradition and innovation, underpinned by teachings from the gospel, Rugby school became the platform from which he preached a muscular Christianity in order to prepare his army of young Christian soldiers for the outside world<sup>8</sup>. His dogmatic stress on religious virtue was in stark

4 Clough's brother Charles also remained behind in England where he was sent to a school in Shrewsbury.

5 Robindra Kumar Biswas, *Arthur Hugh Clough. Towards a Reconsideration*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 430. "The ontological insecurity which manifests itself throughout Clough's life and provides the psychological energy behind his search for truth and assurance, was created out of the emotional deprivations of his childhood." Katharine Chorley, *Arthur Hugh Clough. The Uncommitted Mind*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 28, pinpoints the problem of Clough's 'homelessness'. See also Samuel Waddington, *Arthur Hugh Clough*, London George Bell and Sons, 1883, p. 54, who notes more candidly: "Not many poets like Clough could have been so often shuffled between two continents in their childhood. This in itself must have had an effect on his personality."

6 Arnold was headmaster of Rugby School from 1828 until his premature death in 1842.

7 A. P. Stanley, *Life of Thomas Arnold D. D.*, London, John Murray, 1903. p. 87.

8 *Ibid.* p. 87. "[...] he governed the school precisely on the same principles as he would have governed a great empire" Also James Insley Osborne, *Arthur Hugh Clough*, Constable and Company Limited, 1920, p. 17, who notes: "One who looks through the Rugby roll of the years of Arnold's mastership is struck by the fact that it divides itself almost half and half into soldiers and clergymen".

contrast with a public school system which, in Lytton Strachey's wry words, was a life of "[...] freedom and terror, of prosody and rebellion, of interminable floggings and appalling practical jokes"<sup>9</sup>. Arnold's utilitarian agenda was designed to satisfy the public desire for change. At the same time, he created a decidedly more liberal curriculum which comprised sporting activity and modern subjects such as foreign languages and history. Arnold's intrinsic association with the school was such that, in the words of his biographer, Stanley: "From one end of it to the other, whatever defects it had were his defects; whatever excellences it had were his excellences"<sup>10</sup>.

The hypersensitive Clough was immediately affected by the atmosphere of moral earnestness that pervaded the school and set about diligently observing the three precepts of Arnold's programmatic aims: religious and moral principles; gentlemanly conduct and intellectual abilities<sup>11</sup>. The order is significant. For Arnold's prime concern was to turn undisciplined boys into Christian gentleman<sup>12</sup>. His liberal humanism, which was qualified by a high degree of tolerance and respect, aligned itself with the ethics of Oxford University and was diametrically opposed to the rational utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill that dominated the philosophical milieu of London University. Bentham's advocacy of the greatest happiness of the greatest number self-evidently pointed to the impossibility of pleasing everyone, since it would mean the subjugation of the weakest and poorest members of society through the creation of a centrally controlled state. Arnold's experiment, in contrast, aimed to effect the moral and social regeneration of society through Christian virtue and charity. He was firmly convinced that the intellectual abilities of his pupils would develop as a result of religious devotion and good conduct rather than the opposite. Therefore, rather than the idea of a short-cut taming of wild unruly natures, the disciplinarian tactics he imposed stemmed from a sense of social justice:

9 Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, Oxford, Oxford World Classics, 2003, p. 148.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 95: "[...] the boys were still treated as schoolboys, but as schoolboys who must grow up to be Christian men".

When he thought of the social evils of the country, it awakened a corresponding desire to check the thoughtless waste and selfishness of schoolboys; a corresponding sense of the aggravation of those evils by the insolence and want of sympathy too frequently shown by the children of the wealthier classes towards the lower orders; a corresponding desire that they should there imbibe the first principles of reverence to law and regard for the poor which the spirit of the age seemed to him so little to encourage<sup>13</sup>.

As for intellectual abilities, these were deemed pointless without the basis of humane Christianity, in which case intellect could become an invincible tool against the forces of corruption and evil. Naturally, to attain this calibre of moral integrity, conscientious effort was of the utmost importance. *Orando Laborando* (“By praying, by working”) was the school’s motto. The extreme emphasis placed on ethics found a successful terrain in a susceptible young spirit like Clough’s.

Although Arnold would be immortalised in Thomas Hughes’s novel *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, his fame was by no means confined to his position as head of Rugby School. He was also a highly respected figure among the liberal intellectuals of Oxford University and his provocative writings were generally regarded with interest for the relevance of the urgent religious problems they addressed. His 1829 pamphlet *Christian Duty on Conceding the Roman Catholic Claims*, for example, which argues for acceptance of Roman Catholics in parliament, coincided with the controversial Catholic Relief Act passed by parliament in the same year. Arnold was no ivory tower intellectual and strongly believed in the mutual interdependence of social and religious issues. His pamphlet *Principles of Church Reform* (1833), is one of his most significant pronouncements. Its main argument centres on the religious divisions in Nineteenth-Century England (notably between the Established Church and the Dissenters) which were, in turn, the result of centuries-old opposition. Arnold lays down his belief that such sectarian hindrances may be overcome and that a unified church be established upon the basis of a general agreement on the fundamental principles of Christianity. Clough whole-heartedly embraced his headmaster’s opinions and was no doubt awestruck by the fearless self-confidence with which he argued his points (it is a tone he himself emulates in his own prose writings). Here was a man who, in a period of increasing moral

13 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

and epistemological uncertainty, could regard evil and disruptive forces full in the face and offer practical solutions to counteract them. Writing to his sister Anne on 30 December, 1835, Clough boldly replicated Arnold's ideas to the letter:

How then must we secure the blessings of an Established Church, that is, one which shall be united with the state and therefore must properly comprehend all who belong to the state and are protected by its laws and are possessed of its political privileges? [...] the only alternative is to admit all such sects as are Christian sects, and believe in the essentials of Christianity, meaning by essentials, those points without which no one can be saved and thus we shall form into one body all Christians, and all the Kingdom of the State would become at least completely Christian externally. (C, p. 20)

Arnold's peculiar combination of stern judgment and liberal-minded tolerance was a potent weapon he wielded as headmaster of Rugby school and his concept of a muscular Christianity, that encompassed strength and firmness with kindness and compassion had a permanent effect on Clough to the extent of instilling a sense of unworthiness and insufficiency which only intensified his self-demands for moral improvement. Arnold's stress on independence of thought<sup>14</sup> was no doubt a further contribution to Clough's heightened conscientiousness. The ensuing conflict between virtuous Christian and tormented sinner was an inevitable outcome of such a striving for perfection. It is poignantly manifested in his correspondence of the time, as in the following to his brother George:

[...] My dear George, do, I beg you, strive to keep yourself up; do resist your indolence and your fearfulness; do exert yourself, and keep doing your work actively [...] You must not think of God only as your loving Father and Friend, though He is so much so, but also as your Judge; as one who is so holy and pure that He cannot bear any sin in this world of His; and who, at the same time, is so powerful as to be able to inflict the heaviest punishment I should suppose that you did not think enough whenever you do anything wrong, my dear George, how God must hate it. (C, p. 21)

The uncompromising tone is tellingly self-referential. For Clough seems just as concerned in warning himself against sinful thoughts as in urging

14 Cf. Michael Timko, *Innocent Victorian. The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough*, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1963, p. 24.

his brother to avoid falling into a state of sloth. The special religious campaign he ardently conducted in the school similarly served to reinforce spiritual improvement in others as well as himself<sup>15</sup>. Again, his letters of the time testify to his over-zealous attitude. Idleness was evil, industry was virtuous: “I do not think you will be likely to fall into any more stupors, as you call those states of mind, which I very well know and have often experienced. As soon as you feel anything of the kind coming on, go and do something, no matter what, which will employ you actively” (C, p. 21). One can hardly fail to note the extent to which these and other similar calls to action were instigated by his headmaster’s captivating sermons<sup>16</sup>. But Clough’s mind lacked Arnold’s immovable tenacity, and his efforts to sustain his flawless standards only led to nervousness and intellectual collapse. As he admits to J.P. Gell in a letter dated November 5 1835: “Sometimes all seems so very bright, the little good one has done seems so great, and the good one hopes to do so certain, that one gets quite elevated; then there soon follows the exhaustion, and I think it is no use trying [...]” (C, I, p. 25). The fact that Arnold drew on Rugby as a model for a much wider aspiration (no less, as A. N. Wilson puts it, than the moral regeneration of the whole nation through the creation of an expandable governing class made up of “a comparatively small pool of privately educated boys”<sup>17</sup>) only accentuated Clough’s predicament. It therefore comes as no surprise that much of his early verse not only reflects the loneliness and spiritual struggle that characterised his school life, but also testifies to what one critic has described as “the haunting dread of moral backsliding implanted in him

15 C.L. p. 12: “There is a great deal of good in the top of the school, but then it is what may be called disagreeable good, having much evil mixed with it, especially in little matters. So that from these persons, good is disliked. I am trying if possible to show them that good is not necessarily disagreeable, that a Christian may be and is likely to be a gentleman [...]” (to Anne Clough, Oct 10, 1835); p. 21: “I verily believe my whole being is regularly soaked through with the wishing and hoping and striving to do the school good [...]” (to J. N. Simpkinson, Jan 18, 1836).

16 Thomas Arnold, *Sermons Preached in the Chapel of Rugby School*, London, Longmans Green, and Co, 1874, p. 127. “[...] idleness [...] is certainly sinful, and to strive against it is a religious duty, because it is highly offensive to God.”

17 A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, London, Arrow Books, 2003, p. 279.

by Thomas Arnold”<sup>18</sup>. Arnold’s concern with truth, not as an abstract idea but as “a value he wished in some way to realise”<sup>19</sup> finds a reflection in Clough’s poetical temperament, which, from the very beginning, engages in a struggle with the very notion of truth. His early poems are full of self-reprimand, tormented reflections and moral and psychological turmoil. He even believed that writing poems itself was a sinful vanity inducing a state of excitement that was entirely at odds with a good Christian’s pursuit of humility and selflessness<sup>20</sup>. Despite this, the almost hypnotically iterative tone of the following juvenile diary jotting shows the exhilaration and passion of one for whom poetic composition was an absolute necessity:

How well I remember the night when I sat up till 12 to write out what I had composed that evening. That excitement I shall never forget, it was indeed, rich and overflowing excitement – my head troubled with aching and my eyes were half sealed up, but I went on – on – on till it was all done<sup>21</sup>.

This state of feverish toil, which would continue to be the dominant trait of Clough’s intellectual and artistic temperament, testifies to the mesmeric affect poetry was already exerting on his youthful imagination.

- 18 David Williams, *Too Quick Despairer: A Life of Arthur Hugh Clough*, London, Rupert-Hart Davis, 1969, p. 28.
- 19 Evelyn Barish Greenberger, *Arthur Hugh Clough. The Growth of a Poet’s Mind*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 21. Greenberger is one critic who believes Clough’s Rugby experience to have been a negative influence on the man and poet: “Rugby was, unquestionably, an unfortunate influence, fostering qualities which have notoriously bedevilled Clough’s poetry [...] Encouraging an earnest, drearily toneless moralism [...] a too-ready confusion between literature and life [...] a distrust of the necessary artifice of art, Rugby set him problems as a poet for which he never really found stable solutions” p. 48.
- 20 K Chorley, *op. cit.*, p. 8. Chorley notes how Clough was composing verses “against the dictates of his over-scrupulous conscience” and goes so far as to suggest an inherent inability in Clough “to believe enough in the value of his own poetry”.
- 21 Quoted in A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet’s Life, cit.*, p. 16. Rupert Christiansen, *The Voice of Victorian Sex. Arthur Hugh Clough, 1819–1861*, London, short Books, 2001, p. 22. mischievously comments on the “unmistakably erotic rhythm” of this jotting assigning it to Clough’s sexual hysteria.

## 1.2 *Thoughts from Home: An Incident*

Although Clough's Rugby poems lay bare the ontological and existential dilemmas between duty and the pursuit for truth, Biswas, for one, suggests that it is "totally dedicated to the task of [...] making conscience and the will of Arnold prevail"<sup>22</sup>. Certainly, his various compositions for school prizes and contributions to the Rugby magazine (of which he was an almost maniacally over-scrupulous editor) appear little more than replications of the lessons of his headmaster. In spite of this, Clough's first authentic, non-scholastic, poem, *Thoughts of Home* (1834) contains features that anticipate aspects of his mature verse and whilst being clearly grounded in the kind of reasoning which would no doubt have met with Arnold's approval, indicates an underlying resistance to the Rugby environment and reaffirmation of his real family affections. Its autobiographical origin concerns a moment in which, during convalescence, Clough found himself observing Arnold's children at play in their garden from a school window<sup>23</sup>. The harmonious scene initially induces an increasing melancholy at the absence of his own family, but the young poet's thoughts gradually acquire a more objective stance as he ponders on the nature of home and his relationship with others until his initial self-commiseration is eventually resolved in an invocation of the positive values of love and virtue. The contrasting attitudes of self-absorption and altruism around which the poem revolves are the dominant paradigms of virtually all of Clough's poetry. *Thoughts of Home*<sup>24</sup> is an adolescent production, not without verbal and metrical awkwardness. But it is not self-indulgent. Clough is making a serious attempt to overcome the psychological tensions generated by his homesickness through a logical reasoning that will harmonise the discordant elements of an existential unease. The presence of paradigms from the

22 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

23 *CL I*, p. 8: "I was in a room looking on Arnold's garden, and I saw all his children at their play, and I was quite by myself, and how could I help thinking of you all, and put my feelings into verse that I might remember them afterwards, and since then I have often looked at them and added on a patch". (To his sister Annie, September 1834).

24 The poem was published in the Rugby School Magazine in 1835.



romantic tradition (notably Wordsworth), such as the representation of childhood bliss and the moral lessons of recollection and reflection, are perhaps less surprising than the unusual choice of a galumphing iambic heptameter metre. The first stanza, which describes the children at their play as seen from a window, incites in the poet sentiments of a particularly complex nature because whilst he can feel an acute sense of “a child’s own buoyant gladness”<sup>25</sup>, he has nevertheless precociously lost this innocence in the foster home of Rugby School. Thus, the possibility of his participation in their games is denied and all he can do is observe them in “solemn sadness”<sup>26</sup>. The focus then shifts from Arnold’s children to Clough’s own family<sup>27</sup>. The second and third stanzas are explicitly autobiographical in detailing his infancy in America and ensuing peregrinations:

I looked upon thy children, and I thought of all and each,  
 Of my brother and my sister, and our rambles on the beach,  
 Of my mother’s gentle voice, and my mother’s beckoning hand,  
 And all the tales she used to tell of the far, far English land:  
 And the happy, happy evening hours, when I sat on my father’s knee, -  
 Oh! many a wave is rolling now betwixt that seat and me!

And many a day has passed away since – I left them o’er the sea,  
 And I have lived a life since then of boyhood’s thoughtless glee;  
 Yet of the blessed times gone by not seldom would I dream,  
 And childhood’s joy, like faint far stars, in memory’s heaven would gleam,  
 And o’er the sea to those I loved my thoughts would often roam,  
 But never knew I until now the blessings of a home! (*P*, p. 472)

- 25 F.L. Malhauser (ed.), *The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, second edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974, p. 471. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition (unless otherwise stated) and will be followed by the initial *P* in brackets in the text followed by page numbers.
- 26 On a biographical level, Clough was, at a very early age, reluctant to join in children’s games, even refusing to walk barefoot on the beach.
- 27 *CL* I, p. 8. Writing to his sister Annie in September 1834 he recounts the circumstances surrounding the poem. “I was in a room looking on Arnold’s garden, and I saw all his children at their play, and I was quite beside myself, and how I could not help thinking of you all, and I put my feelings into verse that I might remember them afterwards [...]”.

These lines point to a geographically liminal position that is both physical and cultural. The England wistfully evoked by his mother's stories ("And all the tales she used to tell of the far, far English land") is now the referential world of his poem and, in turn, America, the home of his infancy, becomes the object of his homesickness. The oscillation between affiliation and non-affiliation that ensues is central to the poem's dramatic tension and parallels the poet's own wavering uncertainties regarding the sense of his real home place:

I used to think when I was there that my own true home was here ...  
And I longed for England's cool, and for England's breezes then,  
But now I would give full many a breeze to be back in the heat again.  
(*P*, p. 472)

The high frequency of the possessive pronoun *my*, ("my own dear friends[...] my brother and my sister [...] my mother's gentle voice [...] my mother's beckoning hand [...] my father's knee [...] my own true home" etc.) suggests an unconscious act of re-appropriation. On a less subliminal level, the poet moves from subjective to objective representation in an effort to extract a moral lesson from his experience:

But when cold strange looks without, and proud high thoughts within,  
Are weaving round my heart the woof of selfishness and sin;  
When self begins to roll afar, a worse and wider sea  
Of careless and unloving thoughts between those friends and me,  
I will think upon these moments, and call to mind the day  
When I watched them from the window, thy children at their play. (*P*, p. 472)

The final stanza is, undoubtedly, the most psychologically complex in the poem. The initial resistance between cold looks "without" and proud thoughts "within" is rejected by the poet's affirmation that he will recollect the moments in which he was happy as a child and in so doing connect himself empathetically with those towards whom he is otherwise tempted to nurture feelings of jealousy and hostility. By confronting the guilt and shame which qualify his self-commiseration and envy head on, the speaker finds a form of redemption through the beneficial effects brought about by Arnold's teachings on Christian virtue. Although an early poem, *Thoughts from Home* already contains elements that characterise Clough's poetic temperament – the condition of marginalisation,

the spirit of community and the unflinching scrutiny of the inner self and outer world in the pursuit for truth (qualified by a deep-rooted religiousness). At the same time, it typifies the sense of self-righteousness he developed under Arnold's influence which he soon came to see as an obstacle to his own personal quest.

However, Arnold's teachings did not only have the effect of confining Clough to the realm of obsessive self-conflict. His preaching and practising of the Christian virtues of goodness and generosity instilled in the young boy a sense of social justice and charity which he never abandoned. This specific moral imperative is clearly illustrated in *An Incident* (1836), an urban-style lyrical ballad which stands at the opposite end of his Rugby verses in terms of maturity. Similarly to *Thoughts From Home*, the tensions in *An Incident* are prompted by children, though in this case not merrily at play in the protective environment of their home, but moving furtively and timidly through the streets of a "mighty city"<sup>28</sup> thronging with raucous activity. The poem revolves around the dichotomy between love and charity, and selfish, mindless materialism. The opening lines begin with optimism as the speaker sets out on his walk:

'Twas on a sunny summer day  
I trod a mighty city's street  
And when I started on my way  
My heart was full of fancies sweet [...](*P*, p. 487)

The initial mood of elation, underscored by the "sunny summer's day", however, is the product of the speaker's own romantic reveries and this jars with the cold transactions taking place along the busy streets. All the same, the positive valence ascribed to the adjective "mighty" would seem, initially at least, pertinent enough<sup>29</sup>. The irony of this qualification on a linear-syntagmatic level is immediately evident in the following sequence, however, in which the euphoric opening is overturned by a romantic interpretation of the city which recalls Blake's *London*:

28 The poem was written in Liverpool during the summer months of 1836 whilst Clough was staying with his re-united family. Cf. Anthony Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life*, cit., p. 24.

29 The echo from the final line of Wordsworth's sonnet, *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge* "And all that mighty heart is lying still" cannot go unmissed.

But soon, as nothing could be seen,  
But countenances sharp and keen,  
Nought heard or seen around but told  
Of something bought or something sold,  
And none that seemed to think or care  
That any save himself was there, – (*P*, p. 487)

The confrontation between rural virtue and urban vice is a recurrent romantic theme that has its roots in Cowper, particularly in his long poem *The Task*<sup>30</sup>. But Clough particularises the situation and the notions of solidarity he expresses are clearly indebted to the moral social consciousness of George Eliot. His post-idyllic representation lays the finger on a real problem; the co-presence in society of the wealthy and poor classes has only accentuated the division between people, with the latter expunged from a world they are prohibited from occupying. Not only, but, in such a hostile environment, as Houghton puts it: “What human as distinct from commercial intercourse exists is largely casual and amorphous”<sup>31</sup>. Thus, Clough’s use of the noun “mighty” is stripped of any moral valence and merely designates the magnitude of the city’s aggressive materialism<sup>32</sup>. Similarly, although “Countenances”, suggests, on one level, the emotional features of a face, on another it also recalls the antipathetic attributes “sharp and keen”, thus indicating the impersonality of social relationships reduced to calculating shrewdness and mistrust. The “mighty” city all too candidly exemplifies the over-confident economic superiority of a dehumanised society motivated by the greed for gain which Arnold himself so harshly denounced in his writings<sup>33</sup>. As a result, the speaker is shaken from his initial naïve

30 *The Poems of William Cowper*, eds. John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 201: “The town has tinged the country; and the stain / Appears a spot upon a vestal’s robe / The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs / Down into scenes still rural; but, alas! / Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now!”

31 Walter Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1967 (1957), p. 79.

32 The city in question is Liverpool where Clough stayed with his family during the summer months of 1835.

33 Cf. Thomas Arnold, *The Miscellaneous Works*, London, T. Fellowes, Ludgate Street, 1858, p. 286. Arnold located the social ills of the Nineteenth Century precisely in laissez-faire economics which, to his mind, only generated an obsession

felicity (the deliberate poetic inversion “fancies sweet” reinforcing the ironic contrast between reverie and reality):

Full soon my heart began to sink  
With a strange shame and inward pain,  
For I was sad within to think  
Of this absorbing love of gain [...] (*P*, p. 487)

The “inward pain” that marks his dejection conveys the responsibility of a moral burden he feels the need to assert before this total absence of human fellowship: (“And none that seemed to think or care / That any save himself was there [...]”). The sudden appearance of the two children in the central part of the poem is reminiscently Wordsworthian. Their humble presence appears an incongruity in this world of busy commerce. Like beings from another age, they emerge slowly, walking hand in hand, until their image is indelibly imprinted on the speaker’s mind:

It was a sight to see and bless,  
That little sister’s tenderness;  
One hand a tidy basket bore  
Of flowers and fruit – a chosen store,  
Such as kind friends oft send to others  
And one was fastened in her brothers. (*P*, p. 487)

Their diminutive presences within the urban landscape underline all the more forcefully the central message of charity, generosity and humility. The scene therefore becomes invested with a new meaning in which the simple acts of individual goodness, that spring from the heart of familial relations, take precedence over the impersonal world of business and commerce<sup>34</sup>:

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with self-interest and self-gain. See also *ibid.*, p. 265, in which there is an implicit denunciation of the political application of Benthamite Utilitarianism: “Society has been regarded as a mere collection of individuals, looking each after his own interest; and the business of government has been limited to that of a mere police, whose sole use is to hinder these individuals from robbing or knocking each other down”.

34 The importance of domestic ties cannot be sufficiently emphasised, since the lack of such relationships is a recurrent aspect in Clough’s poems of this period often

It was a voice of meaning sweet,  
And spake amid that scene of strife  
Of home and homely duties meet,  
And charities of daily life [...] (P, p. 487)

The 'empty' feelings of the speaker's initial reverie are implicitly contrasted with the young sister's verbal communication which is full of meaning: *My heart was full of fancies sweet* → *It was a voice of meaning sweet*. Meaning is restored to the poet through the final image provided by the children's bond of love and affection that exerts a therapeutic effect on the poet and which he will call to mind whenever he finds himself "mid busy shops and busier throng", confounded and bewildered in "The thick and crowded thoroughfare". Similar to Wordsworth's poem *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, the little brother and sister represent humble but insistent reminders of a humane rural community founded on principles diametrically opposed to modern urban commerce. The poem's emphasis on recollection underlines the fact that, in a society in which the struggle of the fittest entails the cultivation of selfishness and aggression, a world based on alternative values is already on the verge of extinction.

In spite of an admirable poem like *An Incident*, Clough's early stages as a poet were affected by influences which impeded the development of his individual voice. Arnold was the first of these. Being the model Rugby pupil was a hindrance to Clough's intellectual and artistic development, rather than an asset<sup>35</sup>. The identity of Christian middle-class gentleman was also reductive for a man whose temperament was naturally inclined to probe into the heart of human experience rather than accept unquestioningly pre-established dogmas. Yet, it is also true that the investigative fervour which marks his poetic temperament was

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to be resolved, as Biswas points out, "by an exigent resoluteness" (R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 55).

- 35 See M. Timko, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Timko is one critic who disagrees with this proposition: "Far from being an obstacle, Arnold's teaching, with its stress on independent thinking, actually taught him to think for himself." Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 48, in contrast, sees his Rugby experience as "unquestionably, an unfortunate influence, fostering qualities which have notoriously bedevilled Clough's poetry [...]". More recently, R. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, p. 20 notes how, even as a senior member of the school "he takes his cares upon him and writes as though ventriloquising Arnold".

a principle lively encouraged by Arnold. What Clough admired in his headmaster were those very same qualities of stubborn independence which he recognised in his own self. In essay after essay and sermon after sermon, Arnold reiterates the same abiding concern to deal with the objective truths of the Christian message as preached in the Bible. In poem after poem, Clough searches for his own individual truth. But it is a search that takes him into territories at which Arnold would have shuddered.





## Chapter 2

### Oxford Verses

[...] *it is the double-minded who find difficulties.*  
John Henry Newman<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.1 Newman and Tractarianism

During Clough's years at Balliol College (1837–41) Oxford University was the scene of fierce disputes over religious reform as Low Church Evangelicals<sup>2</sup>, liberal Broad Church Anglicans<sup>3</sup>, and Anglo-Catholic Tractarians<sup>4</sup> competed for primacy in their attempts to challenge the conservative High Church ideals of the governing body. Faithful to the Anglican liberalism of his mentor, Thomas Arnold, it was, nevertheless, impossible for Clough to overlook the impact of the Tractarian movement which, under its charismatic ecclesiastical leader (and Arnold's arch-enemy), John Henry Newman<sup>5</sup>, was attracting increasing

- 1 John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 1, London, Longmans, Green, and Co, 1907, p. 36.
- 2 Evangelicalism, with its emphasis on personal-salvation and Bible-reading, spread throughout England on a mass scale during the 1740s through the preaching activities of John Wesley (1703–91), one of the founders of the Methodist movement. Wesley entered Christ Church College in 1720. In 1725 he was ordained Deacon in the Church of England. In 1729 at Oxford Wesley and his brothers, together with George Whitefield established a religious society (nicknamed the "Holy Club"). He preached his final sermon at Oxford in 1741.
- 3 Thomas Arnold was their national leader.
- 4 This more popular label of The Oxford Movement deceptively undermines the existence of the two other main religious groups.
- 5 The other leading Tractarian figures were: Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–82) who became a fellow of Oriel in 1823 and took Newman's place as leader after the

numbers of followers from the Oxford colleges. Clough (whose arrival at the college was greeted with huge expectations following his brilliant scholastic performance at Rugby) soon found himself among the crowds of graduates and undergraduates<sup>6</sup> who flocked to the University Church of St Mary's to hear Newman's powerful sermons. However, his admiration of the man was also tempered by a suspicion of his Catholic sympathies. Indeed, although Newman was still some years away from his defection to the Roman Catholic Church, his presentation in *Tracts For the Times*, (begun in 1833), declared the central programmatic aim of Tractarianism to be the revival of Catholic doctrines that had become "obsolete with the majority of [the church's] members", and "withdrawn from public view even by the more learned and orthodox few who still adhere to them"<sup>7</sup>. Newman lamented the fact that the modern day law-regulated Church, which had done away with apostolic succession, was falling "under the temptation of leaning on an arm of flesh instead of her own divinely-provided discipline"<sup>8</sup>. He harshly condemned governmental interference in ecclesiastical affairs (especially on the part of the liberalist Whigs), whose sole purpose was to systematically divest the Church of its primary duties, thereby denying people access to the "more gracious and consoling truths"<sup>9</sup> of the Bible. Newman's criticisms were by no means exclusively levied at the political world. He laid equal blame on Protestantism and Roman Catholicism

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latter's conversion of Roman Catholicism, and John Keble (1792–1866), a high Anglican, who was also a fellow of Oriel but left Oxford to become a country clergyman. His sermon on 'National Apostacy' was regarded by Newman himself as the original influence on the Oxford Movement.

- 6 James Anthony Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, London, Longman's Green & co, 1883, pp. 199–200: "Newman, taking some scripture character for a text, spoke to us about ourselves, our temptations, our experiences. His illustrations were inexhaustible. He seemed to be addressing the most secret consciousness of each of us [...] He never exaggerated; he was never unreal. A sermon from him was a poem, formed on a distinct idea, fascinating by its subtlety, welcome — how welcome! — from its sincerity, interesting from its originality, even to those who were careless of religion; and to others who wished to be religious, but had found religion dry and wearisome, it was like the springing of a fountain out of the rock."
- 7 John Henry Newman, *Tracts for the Times*, London, G. F. & J. Rivington, 1840, *Advertisement* p. iii.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. iii.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. iv.

also for replacing Apostolicism with secular-oriented teaching: “Methodism and Popery are in different ways the refuge of those whom the Church stints of the gifts of grace; they are the foster-mothers of abandoned children”<sup>10</sup>. Although his empathy towards Catholicism (at least during the initial stages of Tractarianism) was not so forthrightly Roman as to attract public condemnation in a Victorian England still largely hostile towards the Roman Catholic Church<sup>11</sup>, his publication of Tract 90, which justified the adherence of Catholics to the Thirty-Nine Articles, caused an outcry that eventually led to his resignation from the movement<sup>12</sup>.

In spite of Newman’s subsequently alienated ontological position, his concerns regarding what he saw as the spiritual impoverishment of England echoed the elitist anxieties of many nineteenth-century intellectuals: “Moreover, the multitude of men cannot teach or guide themselves; and an injunction given them to depend on their private judgement, cruel in itself, is doubly hurtful, as throwing them on such teachers as speak daringly and promise largely, and not only aid but supersede individual exertion”<sup>13</sup>. Newman, just as much as Arnold in his own way, felt it his duty to guide the multitude back onto the original intended path of the Church and this entailed a necessary recovery of the fundamental elements of doctrine that had either been forgotten or dismissed as irrelevant. His Catholicism aside, the perspicacious nature of Newman’s inquiry into spiritual matters was an undeniably important behavioural model for the young Clough who was engaged in his own quest for truth. Indeed, his sympathy with Newman’s socio-religious concerns lies at the heart of his future republican pronouncements, and would also be carried out on a practical level in the charity work that would increasingly occupy him in later life. Yet, the public antagonism between Newman

10 *Ibid.*, p. iv.

11 The Roman Catholic Relief Act, which was passed in 1829, was only the beginning of a gradual change in social attitudes towards Catholics.

12 Tract 90, in which Newman extensively argues that the thirty-nine articles were not in contradiction with Catholic doctrine was received with such hostility that he was forced to withdraw from the tractarian movement and resign as vicar of St Mary’s in 1843. It virtually justified admission to the university of the very groups (including Catholics and Jews) that the university authorities had been bent on excluding.

13 J. H. Newman, *Tracts for the Times*, cit., p. v.

and Arnold, which came to a head with the controversial affair over the headmaster's friend Renn Dickson Hampden, brought home the embarrassing predicament of their mutual influences. In an unusual moment of solidarity, Tractarians and Evangelicals had united in protest against Hampden's appointment to Oxford as Professor of Moral Philosophy<sup>14</sup> and succeeded in forcing a vote of no confidence. This controversial result provoked Arnold's public savaging of the Tractarians in an anonymous pamphlet published in the *Edinburgh Review* and later titled "The Oxford Malignants and Dr Hampden":

The fanaticism of the English High Churchman has been the fanaticism of mere foolery. A dress, a ritual, a name, a ceremony; a technical phraseology; the superstition of a priest-hood without its power: the form of Episcopal government, without the substance; a system imperfect and paralysed, not independent, not sovereign, – afraid to cast off the subjection against which it is perpetually murmuring. Such are the objects of High Church fanaticism; objects so pitiful, that, if gained ever so completely, they would make no man the wiser or the better; they would lead to no good, intellectual, moral or spiritual; to no effect, social or religious, except to the changing of sense into silliness, and holiness of heart and life into formality and hypocrisy<sup>15</sup>.

Beyond the tone of personal indignation that his rhetorical emphases betray, Arnold's views can be seen as a distillation of centuries-old protestant antagonisms against Catholic dependence on elements of superstition and ritual, views which Clough also shared. To Arnold's mind, the belief in the dogma of a human priest was not only misguided but idolatrous and "the worst and earliest form of antichrist"<sup>16</sup>. Newman,

14 A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life, cit.*, p. 35: "Tractarians and evangelicals banded together with the high-and-dry (High Church) faction to protest [...] on the grounds that a series of lectures he (Hampden) had given in 1832 had been heretical". However, the common misconception to see Tractarianism and Evangelicalism as arch enemies overlooks the fact that the two movements had much in common, one of which was their opposition to the low-church.

15 Thomas Arnold, *The Miscellaneous Works*, (First American Edition), New York, Philadelphia, George S. Appleton, 1845, p. 141. Significantly, Clough expressed regret at the publication of Arnold's essay in a letter to J. N. Simpkinson: "I am very sorry it was written and I wish it had, if written at all, been published with his name". *C*, (I), p. 47. The original anonymous article was untitled.

16 T. Arnold, *The Miscellaneous Works, cit.*, p. 18. Arnold and Newman only met twice. In 1828, when Arnold received his B.D. degree and four months before

on the other hand, regarded Arnold's liberalism as a form of earthly conceit:

Liberalism [...] is the mistake of subjecting to human judgement those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word<sup>17</sup>.

In other words, It is God's authority that is man's guide, not reason. As Newman would later pithily express it: "Conscience is an authority; the Bible is an authority; such is the Church"<sup>18</sup>. Well before his conversion to Roman Catholicism, therefore, Newman's focus on scripture and examination of doctrine was leading him precisely in that direction.

Clough's interpersonal relations with Newman enhanced and complicated his quasi-adulation of the spiritual teacher on an imaginative level. Nowhere is the complexity of Newman's influence more eloquently illustrated than in Clough's diaries in which he continually invokes the elder man's outstanding qualities: "How strange" he reflects at one point, "that I should owe so much to Arnold & so much to him! How have I deserved this second enlightenment?"<sup>19</sup>. An eloquent example of Clough's reception of his teaching can be seen when, inflicted by overpowering feelings of nightly lust<sup>20</sup>, he sought comfort from the sermon "Religious Worship and a Remedy for Excitements"<sup>21</sup> in which

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Arnold's death in February 1842. Newman appears to have nurtured no ill feelings regarding Arnold's public hostility towards him. See *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. Charles Stephen Dessain, Vol. XVII, London, Nelson, 1967, pp. 416–7 in which he writes to Tom Arnold in 1856: "I knew your father a little, and I really think I never had any unkind feeling towards him [...] If I said ever a harsh thing against him I am very sorry for it. In seeing you, I should have a sort of pledge that he at the moment of his death made it all up with me."

17 J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, London, Penguin, 1994, (1864), p. 254.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 256.

19 Anthony Kenny (ed.), *The Oxford Diaries of Arthur Hugh Clough*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 33. Henceforth cited as *OD* with page numbers given in the text.

20 Clough refers to Galatians V and VI which speaks against the lust of the flesh, *Ibid.*, p. 6.

21 *OD*, p. 6. Clough's jottings of the previous two days and the following day to this entry reads: "I fear I am now sadly excited" (Feb 8), "I am not nearly enough by myself: the effect of which is that I get quite excited before the time and all my

Newman, with a simple yet effective rhetoric, reminds the sinning soul of the rewards of constant prayer and adoration:

[...] whether our excitements arise from objects of this world or the next, praise and prayer will be, through God's mercy, our remedy; keeping the mind from running to waste; calming, soothing, sobering, steadying it; attuning it to the will of God and the mind of the Spirit, teaching it to love all men, to be cheerful and thankful, and to be resigned in all the dispensations of Providence towards us<sup>22</sup>.

In his correspondence to his friend G.P. Gell, however, Clough invariably disparages the phenomenon of Newmanism in comments peppered with irony:

Among other incidents I have had the pleasure of twice meeting [...] John Henry Newman, once at a dinner party, and once at a small and select breakfast [...] I was introduced, and had the honour of drinking wine with him: on the strength of all which of course, as is one's bounded duty, I must turn Newmanist". (C, pp. 88–9)

[...] I should be very glad if you could have staid in England, especially as what with Nemanism, Romanism, Chartism, and other isms, not forgetting Devilism, I suppose everyone will have plenty to do. (C, p. 92)

Whilst it may be pertinent to suggest that the self-referential, confessional mode of a diary allows for less conditioned reflections than the dialogical nature of letter-writing, Clough's satirical epistolary comments may have suited his deliberate strategy to make light of the guilt and ingratitude which undoubtedly stemmed from his inability to emulate Newman's pious example, just as Arnold's exigent standards had proved to be unattainable<sup>23</sup>. On the whole, his ambivalent reactions towards Newman and Newmanism are indicative of the religious doubts to which

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wholesome drowsiness is gone, and the excitement to be cured into the bargain" (Feb 10); "A very foolishly excited & bad night" (Feb 11), pp. 5–7.

22 John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Vol. III, London, Longmans, Green, and Co, 1907, p. 349.

23 One contribution to Clough's ultimate distancing from Newman seems to have been his hourly discussions with his tutor Frances Wingfield Ward. The numerous references in his diaries suggest that Ward used Clough to sound out his own response to Newman's ideas, which always left Clough feeling, as he himself puts it, "like a bit of paper blown up the chimney by a draught". (quoted in A. Kenny, Arthur Hugh Clough. *A Poet's Life*, cit., p. 44). Furthermore, Clough's belief in putting all things to the test ran contrary to the premises of the Tractar-

the debates raging within and without the university walls offered little elucidation. Indeed, his painstaking spiritual self-examination generates a dismal catalogue of self-loathing and self-chastisement, which would have been not only alien but abhorrent to Newman: “[...] How many there are whom I may sorrowfully contrast with myself” (*OD*, p. 3); “[...] A very bad and wicked night” [...] “May God forgive and put away my sin; but may I see it daily more & more!” (*OD*, p. 8); “How irregular I have been this week [...]” (*OD*, p. 9); “Occasionally I have those awful feelings of practical Αθεϊσμος [atheism]” (*OD*, p. 13); “[...] I only fear I am getting sadly άθεος [atheist] [...] My corruption is indeed terrible” (*OD*, p. 21); “[...] My conceitedness & folly & rottenness of heart is very great” (*OD*, p. 35); “My wickedness & neglect has at last reached its height” (*OD*, p. 37);. One of his final entries grimly concludes: “[...] only too fit an ending for this book [...] with all this weight of sins and corruption scare enough good left in me to feel that there is something” (*OD*, p. 28). The self-denigration behind this mono-referential discourse, although it clearly manifests a rhetorical function specific to the confessional mode of a diary, reveals much about Clough’s real sentiments, however conditioned he was by the severe impositions of a religious code and conduct that lay beyond his capability to consistently maintain. One may only surmise the extent to which the awareness of standards impossible to achieve stifled his intellectual and spiritual development. The following untitled poem, which appears in his diary on August 3, 1841, is an attempt to articulate his frustrations:

Would that I were – O hear thy suppliant, thou  
 Whom fond belief has ventured here to see  
 Would that I were not that which I am now  
 Would that I be not that I wish to be  
 What wouldst thou? Poor suggestions of today  
 Depart, vain fancy & fallacious thought  
 Would I could wish my wishes all away  
 And learn to wish the wishes that I ought. (*OD*, p. 173)

The vicious circle of cumbersome repetitions (“would [...] were [...] would [...] wish [...] that [...] which [...] that [...] wish”) produces an

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ian movement. Cf. Francis F. Palmer “The Bearing of Science on the Thought of Arthur Hugh Clough”, *PMLA*, LIX, March, 1944, p. 214.

incongruous tension between comedy and rage that is symptomatic of the pathos and bathos of the poet's existential unease,<sup>24</sup> whilst the negative conditionals and subjunctives underline the fact that his self-rejection is not qualified by the idea of a condition to which he must aspire. Indeed, self-rejection is the end-point of Clough's early verses which explore, often in melodramatic terms, the consequences of his own double-mindedness – the theme of his final great poem, *Dipsychus*.<sup>25</sup> In the meantime, his excessive preoccupation with a poetry grounded in the indeterminate nature of subjective experience may have led Clough into an impasse, but it was a deadlock from which his best poetry was to emerge. This is not to detract from the fact that beyond their predominantly mono-referential nature and variable merits, his Oxford poems contain intimations of his greatness and, as such, represent a significant stage in his poetic development that merits consideration.

## 2.2 *Truth is a Golden Thread; Blank Misgivings*

Most of Clough's Balliol poetry is confessional in nature and replicates, often in derivative and hackneyed poeticisms, the self-dramatic posturing evident in his diary recordings. Yet, however much poetic artificiality and affectation appear to undermine the quest for authenticity, which is always Clough's underlying motivation, his productions of this period should not be dismissed as ineffective en masse, despite their admittedly "uneasy and awkward conventionality"<sup>26</sup>. *Truth is a Golden Thread* (1838) is a case in point. Its eventual omission from Clough's first collection, *Ambarvalia* (1849) (written in collaboration with his friend Thomas Burbidge) may indicate dissatisfaction with its final

24 Cf. R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 102. is certainly right in pointing out that the poem, with its heavy dependence on syntax "looks forward to Clough's most characteristic achievement in poetry".

25 Anthony Kenny ed., *cit.*, p. 46: "I have been careless & I fear [...] [double-minded]"; "St Luke from XII-XIV is very useful in many parts to people like me with good resolutions & an inconsistent course of halting, double-minded conduct".

26 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 98.



couplet which contradicts the sense of truth, running throughout the poem, as an invisible presence captured only in sudden glimpses. But an attentive reading reveals that this incongruity is precisely what makes the poem so interesting:

Truth is a golden thread seen here & there  
In small bright specks upon the visible side  
Of our strange Being's party-coloured web  
How rich the converse. 'Tis a vein of ore  
Emerging now & then on earth's rude breast  
But flowing full below. Like islands set  
At distant intervals on Ocean's face  
We see it on our course; but in the depths  
The mystic colonnade unbroken keeps  
Its faithful way invisible but sure.  
O if it be so, wherefore do we men  
Pass by so many marks, so little heeding?<sup>27</sup>

Conventional features of poetic language aside (e.g. “earth’s rude breast”, “ocean’s face”, “mystic colonnade”), *Truth is a Golden Thread* contains elements that anticipate the syntactic compactness and semantic density of Clough’s mature verse. The conspicuous phrase “party-coloured web” in the opening lines, in which truth is described as a transitory phenomenon, is a case in point. Whilst the lexeme “party” is connoted socially (co-referring both to a festivity and a political group<sup>28</sup>), “web” conveys the sense of deception and entrapment that may be concealed beneath such factors – either way, the stress is laid on the time-bound preoccupations that either impede the poet’s perception of eternal truth or, at the very least, render it teasingly illusive. The fact that the poem proceeds to enumerate what are essentially three semantically unrelated metaphors (“golden thread”, “vein of ore”, “islands”) may have confirmed Clough’s disappointment with its thematic cohesion. Yet, on closer inspection, these images function collectively as manifestations of increasing degrees of perceptibility, to the point of transforming the initial sense of truth as a fleeting and intermittently visible phenomenon

27 *Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, London, Macmillan and co., 1898, pp. 6–7.

28 Incidentally, they also link the two dimensions of Clough’s own worldly preoccupations (the numerous wine parties at Oxford and his growing interest in republicanism).

into a reality unheeded by man. Therefore, what appear to be dislocated elements (falsified by idealisation) are in actuality the paradigms that uncover the real thematic concern of the poem, which is not so much the nature of truth as the poet's inability to define it. For it is the acute verbal self-consciousness that lies behind the poet's allusive and oblique handling of his subject matter that becomes the real 'meaning' of the poem. It is therefore no accident that in the final question: "wherefore do *we* men / Pass by so many marks, so little heeding?" (emphasis mine) the speaker, as a result of the inefficacies of his apparently haphazard images, includes himself among the rest of mankind in its frustrated search.<sup>29</sup> For in spite of his determination to verify the truth, he is equally implicated in a universal ignorance as a result of his own poetical distractions, (his idealised metaphorical elaborations) which can only offer figurative counterparts of the truth rather than actually describe or configure it.

Clough's Balliol verses also reflect a preoccupation with the limitations of expressive and subjective art. In a letter to J.P. Gell, dated 7 July 1838, he grudgingly concedes the main premises of romantic subjectivity:

All poetry must be the language of Feeling of some kind, I suppose, and the imaginative expression of affection must be poetry; but it seems to me that it is both critically best and morally safest to dramatise your feelings when they are of private personal character [...] But there is a point beyond this, which is surely quite wrong morally, and that is so writing as to expose peculiar circumstances of your own life or conduct [...] (C, pp. 73–4)

This sense of a connection between poetic affectation and insincerity overrides the fact that by being the 'translation' of a subjective vision, poetry is necessarily at one remove from the 'authenticity' of the original experience out of which it is written. In reality, the question depends upon how effectively poetic language 'translates' personal

29 Matthew Arnold, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth Allott (2<sup>nd</sup> edition Miriam Allott), London, Longman, 1979 (1965), p. 130. Interestingly, the islands simile recalls Arnold's "To Marguerite-Continued" ("The islands feel the enclasp- ing flow / And then their endless bounds they know") with a similar reference to the mystic depths of the sea in Arnold's notion of the buried life, which is analogous to Clough's "unbroken" truth as it keeps "its faithful way invisible but sure".

experience in a way that is not only shared by readers but offers insights to enrich their view of the world. Clough's 'solution' is to filter his own dilemmas through the objective perspective of a dramatic speaker<sup>30</sup>. His most significant early attempt at this is *Blank Misgivings of a Creature Moving About in Worlds Not Realised*, published in *Ambarvalia* (1849), a sequence of ten poems composed between 1839–42<sup>31</sup>. These crucial years for Clough's intellectual development were heavily marked by bouts of spiritual depression and hopelessness. Yet it is interesting to note that the two events which should have further exacerbated his low morale – his failure to achieve a first-class degree in 1841 and the death of Dr Arnold the following year – provoked unexpected responses. The first was an outcome of his refusal to comply with the conventions of the university's unimaginative curriculum. As he states in a letter to his sister dated June 6 1841: "I can assure you it has not lessened my own opinion of my ability, – for I did my papers not a quarter as well as my reading would naturally have enabled me to do and if I got a 2d with my little finger it would not have taken two hands to get a first [...]" (C, I, p. 109). Such an admission in the face of the external pressure that Oxford no doubt exerted on him, indicated a bold self-confidence. As for the shock of Arnold's immature death, Clough's response was to take a solitary hike through Wales which apparently had an uplifting effect on his spirits. In spite of these unusual reactions, however, his tendency for evasion and withdrawal was a more typical behavioural trait, as is evident in the poems that make up *Blank Misgivings*, several of which were originally drafted in his Oxford diaries. Their theme of spiritual and religious dilemma directly reflect not only the preoccupations and obsessions recorded therein but also, by extension, his problematic

30 Cf. R. K.. Biswas, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–101 justly observes that Clough's moral preoccupations are conditioned by the attempt to find the right language with which to define them and that his tendency to be too precise and poetical at the same time undermined this striving for a linguistic fidelity. This still begs the issue of how a poetic speaker can resolve the hiatus between the "poetical" and the "right" language.

31 Four of the compositions originally appear, some with different wordings, in the Oxford diaries of 1841. As will be noted, their chronology does not reflect their ordering in the final sequence: "Tis true, / Most true" (Feb 3); "Since so it is, So be it still" (Feb 5); "Yet mark where human hand hath been" (Feb 5); "Roused by importunate knocks" (Dec 7).

engagement with Newmanism. Such is the case that Clough feared that the excesses of personal expression would handicap his poetical development. In a letter to J. N. Simpkins dated 16 February 1841 he added the following short apology:

I shall send you some verses which I made about a fortnight ago [...] I am afraid there may be something of affectation in them or at any rate of calling things by wrong names and better names than they deserve [...] but on the whole I venture to believe them fairly truthful and, at any rate, shall send them. (C, I, p. 106)

Clough's qualms over the poetic representation of truthful experience arise from his trepidations over the potential trappings of poetical language (calling things by "wrong names" or "better names than they deserve"). To be sure, derivative, artificial poeticisms permeate *Blank Misgivings*<sup>32</sup>. But these may well be intentional, shifted as they are onto a poetic voice that is at once representative and detached from that of the real poet. This underlying irony is confirmed by Clough's cool summation of his religious position in a letter to J. P. Gell of 24 November 1844:

Without the least denying Xtianity, I feel little that I can call its power. Believing myself to be in my unconscious creed *in some shape or other* an adherent to its doctrines I keep within its pale: still whether the Spirit of the Age, whose lacquey and flunkey I submit to be, will prove to be of this kind or that kind I cannot say. *Sometimes I have doubts whether it won't turn out to be no Xtianity at all.* (C, p. 141, italics mine)

Besides the Carlylean reference to 'the Spirit of the Age', Clough continues in the same letter to compound religious scepticism with self-mockery by invoking comparison with Goethe: "As the great Goethe published in his youth *The Sorrows of the Young Werter*, so may I, you see, the great poet that I am to be, publish my 'Lamentations of a flunkey out of place'" (C, p. 141). This facetious self-appraisal undermines the authenticity of his poetic endeavour whilst simultaneously evoking it. For Clough is aware that *Blank Misgivings* is just as much a product of the double-mindedness of its author as an attempt to render his dilemmas in an objectified artistic form.

32 Cf. R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

The general title of the poem is a quotation from a passage in the eighth stanza of Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*:

[...] those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishings  
Blank misgivings of a Creature  
Moving about in worlds not realised [...]<sup>33</sup>

Clough's admiration for Wordsworth<sup>34</sup> arises from his sense of poetry as the expression of morality and the lines above occur at a turning point in the *Ode* which intimates the possibility of moral salvation through the power of the memory that recognises uncertainty and doubt as necessary states in the growth towards wisdom and maturity. However, through his dramatisation of the young man 'remembered' (and transcended) by Wordsworth in the throes of unresolved existential dilemmas, Clough adopts an ontological perspective which belies the elder poet's philosophical optimism<sup>35</sup>. His very attempt to objectify the highly personal circumstances of the original poems through their re-contextualisation (and re-ordering) in terms of a common framework with a fictional persona at the centre (the "creature" of the title), also undermines the Wordsworthian equation between poetic voice and poet. Indeed, whilst the *Immortality Ode* merges subjective experience and objective reality, the poems that make up *Blank Misgivings* evoke the

33 William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. De Salincourt and Helen Derbishire, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966 (1947), Vol. IV, p. 283.

34 A. Kenny, ed. *op. cit.*, p. 83: "In reading Wordsworth tonight I have been struck again with the interference of the vague excitement of my marvellousness-bump with better Poetical enjoyment." It is significant that Clough finds a moral exuberance in the poetry of Wordsworth in his attempt to escape from the bleakness of tortured self-reflection and religious doubt.

35 See B. Clough (ed), *Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, London, Macmillan and Co, 1888, p. 319. Clough's general appraisal of Wordsworth's poetry in his essay "The Poetry of William Wordsworth" is qualified by a dubiousness regarding what he ultimately considers as the limitations of his moral tone: "To live in a quiet village, out of the road of all trouble and temptation, in a pure, elevated, high moral sort of manner, is after all no such very great a feat". Such a "premature seclusion, for Clough, pinpoints the problem of Wordsworth's arbitrary positiveness" (p. 320).

disjunction between self and universe<sup>36</sup>, the variety of prosodic forms alone – sonnets, blank verse, ballad metre and iambic pentameter couplets – signalling the sense of crisis brought about by fragmentation and division. Furthermore, the poems do not follow a chronological or even logical order, but pinpoint intermittently related moments of acute spiritual doubt – in effect, anti-epiphanies. In contrast with a devotional poetic sequence like John Keble’s *Christian Year*, with its reassuring Christian messages illustrated by pertinent biblical teachings, Clough’s ‘calendar’ of the Christian soul is marked by an a-temporal dimension in which the obsessive reiteration of individual spiritual trauma allows holy scripture no such intertextually moral function. Indeed, the very absence of scriptural references indicates an ontological quest that is in direct opposition to the tractarian emphasis on church doctrine and biblical study.

Section I, the first of four sonnets based on Wordsworth’s revised model of the Petrarchan form<sup>37</sup>, suggests Clough’s reading of Milton’s *Sonnet VII* “How soon hath time, the subtle thief of youth”<sup>38</sup>. Both poems take root from the panic of rapidly passing time and non-productivity, but whereas Milton’s complaint of fruitless activity (“But my late spring

36 Clough’s sequence may owe elements to Tennyson’s dialogue “The Two Voices”, in particular the complementary poem “Supposed Confessions of a Second Rate Sensitive Mind Not in Unity with Itself” (1830). However, despite their similar attempts to create a dramatic voice to mask autobiographical elements, there is a difference between the unified discourse of Tennyson’s speaker, which centres wholly around the question of lost faith, and the fragmented representation of Clough’s poetic voice.

37 The rhyme schemes of the first three sonnets follow the looser abbaacca pattern, established by Wordsworth, for the octet, but differ significantly for the final sestet: I, ddefef; II, cedeed, III, defegg; 4 is the sole exception in having a different rhyme pattern for the initial octet as well as the sestet: abbaabbacdeed. All of Clough’s sestets, with the exception of sonnet II, deviate from the Petrarchean form in commencing with a d rhyme.

38 C, 1 pp. 58–9: “It is difficult here even to obtain assent to Milton’s greatness as a poet [...] Were it not for the happy notion that a man’s poetry is not at all affected by his opinions or indeed his character and mind altogether, I fear the *Paradise Lost* would be utterly unsaleable except for waste paper in the University.” (to J.P. Gell, Feb 16 1839). Clough’s observations throw a deliberately ironic light on the fact that the anti-Catholic Milton would have been anathema to the Tractarian-oriented intellectual milieu.

no bud or blossom shew'th"<sup>39</sup>) concludes in his trust that the "will of Heav'n"<sup>40</sup> will eventually assist him in achieving poetic glory, Clough's dilemma becomes indicative of the moral vacuity that is a result of man's fallen condition. The opening octet laments a state of non-being precipitated by moral laxity and emotional impotency:

Here am I yet, another twelvemonth spent,  
One-third departed of the mortal span,  
Carrying on the child into the man,  
Nothing into reality. Sails rent,  
And rudder broken, – reason impotent,-  
Affections all unfixed; so forth I fare  
On the mid seas unheedingly, so dare  
To do and to be done by, well content. (*P*, p. 28)

The absence of duty and purpose characterising the indeterminate transition from youth to manhood<sup>41</sup>, is rendered through a maritime imagery in which the rent sails and broken rudder are, on one level, indexes of the speaker's frustrations and inadequacies and, on the other, ironic counter-images emblematic of the empirical feats of Victorian England<sup>42</sup>. Thus the alternation between figurative and literal language in "Sails rent, / And rudder broken, – reason impotent – / Affections all unfixed; so forth I fare / On the mid seas unheedingly [...]", which may initially appear a sign of poetic slackness, in effect, serves to deliberately emphasise the disjunction between subjective and objective world. The speaker's frustration, phonically underlined by the recurrence of the

39 John Milton, *Poetical Works*, ed. Douglas Bush, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 105.

40 *Ibid*, p. 105.

41 Compare with the following note from the Oxford Diaries: "In another half year I shall be 20. And with good impulses very early aroused I shall have been loitering & losing time & ground all the time. I have never yet gone forward for anything like a single year, steadily and consistently at all" (*OD*, p. 66). Another jotting in Clough's 1842 lent notebook, p. 1, summarises the dilemma of the poem: "Here I am with all my imagination – truths utterly departed: and a new false growth in their place: so that I cannot act rationally – my affections utterly divorced from both im. & reason".

42 See Patrick Scott, "Clough, Bankruptcy, and Disbelief: the Economic Background to "Blank Misgivings", *Victorian Poetry*, 2006, for an interesting re-interpretation of the sequence in this sense in terms of Victorian economics.

fricative /f/ in “Affections ... unfixed ... forth ... fare”, denotes a sense of moral failure that is ultimately symptomatic of humanity at large. The two dimensions of self and world are conflated in the final mnemonic evocation of the first kiss<sup>43</sup> in the sestet:

So it was from the first, so it is yet;  
Yea, the first kiss that by these lips was set  
On any human lips, methinks was sin –  
Sin, cowardice, and falsehood; for the will  
Into a deed e’en then advanced, wherein  
God, unidentified, was thought of still. (*P*, p. 28)

Clough counters the Wordsworthian view of childhood as an immortal state of beatitude with the notion that the child is intrinsically sinful from the moment it gives its first kiss. In this respect, the omission of the indefinite article in: “methinks was sin” is significant. For, as Kenny has observed, the child’s kiss already consists “in precisely what Christian tradition has always seen as the essence of all sin: placing a creature in one’s affections, above the creator”<sup>44</sup>. Thus, the child is culpable because he already subconsciously conceives of God (who is only “unidentified” on the conscious level). The temporal inversion to the past in the concluding words of the sonnet (“was thought of still”) confirms the inherited nature of sin in whose bounds the lyrical I is confined, whilst the final position of the adverb “still” points both to the permanence of God’s existence within his mind and, as a sentence connector, his negative interpretation of his recalled action<sup>45</sup>.

Section II, which dramatises the opposition between misdeeds and the assertion of faith, envisions the possibility of salvation:

43 The line “Carrying on the child into the man / Nothing into reality” is also a grim echo of Wordsworth’s “The child is father of the man”.

44 Anthony Kenny, *God and Two Poets. Arthur Hugh Clough and Gerard Manley Hopkins*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988, p. 21. Kenny finds justification for this interpretation in the fact that Clough’s original line in the manuscript version runs: “On my mother’s methinks was a sin”.

45 See also John Schad, *Arthur Hugh Clough*, Tavistock, Northcote House Publishers, 2006, p. 7, who similarly observes: “Clough’s God is both still and still, both continuing and yet unmoving”.



Though to the vilest things beneath the moon  
 For poor Ease' sake I give away my heart,  
 And for the moment's sympathy let part  
 My sight and sense of truth, Thy precious boon,  
 My painful earnings, lost, all lost, as soon  
 Almost, as gained: and though aside I start,  
 Belie Thee daily, hourly, – still Thou art,  
 Art surely as in heaven the sun at noon:  
 How much soe'er I sin, whate'er I do  
 Of evil, still the sky above is blue,  
 The stars look down in beauty as before:  
 Is it enough to walk as best we may,  
 To walk, and, sighing, dream of that blessed day  
 When ill we cannot quell shall be no more? (*P*, pp. 28–9)

However, the very absence of references to 'God', who, incidentally, is no longer mentioned again in the whole sequence, is compounded by Clough's literal shearing of explicit biblical or doctrinal elements as the nature of the quest adopts a secularly orientated ontological perspective. Any manifestations of heavenly glory are directly reflected in natural elements ("the sun at noon", "the sky above", "the stars"). From a structural point of view, this sonnet is also an excellent early example of Clough's metrical and syntactical deftness. The hyperbaton of the first two lines effectively articulates the speaker's frustration, with the placing of "vilest things" in initial focus as well as underlining his guilt-ridden conscience in the end-position of "give away my heart". The breathlessness of the emotional outburst in the opening septet (terminating: "Belie Thee daily, hourly") is also successfully rendered on a syntagmatic level, through the combination of the three main clauses of the single sentence in lines 1–2, 3–4, 6–7 and embedded subordinate clause in lines 4–6<sup>46</sup>. This initial movement is countered by the deceleration of the densely punctuated second quatrain where the speaker pauses to emphatically enumerate the hard-earned virtues he has now lost: "My sight and sense of truth, Thy precious boon, / My painful earnings [...]". Still, although on the one hand, no justification is sought

46 The ratio in terms of syllables between syntactic unit and poetic line reveals an underlying irregularity which serves to heighten the emotional timbre of the poet's denunciation of his worthlessness: first main clause, 10 x10; second main clause, 10x6, subordinate clause, 4x10x4; third main clause, 6x7.

for his ingratitude to God, given that the loss of his “precious boon” had come at such an expense of sacrifice (“My painful earnings”), an evident change of mood is struck at the mention of his hard-won state of beatitude. For in the chiasmatic structure of lines 4–6: “Thy precious boon / My painful earnings, lost, all lost / As soon as gained [...]”, (which is also underpinned by the parallel stress pattern: / – | – /), the end focus on “gained” already hints at the ameliorative direction in which the speaker intends to steer his discourse. Even the verbal echoes shared with the first sonnet suggest a shift from moral laxity to the possible vanquishing of sin: (“so is it yet / still Thou art” – “sin / Sin [...] Thou art / art [...]”). The repetition of “art” unexpectedly reaffirms God’s ‘existence’ at mid-point in the sonnet just after the speaker has declared his lack of faith. Thus, Clough divides the movement into two equal parts, fixing the turn at the beginning of the second septet rather than exploiting the principle of imbalance peculiar to the sonnet form, whilst simultaneously maintaining the octet and the sestet in the rhyme scheme<sup>47</sup>. The two opposing attitudes dramatised throughout, coalesce at the eventual admission of self-defeat, which becomes tantamount to the speaker’s blind trust that evil will be conquered at the final judgement (“that blessed day”).

This tentative optimism is taken up in the first quatrain of section III, which, with its invocation of blessing and forgiveness, constitutes a rare moment of altruism in *Blank Misgivings*:

Well, well, – Heaven bless you all from day to day!  
 Forgiveness too, or e’er we part, from each,  
 As I do give it, so must I beseech:  
 I owe all much, much more than I can pay;  
 Therefore it is I go; how could I stay  
 Where every look commits me to fresh debt,  
 And to pay little I must borrow yet? (*P*, p. 13)

In spite of the generosity of those around him, the Christian virtue of kindness<sup>48</sup> is ignored by the lyrical-I whose sole reaction is to flee from

47 This subtle interplay of two parallel structures appears indicative of his growing sense of the intricate relationship between the formal aspects of versification and those of signification.

48 Matthew, 7:12: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”.

the responsibility of every “fresh debt”<sup>49</sup> into a barren, a-temporal world of darkness and silence:

Enough of this already, now away!  
With silent woods and hills untenanted  
Let me go commune; under thy sweet gloom,  
O kind maternal Darkness, hide my head:  
The day may come I yet may re-assume  
My place, and, these tired limbs recruited, seek  
The task for which I now am all too weak (*P*, p. 13)

The regression into a pre-natal universe that holds back progression into future salvation is the recurrent menace that haunts *Blank Misgivings*. But whereas the recollection of childhood in section I is a confirmation of man’s innate sinful condition, the relapse into a primordial world of “silent woods” (the Dantesque forest of sin and error) and “hills untenanted”, leads to a desire for self-annihilation (“O kind maternal Darkness, hide my head”). The dysphoric movement, framed by the first and last words of the poem (“Well → weak”) – demarks the transition from health and optimism to vulnerability and hopelessness. Nevertheless, in terms of its intratextual relationship with sonnet II the conclusion of III moves full circle with the final tercet of the sestet once again suggesting the tentative possibility of future salvation. This is particularly demarked by the unexpected military adjective “recruited” indicating the speaker’s sense of himself as a Christian soldier marching determinedly towards God.

Although the references to the speaker’s misdeeds are kept deliberately vague and indeterminate throughout *Blank Misgivings*, section IV explicitly refers to his deceit for the first time in the sequence:

Yes, I have lied, and so must walk my way,  
Bearing the liar’s curse upon my head;  
Letting my weak and sickly heart be fed  
On food which does the present craving stay,  
But may be clean-denied me e’en to-day,  
And tho’ twere certain, yet were ought but bread;

49 Thereby the speaker fails to comply with one of the most fundamental Christian principles laid down by Jesus: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them [...]” Matthew 7: 12.

Letting – for so they say, it seems, I said,  
 And I am all too weak to disobey!  
 Therefore for me sweet Music greets me and I feel not;  
 Sweet eyes pass off me uninspired; yea, more,  
 The golden tide of opportunity  
 Flows wafting-in friendships and better, – I  
 Unseeing, listless, pace along the shore. (*P*, pp. 29–30)

As in the “moment’s sympathy” of sonnet II, gratification is sought in the “present craving” which may be denied as soon as received. The speaker’s deceit is therefore, in reality, self-directed, for, as a rational Christian, he is aware of the benefits he is deprived of by denying God. In his sermon “Knowledge of God’s Will without Obedience”, Newman describes this trait as one of contemporary relevance:

There never was a people or an age to which these words could be more suitably addressed than to this country at this time; because we know more of the way to serve God, of our duties, our privileges, and our reward, than any other people hitherto, as far as we have the means of judging. To us then especially our Saviour says, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”<sup>50</sup>

By ‘forgetting’ his knowledge of “these things”, the speaker forfeits his own happiness and worth. His angst at the instantaneous realization of his sin (which conflates the time lapse required for its moral consequences to be absorbed to degree zero), is aptly rendered in the awkwardly elliptic and parenthetical phrase of line 7, signalling the shift from admission (“I have lied”) to evasion: “Letting – for so they say, it seems, I said [...]”. The sense of self-dissociation implied in the verb “seems” is a momentary lapse of moral evasion that, whilst anticipating the theme of the divided self<sup>51</sup> which becomes central to the latter part of the sequence, in this case, only exposes the speaker’s shame. Indeed, any attempt to dramatise his dilemma in terms of a two-way split between a virtuous and sinful self is here recognised as a false dichotomy. Spiritual wholeness can only be retrieved by the recognition of innate sinfulness, and subjection to a superior force, as the first line of the sestet – “And I am all too weak to disobey” (recalling the final line

50 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. I, *cit.*, p. 27.

51 *OD*, p. 73: “[...] I can hardly for a moment realise in the very least degree that I really am the same person, that my identical self did these things [...]”.

of sonnet III: “The task for which I now am all too weak”) – readily acknowledges. Thus, the lexeme ‘disobey’ is subverted to ironically allude to an opposing scale of values (the speaker is too weak to disobey his evil impulses). On the other hand, the final lines set up a reactionary process whereby the iconically stranded “I” paradoxically underlines both his isolation and attempt at self re-assertion<sup>52</sup>.

The variety of poetic forms which characterise the second part of *Blank Misgivings* (sections V to X), ranging from traditional rhyme schemes to blank verse, enact, on a formal level, the poet’s difficulty in constructing a patterned progression of thought and feeling. The sudden transition to the 4x3 ballad-metre of section V, creates an incongruous effect in the light of the graver tones of the Petrarchean sonnets, which is especially emphasised by the clumsy syntactic inversion of the opening line:

How often sit I, poring o’er  
My strange distorted youth,  
Seeking in vain, in all my store,  
One feeling based on truth;  
Amid the maze of petty life  
A clew whereby to move,  
A spot whereon in toil and strife  
To dare to rest and love.  
So constant as my heart would be,  
So fickle as it must,

52 The dejected mood of the closing lines of the sonnet is reminiscent of the first stanza of Wordsworth’s *Immortality Ode*: “Turn whereso’er I may, / By night or day, / The things which I have seen I now can see no more”. De Salincourt and Derbyshire (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 279. However, the inability to participate empathetically in the natural world is conditioned by epistemological rather than metaphysical factors. Clough describes the same loss of empathetic feeling in another early, Wordsworthian-inspired poem: “All lovely sights and sounds to deal, / My eyes could see, my ears could hear, / Only my heart, it would not feel [...]” A similar foreboding of sin runs throughout the poem: “I thought I must have done some sin [...] So I turned home the way I came [...] A guilty thing and full of shame”, *P*, p. 480. See also John Keble, *The Christian Year*, Oxford, James Parker and Co, 1866, p. 186 which condemns the soul’s inability to participate in the glories of God: “He in the mazes of the budding wood / Is near, and mourns to see our thankless glance / Dwell coldly, where the fresh green earth is strewed / With the first flowers that lead the vernal dance.” (Third Sunday After Trinity).

'Twere well for others and for me  
 'Twere dry as summer dust.  
 Excitements come, and act and speech  
 Flow freely forth; – but no,  
 Nor they, nor aught beside, can reach  
 The buried world below. (*P*, p. 30)

From specific detail in section IV the reversion to abstract generalisation hinges upon the binary oppositions of constancy (“to rest and love” [...] “So constant as my heart would be”) and inconstancy (“Seeking in vain [...] So fickle as it must”). As the superficial, vain self of the everyday world of “petty life” remains dissevered from the “buried” self of eternal truth, the speaker’s identity is now openly split into two mutually exclusive attitudes: one manifest, and analytic (“poring”), the other hypothetical, and active (“[...] in toil and strife”). The irony of the dichotomy between a real analytical self and an active hypothetical self cannot go unnoticed. For the call to action – a central motif in Clough’s mature poetry – is already envisaged here in terms of repression and self-dissociation. Furthermore, as in the previous two sections, its extension on a social level (“’twere well for others as for me”) underlines the speaker’s alienation from the community which culminates in section VI with his self-representation as social outcast, wandering, like an unattended child, through a “strange garden” (a parody of the biblical Eden) and casually plucking “light hopes and joys” from each tree he passes in a symbolic re-enactment of the original sin<sup>53</sup>. The episodic nature of the poem is reflected on a structural plane in its deliberately fragmented opening and closing lines (three and six syllables respectively) framing six lines of iambic pentameter blank verse:

– Like a child  
 In some strange garden left awhile alone,  
 I pace about the pathways of the world,  
 Plucking light hopes and joys from every stem,  
 With qualms of vague misgiving in my heart  
 That payment at the last will be required,  
 Payment I cannot make, or guilt incurred,  
 And shame to be endured. (*P*, p. 30)

53 *Genesis* 3:6: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [...] and that it was pleasant to the eyes [...] she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat [...]”.

For Biswas, this poem displays an unsatisfying “Byronic attitudinizing”<sup>54</sup> that appears totally inappropriate for a child: “can the ‘qualms of vague misgiving’ of the poet” the critic asks, “have any serious content, can the payment, the shame, and the guilt be so grievous, if the equivalent to his situation is that of an unattended child doing some mild damage in a garden?<sup>55</sup>” Such a criticism fails to take into account the importance of the child as a recurrent symbol of regression in *Blank Misgivings*. For Clough, in contrast with Wordsworth, childhood is no innocent bliss, but already a fallen state (I and II) and his child-figure embodies precisely the stubborn irresponsibility and selfishness of the speaker (III IV and V). The two stages of childhood and youth within which the latter seems permanently trapped are also evidenced by the transition from the child’s “vague misgivings” which recalls the blank misgivings of the general title, to the consciousness of “shame to be endured”.

From the figurative depiction of the child in section VI, section VII (which adopts the past tense for the only time in the sequence) centres round a narrative indoor scene which describes the invasion of a group of night-time revellers into the speaker’s room. The poem draws from Clough’s social life in Oxford, where the colleges were particularly animated by rowdy wine-parties and, on this referential level represents Clough’s denunciation of his own excessive drinking and self-exhibitionism during these occasions. Structurally, it mirrors section VI, retaining the same metrical blank verse form as well as commencing with a truncated opening line:

– Roused by importunate knocks,  
 I rose, I turned the key, and let them in,  
 First one, anon another, and at length  
 In troops they came; for how could I, who once  
 Had let in one, nor looked him in the face,  
 Show scruples e’er again? So in they came,  
 A noisy band of revellers, – vain hopes,  
 Wild fancies, fitful joys; and there they sit  
 In my heart’s holy place, and through the night  
 Carouse, to leave it when the cold grey dawn

54 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

55 *Ibid*, p. 103.

Gleams from the East, to tell me that the time  
For watching and for thought bestowed is gone. (*P*, pp. 30–1)

By succumbing to their insistent knocking, the lyrical I forfeits any chance of moral authority over his rowdy companions. Not only, but by his gesture, the scene assumes the effect of a mock parody of the verses from the Gospel According to Matthew: “knock, and it shall be opened unto you”. In this scene, the knocking is a rude prelude to the night-time carousing which he himself sanctions. The very hopes and joys that the child figure in VI guiltily plucks “from every stem” now qualify a behaviour that is condemned as ‘vain’, ‘wild’ and ‘fitful’ and for all the apparent transference of blame to his companions, the speaker cannot escape the fact that he is an accomplice to their night-time revelry. Although a possibility for redemption is suggested by the spatial transition from the external (“strange garden”) in VI to the internal dimension of the “heart’s holy place”, the shift to the present tense in “there they sit”, only intensifies the dramatic focus on the negative effects of the carousing which finally drains the room of any possibility of moral redemption, leaving a lifeless, bare landscape and melancholy contemplation of time that has been wasted<sup>56</sup>.

The blank-verse sonnet of section VIII<sup>57</sup>, which functions as a sequel to section III, re-proposes the key images and themes of *Blank Misgivings*:

O kind protecting Darkness! As a child  
Flies back to bury in his mother’s lap  
His shame and his confusion, so to thee,  
O Mother Night, come I! within the folds  
Of thy dark robe hide me close; for I  
So long, so heedless, with external things

56 This factor is made even more evident in an early draft of the poem, entered in Clough’s Oxford diary on Tuesday December 7<sup>th</sup> 1841, which concludes: “(For fasting & for prayer bestowed) is gone” (*OD*, p. 186). The phrase in brackets suggests indecision on the poet’s part, and the eventual lexical changes (“fasting” → “watching”; “prayer” → “thought”) indicate his reluctance to invest the poem with an explicit religious terminology in spite of its religious content.

57 Wordsworth was the first to refer to ‘a perfect sonnet without rhyme’ in *Paradise Lost*. See Markham L. Peacock, Jr., (ed), *The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth*, New York, Octagon Books, 1969, p. 149.



Have played the liar, that whate'er I see,  
 E'en these white glimmering curtains, yon bright stars,  
 Which to the rest rain comfort down, for me  
 Smiling those smiles which I may not return,  
 Or frowning frowns of fierce triumphant malice,  
 As angry claimants or expectants sure  
 Of that I promised and may not perform,  
 Look me in the face! O hide me, Mother Night! (*P*, p. 31)

All the recurrent elements of the sequence – the child simile, the speaker's withdrawal from the world, his deceitfulness and moral indebtedness – coalesce in a crescendo of self-commiseration which coincides, precisely half-way through the poem, with his recognition that the split between self and world is his sole responsibility. For, whilst his falseness is seen as a sign of immaturity and fear, it also triggers a morally reprehensible playfulness and deviousness. Thus, the allusion to the Virgin Mary on the one hand, assumes the ambivalent valence of a fixed centre point of peace and protection<sup>58</sup> and therefore of salvation, and, on the other, a dark locus of pre-natal unconsciousness in which the lyrical-I eludes his earthly responsibilities. But the description also recalls the episode in Genesis in which Adam and Eve conceal themselves from God in their shame after eating from the forbidden tree<sup>59</sup> – of which Keble also gives a dramatic psychological representation in his poem *Sexagesima Sunday*<sup>60</sup>. As in section IV, fearful withdrawal (rendered in the graphically segregated "I" in the enjambment "I / So long, so heedless [...]") appears to annihilate any hope of the redemption intimated at certain moments in the previous poems. On a syntagmatic level, the awkward interweaving of subject and objects in

58 In spite of the Catholic religion's sanctified view of the Virgin Mary, her figure is revered by Anglicans and Catholics alike. As an Anglican, Newman dedicates a sermon to her figure entitled "The Reverence Due to the Blessed Virgin Mary" (J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Vol. II, cit., pp. 127–38) which Clough may have been familiar with. But Clough's evocation is also psychologically intriguing when his continual absence from his family is recalled.

59 *Genesis*, 3: 8.

60 J. Keble, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–7: "Lord, when in some deep garden glade, / Of Thee and of myself afraid, / From thoughts like these among the bowers I hide, / Nearest and loudest then of all / I seem to hear the Judge's call: - / "Where art thou, fallen man? Come forth, and be thou tried".

lines 9–13 effectively articulates the embarrassment and shame of the speaker's sense of his guilt

The resultant emotional crisis is also paralleled, on a prosodic level, by the breakdown in the sonnet's rhyme scheme<sup>61</sup> (Clough contrives the bizarre pattern: a b c d e f c g c h i j k l) – a deliberate subversion of the traditional poetic form which anticipates the formal experimentation of his mature verse.

Notwithstanding the lack of a sequential development in *Blank Misgivings*, the final two sections strive towards a resolution to the speaker's apparently permanent moral and spiritual impasse. Section IX, the lengthiest and most meditative poem, admittedly contains some of Clough's worst poetry. Stock poetic phrases and clichés combine with heavily constructed hyperbatons as the speaker is depicted wandering through a romantically stylised landscape. On a discursive level, the shifts of addressee (self – heart – God) map the progress of the spiritual journey from doubt and struggle with evil to need for faith:

Once more the wonted road I tread,  
Once more dark heavens above me spread,  
Upon the windy down I stand,  
My station whence the circling land  
Lies mapped and pictured wide below;-  
Such as it was, such e'en again,  
Long dreary bank, and breadth of plain  
By hedge or tree unbroken; – Lo,  
A few grey woods can only show  
How vain their aid, and in the sense  
Of one unaltering impotence,  
Relieving not, meseems enhance  
The sovereign dulness of the expanse  
Yet marks where human hand hath been,  
Bare house, unsheltered village, space  
Of ploughed and fenceless tilth between,  
(Such aspect as methinks may be  
In some half-settled colony),  
From nature vindicate the scene;  
A wide, and yet disheartening view,  
A melancholy world. (*P*, pp. 31–2)

61 This is further compounded by the deviation of lines 11 and 14, which have eleven syllables, from the iambic pentameter pattern.

From a prosodic point of view, the sense of restraint evoked by these iambic tetrameter couplets counters the emotional intensity of section VIII and marks a new impulse as the speaker sets out on a fresh journey within a monotonous landscape the natural presences of which, rather than representing moral signposts guiding the spiritual traveller along his path, – as in Wordsworth – become a constant impediment to progress (“By hedge or tree unbroken”). Neither does nature initially provide a reviving or edifying influence: the bank is “Long dreary”, the “few grey woods” are ineffective (“How vain their aid”) and the whole scene is a “sovereign dullness”, “disheartening view” and “melancholy world”. Furthermore, the phrase “unfaltering impotence” echoes “reason impotent / And affections all unfix’d” of section I, bringing the sense of spiritual stagnancy full circle. The landscape essentially reflects a distorted world-view since it is perceived exclusively through the psychological filter of the speaker’s dejection<sup>62</sup>. It is only when he begins to altruistically acknowledge the existence of another reality, whose images of salvation and grace restore beauty and light to the universe, that the poem begins to assume an ameliorative tone (signalled also by the change in rhyme scheme):

‘Tis true,  
 Most true; and yet like those strange smiles  
 By fervent hope or tender thought  
 From distant happy regions brought,  
 Which upon some sick-bed are seen  
 To glorify a pale, worn face  
 With sudden beauty, – so at whiles  
 Lights have descended, hues have been,  
 To clothe with half-celestial grace  
 The bareness of the desert place. (*P*, p. 32)

Clough wrote an early draft of the above segment in his Oxford diaries on February 3 1841. It is preceded by the following jotting: “My present state I fear must be very bad – I feel myself to be feeding on all sorts of garbage in the way of sympathy and losing all recollection of the past and thought of the future & with little sorrow or uneasiness because of

62 In an earlier draft the final line of this section reads: “A cold repulsive world – ‘tis true” (*P*, p. 585).

it” (*OD*, p. 155). As a literal response to his comment, (“’Tis true / Most true; and yet [...]”) the poetic passage intratextually elucidates the extent to which his own self-indulgence and the speaker’s solipsistic world-view are one and the same vice. Only by transcending the obsessions of the ego, which has a morally numbing effect on both poet and speaker, can there be an authentic engagement with the world. The volte-face from misanthropic rumination to a vision of healing and restoration is therefore appropriately triggered by the inadvertent recollection of human suffering: (“[...] those strange smiles / By fervent hope or tender thought / From distant happy regions brought, / Which upon some sick-bed are seen / To glorify a pale, worn face / With sudden beauty [...]”). Human compassion metaphorically (and literally) transforms the landscape into a warmer, brighter place, though one in which suffering and spiritual sterility remain ever-present realities. This explains why the beneficial force is a “half-celestial grace that can only be perceived, as in *Truth is a Golden Thread*, in transitory moments of inspiration:

Since so it is, so be it still!  
 Could only thou, my heart, be taught  
 To treasure, and in act fulfil  
 The lesson which the sight has brought;  
 In thine own dull and dreary state  
 To work and patiently to wait:  
 Little thou think’st in thy despair  
 How soon the o’ershaded sun may shine,  
 And e’en the dulling clouds combine  
 To bless with lights and hues divine  
 That region desolate and bare,  
 Those sad and sinful thoughts of thine! (*P*, p. 32)

Once the speaker recognises the “dull and dreary state” of his own heart, the transformation of the landscape assumes a Christian gloss (“bless”, “divine”, “sinful”) which inspires a cautious optimism signalled by the momentary emergence of the sun, whose simultaneous visibility and invisibility (“[...] the o’ershaded sun may shine”<sup>63</sup>) is paralleled on a metrical level by the fact that the line is a virtual decasyllable contractible to a regular tetrameter metre through the elision in “o’ershaded”.

63 In an earlier draft, Clough wrote ‘hidden’ in place of o’ershaded’. The alteration has the effect of blurring the dichotomy between presence/absence (*P*, p. 585).

The transitory moment of inspiration provides the speaker with the insight that religion depends not upon the forces of reason but unquestioned subjection and blind faith towards a greater will. But it is conspicuous that this essentially non-linguistic attempt to resolve his dilemmas evaporates once the reasoning mind takes precedence again, as is marked by the shift in the I-You discourse situation in which the external addressee (i.e. God, his companions, Mother Night) becomes the internal addressee of the speaker's heart. For after his reconciliation with the external world, he now confronts the real antagonistic force that has impeded his spiritual progress<sup>64</sup>:

Still doth the cowardly heart complain;  
The hour may come, and come in vain;  
The branch that withered lies and dead  
No suns can force to lift its head.  
True! – yet how little thou canst tell  
How much in thee is ill or well;  
Nor for thy neighbour nor for thee,  
Be sure, was life designed to be  
A draught of dull complacency. (*P*, pp. 32–3)

The struggle between the speaker and his heart becomes the theme of the final part of section IX. His attempt at disavowal, (evidenced in the subsequent impersonal I-It discourse situation), does not detract from his acceptance of the heart's complaints. The search for the truth, therefore, assumes a dual valence with the subjective dimension of the heart vying continually with the objectivity of the external world. It may also be noted that the majority of the recurrent cross-references to the heart<sup>65</sup> throughout *Blank Misgivings* demark three distinct stages in his spiritual progress; 1) misuse of the heart; 2) subjection to the heart 3) resistance of the heart's pernicious influence:

I give away my heart (II) → 1  
my weak and sickly heart (IV) → 2

64 Significantly, an early draft of this stanza reads "That weak unfaithful heart of thine" (*P*, p. 585).

65 A. Kenny, *God and Two Poets. Arthur Hugh Clough and Gerard Manley Hopkins*, cit., p. 28 interestingly notes that the word heart occurs forty times in *Ambarvalia* as the most common noun in the collection.

So constant as my heart would be, / So fickle as it must, (V) → 2  
With qualms of vague misgiving in my heart (VI) → 2  
the cowardly heart (IX) → 3

The images of resurrection and renewal in the following stanza are the external signs of a divine force that lies ‘beyond’ the limited scope of the subject and moves through all things:

One power too is it, who doth give  
The food without us, and within  
The strength that makes it nutritive:  
He bids the dry bones rise and live,  
And e’en in hearts depraved to sin,  
Some sudden, gracious influence  
May give the long-lost good again,  
And wake within the dormant sense  
And love of good; – for mortal men,  
So but thou strive, thou soon shalt see  
Defeat itself is victory. (*P*, p. 33)

The metrical underpinning of the assertive trochaics of the opening syllables and the sustained regularity of the iambs in the first syllables of the following eight lines reinforce the solemn rhetoric of a confident faith in lieu of the speaker’s past emotional volatility, as he now adopts the tone of a confident and benevolent preacher<sup>66</sup>. However, despite the irrevocably triumphant paradox of the culminating line (“Death itself is victory”), he seems only too ready to dissociate himself from any facile optimism and the poem concludes with a chain of negative particles the effect of which debilitates his newly aroused assurance:

So be it: yet, O Good and Great,  
In whom in this bedarkened state  
I fain am struggling to believe,  
Let me not ever cease to grieve,  
Nor lose the consciousness of ill

66 J. Keble, *op. cit.*, pp. 56–7, for a similar evocation of revived spiritual awakening within a dreary landscape with the heart as ‘protagonist’ can be seen in Keble’s “Third Sunday After Epiphany”: “Light flashes in the gloomiest sky, / And Music in the dullest plain, / For there the lark is soaring high / Over her flat and leafless reign, / And chanting in so blithe a tone, / It shames the weary heart to feel itself alone.”

Within me; – and refusing still  
 To recognise in things around,  
 What cannot truly there be found,  
 Let me not feel, nor it be true,  
 That while each daily task I do  
 I still am giving day by day  
 My precious things within away,  
 (Those Thou didst give to keep as thine)  
 And casting, do whate'er I may,  
 My heavenly pearls to earthly swine. (*P*, p. 33, underling mine)

It is no accident that the lexeme *yet* recurs five times in the poem as a linguistic trait of the speaker's double-mindedness. The awkward subordinate clauses, while contrasting with the syntactic cohesion of the previous stanza, also belie any notion that his acknowledgement of the forces of evil be a sign of muscular Christianity. Indeed, his dread at the possibility of squandering his "heavenly pearls" is merely the flip side of the lack of self-confidence he betrays in his earlier coveting of the 'fruits' received from others.

The dialogical circularity of *Blank Misgivings* is the symptom of a moral impasse. Thus, whilst the final section leaves the alternative course of surrender to a higher order an open question, it simultaneously confirms the speaker's psychological impressionability. Section X, which was drafted in two different moments in Clough's 1841 Oxford diary<sup>67</sup>, reflects diametrically opposing states. It is one of his most well known early poems and has often been anthologised independently from the sequence. The first three stanzas, written on May 16, dramatise the quandary of the speaker's recurrent lapses into sin:

I have seen higher, holier things than these,  
 And therefore must to these refuse my heart,  
 Yet, am I panting for a little ease;  
 I'll take and so depart.

67 *OD*, pp. 165 and 183. The first two lines of stanza I read: "I have seen higher heavenlier things than these / Therefore to these I may not give my heart", whilst the only other significant variation is "memories" for "visions" in stanza II. The other variation of note is in line three of stanza V: "What God allows thee be content to love". It is conspicuous that the final version contains no such explicit references to God.

Ah, hold! The heart is prone to fall away,  
Her high and cherished visions to forget,  
And if thou takest, how wilt thou repay  
So vast, so dread a debt?

How will the heart, which now thou trustest, then  
Corrupt, yet in corruption mindful yet,  
Turn with sharp stings upon itself! Again,  
Bethink thee of the debt! (*P*, pp. 33–4)

The tight stanza form of section X, with its three iambic pentameters and concluding iambic trimeter in alternating rhyme, assumes a control that vies with the turmoil of the self-argumentative dialogue. As in section III, the main thematic elements of the sequence are re-proposed in synopsis: the struggle to resist the temptations of the heart, the premature awareness of the consequences of sinful conduct, the speaker's moral debt towards others and the mental fracture of a stasis that is the symptom of his moral lethargy. Although the dialogical confrontation is characterised by a mental clarity that indicates the transcendence of emotional instability, the speaker's psychological condition remains one of indecision (thus, the silencing of the voice of temptation in the first line of stanza II). In passing, the same direct speech phrase appears in the following verses from Keble's *Second Sunday After Epiphany*:<sup>68</sup>

The heart of childhood is all mirth:  
We frolic to and fro  
As free and blithe, as if on earth  
Were no such thing as woe.

But if indeed with reckless faith  
We trust the flattering voice,  
Which whispers, "Take thy fill ere death,  
Indulge thee and rejoice [...]"

Their contrasting depiction of childhood aside, the same egotism underlies the attitude of the counter-voices in both poems as well as their offhand references to death (literally in Keble, figuratively in Clough). In Clough's poem, however, the literal definition of "depart" recalls the speaker's evasion of earthly responsibilities and is thematically linked

68 J. Keble, *op. cit.*, p. 52.



to the question of his moral debts which, rather than being confronted in a spirit of Christian humility are viewed with guilt and terror. In his sermon “Faith and Obedience”, Newman denounces the attitude of moral impasse that is at the very core of this dilemma:

When, then, a man complains of his hardness of heart or weakness of purpose, let him see to it whether this complaint is more than a mere pretence to quiet his conscience, which is frightened at his putting off repentance; or, again, more than a mere idle word, said half in jest and half in compunction. But, should he be earnest in his complaint, then let him consider he has no need to complain. Every thing is plain and easy to the earnest; it is the double-minded who find difficulties<sup>69</sup>.

Clough’s readings of Newman brought home the quandary of his own position, in which epistemological doubts engendered a ‘double-mindedness’ which ran contrary to the simple, unproblematic belief in a superior being. At the same time, the struggle between the speaker and his heart is resolved by rendering the latter the scapegoat for a sensibility loath to acknowledge total responsibility in terms of an ironic worldview that will become a hallmark of Clough’s mature verse.

On a macro-textual level, the final two stanzas of section X, (written six months later on November 13), liberate the dialogical discourse of *Blank Misgivings* from its vicious circularity through the intransigent tones of a counter-voice which seeks to override tortuous self-conflict and doubt by counselling a faithful obedience to a superior force:

– Hast thou seen higher, holier things than these,  
And therefore must to these thy heart refuse?  
With the true best, alack, how ill agrees  
That best that thou wouldst choose!

The summum Pulchrum rests in heaven above;  
Do thou, as best thou may’st, thy duty do:  
Amid the things allowed thee live and love;  
Some day thou shalt it view. (*P*, p. 34)

The spiritual apathy which dominates *Blank Misgivings* is suddenly replaced by a call for positive action, qualified by a serene confidence in its heavenly rewards. That this can only be affected through a process

69 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, cit., p. 36–7.

of humility is evidenced in a descending scale of virtues: “true best” → “best that thou wouldst choose” → “best thou may’st thy duty do”. The exercise of virtue is also necessarily upheld by the idea of confinement and prohibition (“the things allowed”), whilst, on an existential level, the predicament outlined in section V (“A spot whereon in toil and strife / To dare to rest and love”) is here resolved by the active verbs “live and love”. Yet it also cannot go unnoticed that the insertion of the Latin phrase “Summum Pulchrum” bestows an ironic ‘sanctification’ on the finale of Clough’s poem, since its implicit allusion to an ecclesiastical hierarchy in which English is subordinate to Latin, highlights a linguistic distance that is symptomatic of the gulf separating the speaker from heavenly grace. Indeed, it is not Clough’s aim in *Blank Misgivings* to offer a chronology of the journey of the Christian soul from sin to virtue since the temporal dimension of the whole sequence is marked by the circular repetition of sinful behaviour. The alternative view sees the individual’s progression towards God as being possible only through an obstinate and unquestioning pursuit of faith, as in Arnold’s stern Anglicanism and Newman’s uncompromising Catholicism. Yet neither could satisfy his spiritual needs because they failed to relate to the real world. The quarrel between Arnold and Newman emblematically underlined the arbitrary nature of religious systems and the absurdity of their divisions. It is a sign of Clough’s unease with both orthodox religion and conventional thinking and his tendency towards self-analysis and speculation, that he corroborates the ambiguities and indecisions that pervade *Blank Misgivings* by forfeiting artistic consolation for a more uncomfortable truth.

## Chapter 3

### A Questioning Spirit

*We are most hopeless who had once most hope,  
We are most wretched that had most believed.*  
(‘Easter Day’)

#### 3.1 *The New Sinai*

Clough’s religious crisis came to a head with his rejection of the Thirty-Nine Articles<sup>1</sup>. Although subscription to them was tacitly regarded as a formal gesture<sup>2</sup>, his over-earnest nature typically magnified the importance of the pledge. In a letter to John Gell dated October 8, 1843, he even refers to the Articles as “a bondage, and a very heavy one that may cramp one and cripple one for life”, and indicated (albeit evasively) that his aversion to signing them was due: “[...] not so much from any definite objection to this or that point as general dislike to Subscription” (*C*, p. 124)<sup>3</sup>. This moral anxiety led to a four-year long epistolary exchange (from 1844 to 1848) with the Provost responsible

- 1 It was an obligatory procedure to renew one’s pledge to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church in order to pursue an M.A. degree. Clough was obliged to subscribe to the Articles ex-novo after being appointed as Fellow and Tutor at Oriel in 1843.
- 2 See R. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, p. 38, who notes: “One might compare the level of hypocrisy involved in nodding assent to that of a republican standing up for ‘God Save the Queen’.
- 3 J. Schad, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–30 acutely observes that: “For Clough, the problem of the signature is almost pathological – to sign, he feels, would entail an acute and recurring physical handicap, or burden; it would be (to echo the proverb) a cross to bear.”

for his positions at Oriel, Edward Hawkins<sup>4</sup>. Ironically, Hawkins would reproach Clough for the one feature so vital to his perspective on religious matters: “In truth you were not born for speculation. I am not saying a word against full and fair enquiry. But we are sent into this world not so much to speculate as to serve God and serve man” (C, I, 165). For Clough, however, speculation and service were not mutually exclusive but essentially interrelated activities in his quest for religious truth<sup>5</sup>. In spite of Hawkins’ well-meaning attempts to win him over, Clough finally announced his refusal to subscribe to the articles in no equivocal terms in October 1848: “I am going to ask you to accept my resignation as Fellow. I do not feel my position tenable in any way. I can have nothing whatever to do with a subscription to the xxxix articles – and deeply repent of having ever submitted to one.” (C, I, p. 219). As if to dash any remaining hopes the patient Provost may have fostered, Clough sent him a final letter on 3 March 1849 which comprised an enthusiastic overview of contemporary religious criticism:

A book just published by a friend of mine, Froude, once of Oriel afterwards of Exeter, contains a good deal of what I imagine pervades the young world in general, though at Oxford there is great apathy and incuriousness, to the best of my observation, among undergraduates and even bachelors. Elsewhere I think there is a general feeling that Miracles are poor proofs. The doctrine must prove them, not they the Doctrine. Can we be sure that anything is a miracle? [...] Again books like Strauss’s life of Jesus have disturbed the historical foundations of Christianity. And people ask further what has History to do with religion? The worth of such a doctrine as that of the Holy Ghost as the Lord and Giver of Spiritual life is intelligible: but what is the value of biographical facts? – External Evidence is slighted: but I think the great query is rather as to the *internal* Evidence. Is Xtianity really so much better than Mohometanism, Buddhism (a more extensive faith) or the old heathen philosophy? (C, I, p. 249).

Clough’s keen response to the German Bible critics of the Tübingen School and his identification with the young intellectuals described by

4 Hawkins had also been responsible for promoting Thomas Arnold’s candidacy as headmaster at Rugby.

5 The conservative attitudes of churchmen such as Hawkins is satirised in Clough’s unfinished poem “I Dreamed a Dream”: “Religion rests on evidence of course, / And on inquiry we must put no force” (P, p. 372).

Froude in his notorious novel *The Nemesis of Faith*<sup>6</sup> indicate the direction towards which his religious questionings were swinging. Moreover, reading George Eliot's translation of Strauss's seminal text<sup>7</sup>, which resolved to destroy "the antiquated systems of supranaturalism and naturalism"<sup>8</sup> through a demythologisation of the Gospels, brought home the idea of religion as a symbolic truth overriding blind obedience to human institutions<sup>9</sup>.

Consequently, in his poetry, Clough began to integrate the effects of the new scholarship within a framework grounded on the re-interpretation of Christian values. For example, *Epi-Strauss-ion* (1847), begins with a dramatic announcement of the fate of the four Gospels ("Matthew and Mark and Luke and holy John / Evanished all and gone!" *P*, 163) and goes on to suggest that, however half-heartedly contemporary criticism appears to 'illuminate' the Christian message, its ultimate

- 6 J. A.. Froude, *The Nemesis of Faith*, London, John Chapman, 1849, p. 8: "unable to escape from themselves into healthy activity: because they want the strength to carve out their own independent road, and the beaten roads offend their sensibility". Froude's novel was publicly burnt in Exeter College as a result of which he was forced to resign his tutorship.
- 7 As translator of Strauss' text, she appears under her real name, Marian Evans.
- 8 David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, New York Calvin Blanchard, 1856 (2 vols.), Vol 1, p. 3.
- 9 E.B. Greenberger, *op. cit.*, p. 38 rightly points out Ward's contribution "in eradicating from Clough's mind the notion that history could be used to prove the truth about Christianity." L. Strachey, *op. cit.*, p. 158 refers to the fact that Thomas Arnold himself adopted an approach of free inquiry with the scriptures: "He was not afraid of facing apparent difficulties, of admitting inconsistencies, or even errors, in the sacred text". Admittedly, Arnold's individual interpretations and 'interferences' were designed to clarify and enhance the messages of the Bible, rather than undermine them. Strachey goes on to say that Arnold had "held up to scorn and execration Strauss's 'Leben Jesu' without reading it" (p. 159). This impression is confirmed by a comment Arnold makes in a letter to Chevalier Bunsen in October 1836: "What a strange work Strauss's *Leben Jesu* appears to me, judging of it from the notices in the *Studien und Kritiken*" (p. 290). A similar attempt to reaffirm the basic tenets of Christianity whilst discarding its elements of miracle and prophecy can be seen in Charles Hennell, *An Enquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, London, T. Allman, 1841, p. 488: "Let not, then, the mind which is compelled to renounce its belief in miraculous revelations deem itself bound to throw aside, at the same time, all its most cherished associations".

sincerity will be more enlightening to the Christian soul than a merely blind belief:

Are, say you, Matthew Mark and Luke and holy John?  
Lost is it? Lost to be recovered never?  
However,  
The place of worship the meantime with light  
Is, if less richly, more sincerely bright,  
And in blue skies the Orb is manifest to sight. (*P*, p. 163)

The erratic irregularity of the metre betrays the speaker's restless urge to press the question of insistent pursuit for the truth onto the reader, whilst the perfect regularity of the final hexameter summons a vision of spiritual enlightenment that, on a semantic level, is envisaged as a distant dream<sup>10</sup>. A similar attempt to transcend the barriers of deception that lie before the individual soul can already be seen in an earlier poem, *Salsetta and Elephanta*<sup>11</sup>(1838), which presents Buddhism and Hinduism as corrupted versions of an original message<sup>12</sup>:

Methought beneath these storied roofs there lay  
Dim recollections of a holier day  
[...]  
And from afar some rays of glory shine,  
And faintly gleams primeval Truth divine". (*P*, pp. 142–3)

By assigning the sources of these two religious expressions to the a-historical dimension of a "primeval truth divine", Clough insists on a fundamental mystery that, by implication, surpasses all orthodox forms of worship (Christianity included). Therefore, granted its temporally

10 See Charles LaPorte, *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible*, Virginia, University of Virginia Press, 2011 pp. 115–118 for a sensitive comment of the poem. LaPorte rightly observes that the poem is an early testimony of Clough's search "for ways to reconcile the higher criticism with his culture's religious heritage" (p. 115).

11 Written for a verse competition organised by the University, it was judged unfavourably and the winning prize went to John Ruskin.

12 Matthew Arnold later also accosts Hindu, Muslim and Christian thought in "Resignation" in which he advocates the values of Hindu detachment as reflected in the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. See Renzo D'Agnillo, *The Poetry of Matthew Arnold*, Roma, Aracne, 2005, pp. 35–7.

remote origin, true enlightenment can only be obtained through persistent philosophical inquiry. In spite of his relative disinterest in Oriental wisdom<sup>13</sup> (unlike his friend Matthew Arnold) the following words from *The Bhagavad Gita* may be seen as an apt summation of Clough's moral and aesthetic position: "A constant yearning to know the inner Spirit, and a vision of Truth which gives liberation: this is true wisdom leading to vision. All against this is ignorance"<sup>14</sup>. This condition of suspended judgement is candidly described in a letter to his sister Anne in May 1847:

I should say, Until I know, I will wait: and if I am not born with the power to discover, I will do what I can, with the knowledge I have; trust to God's justice; And neither pretend to know, nor without knowing, pretend to embrace: nor yet oppose those who by whatever means are increasing or trying to increase knowledge. (C, I, p. 182)

Clough's choice of direction was by no means prudent in an age in which, as J.W. Burrow points out, "[T]he unbeliever was regarded with much the same kind of horror as the Jesuit, as a subverter of society" and unbelief was almost universally judged to be not only indicative of moral laxity, but a sin. By cutting himself off from the protective and powerful milieu of Oxford, Clough was now forced to seek a living in a wider, less amicable world. It is also important to remember that not until a decade later, with the writings of T.H. Huxley and his coinage of the term 'agnosticism', was such an inquiring attitude regarded as intellectually acceptable<sup>15</sup>. Clough would have fully sympathised with such modern formulations as the following, with its blend of respect for the

13 Cf. Park Honan, *Matthew Arnold. A Life*, Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 99.

14 *The Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Juan Mascaró with an introduction by Simon Brodbeck, London, Penguin, 2003 (1962), p. 63.

15 See also J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, London, Penguin, 1974 (1859), p. 95. Although Mill's work appeared over ten years later, the following words are an appropriate summation of the conflicting climate in which Clough pursued his intellectual speculations: "No one can be a great thinker who does not recognize that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself than by the true opinion of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think."

Christian tradition and recognition of its obsolete elements: “Christianity is only a chapter in the perennial human quest for meaning, a current in the sea of evolving human consciousness, another attempt at articulating the timeless Gnosis towards which mystics have reached from the most ancient of days”<sup>16</sup>. However these observations were made in 1999 and, even so, by no means reflect the opinions of millions of Christian believers today.

Clough’s determination to follow his “own independent road” was additionally prompted by a growing restlessness with the orthodox thinking he had whole-heartedly endorsed at Rugby and Oxford. What passed as religious faith seemed all too often a mark of selfishness and weakness rather than selfless subservience: “[...] we attach ourselves to that which so far as we know is inadequate, by an arbitrary assumption in the one case of *pride*, in the other of *cowardice*” (emphasis mine)<sup>17</sup> As a result, his intellectual speculations ran athwart Tractarian principles<sup>18</sup> as well as the anti-rationalist stance of Rugby School. His challenge of Literalist Christian thought even bypassed the rationalistic stance of German biblical criticism in the search for a more profound spiritual enlightenment:

But I cannot feel sure that a man may not have all that is important in Christianity even if he does not so much as know that Jesus of Nazareth existed And I do not think that doubts respecting the facts related in the Gospels need give us much trouble [...] The thing which men must work at, will not be critical questions about the scriptures, but philosophical problems of Grace and Free Will, and of Redemption as an Idea, not as an historical event. What is the meaning of ‘Atonement by a crucified Saviour’? – How many of the Evangelicals can answer that? (C, 149).

It was precisely through such a metaphysical stripping of the layers of self-deceit that encourage the implementation of religious creeds that Clough hoped to discern the authentic core of religious truth within the buried self. In his poetry, this ontological shift is evidenced in his abandonment of lyrical subjectivism for an objective (and dramatic)

16 Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries*, London, Thorsons, 1999, p. 309.

17 A. Kenny (ed.), *The Oxford Diaries of Arthur Hugh Clough*, *cit.*, p. 215.

18 Cf. Francis W. Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 214.



confrontation of multiple viewpoints, as the wistful melancholy of his early conventionally romantic-oriented verse is replaced by an assertive, satirical mode underscored by a “muscular syntax”<sup>19</sup> reminiscent of the satirical works of Dryden, Pope, Cowper and Crabbe. Clough’s insistence on uncertainty and contradiction, at the cost of ontological stability, represents the distinctive prerequisite for “a criticism of life [...] penetrating in its exposure of shams and hypocrisies”<sup>20</sup>. Thomas Hardy’s famous line: “if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst”<sup>21</sup>, could be no less applicable to Clough whose epistemological speculations are characterised by a similar “full look” into the manifold aspects of human experience.

Whilst testifying to his pursuit for religious truth, *The Questioning Spirit*<sup>22</sup> (1847) exemplifies the kind of changes evidenced in the transition from the conventional sentimentality of Clough’s adolescent verses to the poetical representation of unresolved dialectical tensions that typify the epistemological inquiry behind his mature works:

The human spirits saw I on a day,  
Sitting and looking each a different way;  
And hardly tasking, subtly questioning,  
Another spirit went round the ring  
To each and each: and as he ceased his say,  
Each after each, I heard them singly sing,

19 Frederick Bowers, “Arthur Hugh Clough: The Modern Mind”, *Studies in English Literature*, Autumn, Vol. VI, 1966, p. 715.

20 K. Chorley, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

21 Thomas Hardy, *The Complete Poems*, ed. James Gibson, London, Macmillan, 1991 (1976), p. 168.

22 The poem, which opens Clough’s section of contributions to *Ambarvalia*, also draws on a tradition of escapist poetry, including Tennyson’s “The Lotus Eaters” and Thomson’s “The Castle of Indolence”. The latter, in particular, describes a similar resistance to spirits of ‘unrest’: A pleasing Land of Drowsyhed it was: / Of Dreams that wave before the half-shut Eye; / And of gay Castles in the Clouds that pass, / For ever flushing round a Summer-Sky: / There eke the soft Delights, that witchingly / Instil a wanton Sweetness through the Breast, / And the calm Pleasures always hover’d nigh; / But whate’er smack’d of Noyance, or Unrest, / Was far, far off expell’d from this delicious Nest”. *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems*, ed. James Sambrook, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 176.

Some querulously high, some softly, sadly low,  
We know not, – what avails to know?  
We know not, – wherefore need we know? (*P*, p. 3)

It is instantly perceivable that Clough attenuates the subjective intensity of his earlier poems by presenting the speaker as an objective observer of the scene whilst delegating his religious preoccupations to a third figure (precisely, the questioning spirit). This apparent detachment heightens the ironic effect since the latter's taunting<sup>23</sup> only falls on the flat ears of the other spirits who, in their apathetic complacency, refuse to listen to his irksome interrogations:

Does thou not know that these things only seem?–  
I know not, let me dream my dream.  
Are dust and ashes fit to make a treasure?–  
I know not, let me take my pleasure.  
What shall avail the knowledge thou hast sought?–  
I know not, let me think my thought.  
What is the end of strife?–  
I know not, let me live my life [...] (*P*, p. 3)

Unable to penetrate the existential insularity of the human spirits<sup>24</sup> who can only repeat the same vacuous replies, the questioning spirit eventually settles down to occupy his own place, though not without revindicating the importance of his self-search:

- 23 A. Kenny, *God and Two Poets*, cit., p. 28, suggests that Clough uses the term 'spirit' for both the questioner and the questioned to indicate the fact that they represent "the human psyche which concerns itself with ideals or ultimate goals". However, this explanation ignores the distinction made in the poem between the questioning spirit and the other human spirits.
- 24 A similar sense of alienation is dramatised in the opening description of Arnold's poem "To Marguerite-Continued": "Yes! In the sea of life enisled,/With echoing straits between us thrown./Dotting the shoreless watery wild,/We mortal millions live alone", K. Allot, ed. *op cit.*, p. 130. Arnold himself found the poem unsuccessful and told Clough in so many words in a letter written in early December 1847: "This is the worst of the allegorical – it instantly involves you in the unnecessary – and the unnecessary is necessarily unpoetical". *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. and Introduction Howard Foster Lowry, Oxford, Clarendon, 1968 (1932), p. 60.

I also know not, and need not know,  
Only with questionings pass I to and fro,  
Perplexing these that sleep, and in their folly  
Imbreeding doubt and sceptic melancholy;  
Till that, their dreams deserting, they with me,  
Come all to this true ignorance and thee (*P*, p. 4.).

The questioning spirit's determination to confront ontological uncertainty and cognitive fallibility not only goes against the grain of complacent nineteenth-century empiricism. Clough is also denouncing a general human tendency to accept cultural and religious precepts at face value. For the human spirits would rather remain with their comfortable delusions than be perplexed by truths only conceivable through the prickly prospect of self-interrogation, with the niggling doubts and scepticism involved<sup>25</sup>. However, for Clough, for whom it is imperative that as these real truths lie beyond the scope of man's teleological and intellectual assumptions, the latter must be continually challenged.

*The New Sinai*, composed two years earlier, explores, on a more comprehensive level, the clash between unquestioned idolatry and scientific atheism. The title refers to the *Exodus* story of Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai<sup>26</sup> and his reception and translation of the ten commandments. The significance of this poem in Clough's oeuvre was not lost on his first critic who considers it "a high water-mark of religious thought in England"<sup>27</sup>. Indeed, *The New Sinai* draws its strength precisely from the uncertainty and disorientation produced by its rational scepticism. The first verse anticipates the poem's itinerary from superstitious worship to the quest for authentic spiritual enlightenment:

Lo, here is God, and there is God!  
Believe it not, O man;  
In such vain sort to this and that  
The ancient heathen ran;  
Though old Religion shake her head,

25 See Paul Veyviras, *Arthur Hugh Clough*, Paris, Didier, 1964, p. 247 for a comparison between Clough's poem and Tennyson's lotus-eaters, especially in terms of rhythm: "C'est un rythme souple, insidieux, image de cet abandon auquel refusent de se livrer les deux poètes".

26 *Exodus*, 19–20.

27 S. Waddington, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

And say, in bitter grief,  
The day behold, at first foretold,  
Of atheist unbelief;  
Take better part, with manly heart,  
Thine adult spirit can;  
Receive it not, believe it not,  
Believe it not, O Man! (*P*, p. 17)

The speaker's simultaneous warnings against blind adulation and atheistic pessimism point to a mental and moral slackness inherent in man's tendency to unquestioningly accept pronouncements based on hearsay:

As men at dead of night awaked  
With cries, 'The king is here,'  
Rush forth and greet whome'er they meet,  
Whoe'er shall first appear;  
And still repeat, to all the street,  
'tis he, – the king is here;  
The long procession moveth on,  
Each nobler form they see,  
With changeful suit they still salute,  
And cry, 'tis he, 'tis he!

So, even so, when men were young,  
And earth and heaven was new,  
And His immediate presence He  
From human hearts withdrew,  
The soul perplexed and daily vexed  
With sensuous False and True,  
Amazed, bereaved, no less believed,  
And fain would see Him too:  
'He is!' The prophet tongues proclaimed;  
In joy and hasty fear,  
'He is!' aloud replied the crowd  
'Is here, and here, and here.'

'He is! They are!' in distance seen  
On yon Olympus high,  
In those Avernian woods abide,  
And walk this azure sky:  
'They are! They are!' to every show  
Its eyes the baby turned,  
And blazes sacrificial, tall,

On thousand alters burned:  
'They are! They are!' – On Sinai's top  
Far seen the lightnings shone,  
The thunder broke, a trumpet spoke,  
And God said, 'I am One' (*P*, pp. 17–18).

Just as the news of the king's arrival is erroneously transmitted through word of mouth by men as they greet one another on the street, so is the existence of a deity itself the product of an excited rumour to appease man's "perplexed and daily vexed soul". The reiterated exclamation "They are" in the third stanza culminates in God's explicit declaration ('I am one'). Yet, this element of distinction is, in turn, belied by the fact that there only follow: "unheeding ages" and that "baby-thoughts again, again / Have dogged the growing man [...]" (*P*, p. 18). Clough's oblique reference to the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians ("When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things"<sup>28</sup>) undermines its primal significance in which childish thoughts are seen as surpassed, by insisting, on the contrary, that man has fundamentally remained in a spiritually child-like state. From the pagan gods of Ancient Greece of Mount Olympus to the Christian God of Mount Sinai, men have only been able to 'manufacture' fallacies based on their own stories. In this sense, the advent of science becomes just another form of religion to replace the rationalist suppositions of the classical age:

By science strict *so speaks He now*  
*To tell us, there is None!*  
Earth goes by chemic forces; Heaven's  
A *Mécanique Céleste!*  
And heart and mind of human kind  
A watch-work as the rest! (*P*, p. 18, italics mine)

The lexical opposition *none/one* does not detract from the fact that 'none' both negates and comprises 'one'. Thus, although God is made to paradoxically disclose his own non-existence, thereby reinforcing the refutation of his autonomy expressed in the first part of the poem, the second part readjusts this stance to advance an idea of God as a work

in progress. Clough's citation of the French mathematician and astronomer Pierre-Simon de Laplace's *Mécanique Céleste*, is intentionally tongue-in-cheek. Laplace's study of the mechanisms that govern the solar system was a pioneering work which had inaugurated the shift in his field from classical to modern science<sup>29</sup>. However, for Clough, this apparent advancement in the field of knowledge has only depressingly reduced all life to a mechanical process and is, for all its discoveries, no less an unreliable source in mankind's search for the true voice of God:

Is this a Voice, as was the voice  
Whose speaking told abroad,  
When thunder pealed, and mountain reeled,  
The ancient Truth of God?  
Ah, not the Voice; 'tis but the cloud,  
The outer darkness dense,  
Whose image none, nor e'er was seen  
Similitude of sense.  
'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense,  
That wrapt the Mount around;  
While in amaze the people stays,  
To hear the Coming Sound. (*P*, p. 18)<sup>30</sup>

On one level, this stanza is based on the verses in Exodus in which God tells Moses: "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever"<sup>31</sup>. On another, the speaker once more demythologises the spiritual symbolism of the biblical account with a materialistic re-interpretation of the natural elements which negates the euphoric function of the sky as "the ideal space where the voice of man's spiritual yearnings can best be heard"<sup>32</sup> ("Ah, not the Voice; 'tis but the cloud, / The outer darkness dense"), to create,

- 29 Laplace was also one of the first scientists to suggest the existence of black holes.
- 30 An earlier version of the stanza begins with an interrogation: "Is there no prophet-soul the while / To dare, sublimely meek, / Within the shroud of blackest cloud / The Deity to seek?" *Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, London Macmillan and co., Limited, 1898, p. 83.
- 31 Exodus, 19:9.
- 32 Francesco Marroni, *Victorian Disharmonies: A Reconsideration of Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Cranbury NJ, The University of Delaware Press, 2010, p. 35. See also the following pages (35–42) for a fascinating discussion of the interpretative valence of nephelometry and cloud morphology in the visions of

in a series of compact lexical repetitions revolving around the opposing paradigms VOICE / CLOUD, a phenomenological confusion in which spiritual loss is conveyed through the implicit allusion to the physical and moral degradation of the industrial cityscape.

The lyrical voice is collocated at a subtle intersection point in the poem. On the one hand, dictating the problematic discourse of the conflict between belief and non-belief from an omniscient level, on the other, engaging in the poem intradiegetically by invoking a new Moses-figure:

Some chosen prophet-soul the while  
Shall dare, sublimely meek,  
Within the shroud of blackest cloud  
The Deity to seek:  
'Midst atheistic systems dark,  
And darker hearts' despair,  
That soul has heard perchance His word  
And on the dusky air  
His skirts, as passed He by, to see  
Hath strained on their behalf,  
Who on the plain, with dance amain,  
Adore the Golden Calf. (*P*, pp. 18–19)

The transmutation of the “thick cloud” of the Exodus story into the “blackest cloud” of “atheistic systems dark” underlines the arduousness of the new-prophet’s search. Nevertheless, the very fact that the speaker summons such a figure is indicative of an inability to completely rid himself of the notion of God. For although Clough decries the biblical story as fiction, he is unable to debunk the idea of religious faith altogether: “Though blank the tale it tells, / No God, no Truth! Yet He, in sooth, / Is there, – within it dwells [...]” (*P*, p. 19). Indeed, the final section of the poem with its dramatic exhortation (“[...] ah, wait in faith / God’s self-completing plan; / Receive it not, but leave it not, / And wait it out, O man” (*P*, p. 19), subverts its initially atheistic pronouncements for a partial acknowledgement of God’s existence.

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social and spiritual harmony and disharmony in Gaskell, Dickens, Hopkins, Carlyle and Ruskin.

### 3.2 *The Mystery of the Fall*

Clough's rejection of orthodox religion as a means of discovering cognitively unfathomable truths (or "true ignorance") leads to a quest for spiritual enlightenment conducted by self-analysis and philosophical contemplation. In opposition to theologically-inspired works of the time such as *Lyra Apostolica*, or Keble's *Christian Year*, his religious poetry is undercut by a critical questioning of the very foundations of Christianity. In his unfinished dramatic poem, *The Mystery of the Fall*<sup>33</sup>, written while he was still contemplating resignation from his Oriel fellowship, he provides his own provocative interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, through what Biswas has described as "the multiple, refracted, frequently introverted perspectives of a form which exists between lyric and drama"<sup>34</sup>. Clough's multifaceted approach is symptomatic of his secular reading of the myth of Original Sin and the debate surrounding its metaphysical dilemmas. As he writes in "Notes on the Religious Tradition": "It may be true that man has fallen, though Adam and Eve are legendary"<sup>35</sup>. The conspicuous absence of God renders absolute the metaphysical isolation of Adam and Eve as, already outcast from the Garden of Eden at the beginning of the poem, they engage in a mutually incomprehensible dialogue on the existential<sup>36</sup> consequences of their fate<sup>37</sup>. In spite of its incomplete form, the fourteen sections of

33 The poem is Clough's first important long poem. Written during 1840 and left untitled, it is one of a series based on the narratives of the *Book of Genesis*. Although generally known as "The Mystery of the Fall", "Adam and Eve" is the title used by Clough's wife and Matthew Arnold. See *P*, p. 663: "The scattered scenes or fragments were "pieced together in 1869 from four MS. Notebooks and from separate MS. Sheets."

34 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

35 Buckner B. Trawick (ed), *Selected Prose Works of Arthur Hugh Clough*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1964, p. 291.

36 To be more precise, Clough's Adam is a proto-existentialist. As J. Schad, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–3, rightly warns: "We must [...] be careful since full-blown Existentialism, the French Existentialism of the late 1940s and 50s is thoroughly atheist." Still, there is no doubt that much of Clough's poetry is pervaded by anticipations of such existential notions.

37 W. Harris, *Arthur Hugh Clough*, New York, Twayne Publishers, inc. 1970 pp. 99–100, observes: "Clough's Adam and Eve employ quite sophisticated theological



*The Mystery of the Fall* follow a chronological three-part sequence, faithful in outline to the biblical story: the aftermath of Original Sin; Cain's killing of Abel and Cain's departure into the world<sup>38</sup>. The poem is characterised throughout by an unresolved tension which centres upon Adam who, as Clough's first double-minded character, is not only coeval with early nineteenth-century religious scepticism but also echoes many of the poet's own spiritual qualms.

Adam's brash self-confidence and colloquial energy dominates the opening scene of the drama as he counters Eve's grief over their banishment from Eden with casual indifference:

*Adam.* Since that last evening we have fallen indeed!  
Yes, we have fallen, my Eve! O yes! –  
One, two, three, and four; – the Appetite,  
The enjoyment, the aftervoid, the thinking of it- (*P*, p. 165)

Eve, whose distress in the first scene prevents her from uttering little more than one-line lamentations, manifests the traditional view of their guilt, dogmatically pursuing a Tractarian-line of atonement through prayer and ritual. Adam, on the other hand, derides the idea that they have been condemned to eternal punishment and views the outcome of their action as a natural course<sup>39</sup>: “[...] it was to be done [...] That which we were we could no more remain”, *P*, p. 165). For Adam, Eve's story “Of the serpent, and the apple and the curse” is nothing more than the “Fondest of dreams and cloudiest of clouds” (*P*, p. 166). His sense

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concepts for beings who have so newly begun to vex themselves with religious controversy. It is likely that such anachronisms as their implied familiarity with the doctrine of the elect is intended to remind the reader that all theological systems take their rise in the attempt to solve the eternal enigmas that would have suggested themselves even to the first man and woman”

38 In spite of its theme, Clough's poem owes almost nothing to *Paradise Lost* and his Adam and Eve, unlike Milton's biblically-oriented reconstructions, are personal interpretations voicing contemporary dilemmas.

39 G. P. Johari, “Arthur Hugh Clough at Oriel and at University Hall”, *PMLA*, June, 1951, p. 419: “It will be seen that Adam and Cain typify the masculine principle of reason, which refuses to take things on trust or to accept a pre-ordained scheme of things [...] Eve and Abel typify the feminine principle of faith, or of the sinfulness and imperfection of man, and the need to surrender ourselves to God in all humility and repentance.

of the Fall as a dimly recollected dream is an interesting metaphor of psychological displacement, undermining the self-assurance of a rationalistic approach which can only attribute a literal interpretation to the act of eating an apple. This explains his blasphemous denial of God's condemnation in a speech replete with negations and implicit mockery of biblical exegesis:

What!  
Because I plucked an apple from a twig  
Be damned to death eterne! Parted from Good,  
Enchained to ill! No, by the God of Gods,  
No, by the living will within my breast,  
It cannot be, and shall not; and if this,  
This guilt of your distracted fantasy,  
Be our experiment's sum, thank God for guilt,  
Which makes me free! (*P*, p. 165)

Besides underlining the emotional force of Adam's argument, the emphatic stresses on "twig" and "eterne" rhetorically foreground his feigned wonderment at the dire metaphysical consequences of man's condemnation. However, Adam's over-simplistic interpretation of the Fall as a non-event is short-lived and in his subsequent discourses he wavers nervously between an acknowledgement of its actual occurrence and evaluation of its symbolic significance. His ironic description of Eve's dream, for example, plays down the importance of the events surrounding the Fall by relating them in terms of a retrogressive temporal sequence:

So as our nightly journey *we began*,  
Because the autumnal fruitage that *had fallen*  
From trees whereunder we *had slept*, lay thick,  
And we *had eaten* overnight, and seen,  
And *saw again* by starlight when you woke me,  
A sly and harmless snake glide by our couch;  
And because, *some few hours before*, a *lamb*  
*Fell* from a rock and broke its neck [...] (*P*, pp. 166–7, emphases mine)

By contrast, in his third reference to the Fall, Adam initially appears sympathetic to Eve's dream, recognising it as: "[...] the dream of both/No dream but dread reality [...]" (*P*, p. 167). But this moment of

imaginative involvement proves equally brief since his fear of eternal condemnation is over-powered by the urge to carry out his own pragmatic vision on earth (““Work and live!””*P*, p. 168). In scene IV he again reverts to provocatively recounting the story of the Fall to Eve by rote:

*Adam.* What is it then you wish me to subscribe to?  
That in a garden we were put by God,  
Allowed to eat of all the trees but one;  
Somehow – I don’t know how – a serpent tempted,  
And eat we did, and so were doomed to die;  
Whereas before we were meant to live for ever. (*P*, p. 174)

Eve’s understanding of the events in Eden hinges on her interpretation of their central symbols: “I still must think / Of Paradise, and of the stately tree / Which in the middle of the garden grew, / The Golden fruit that hung upon its boughs, / Of which but once we ate” (*P*, p. 174). As she recalls God’s words of prohibition, Adam insists on an anti-mythical reading of the event: “God does not speak to human minds / In that unmeaning arbitrary way” (*P*, p. 174). This agnostic view of God as an inner voice of the individual conscience is antithetic to the traditional Christian concept of an external deity:

*Adam.* God’s Voice is of the heart: I do not say  
All voices, therefore, of the heart are God’s;  
And to discern the Voice amidst the voices  
Is that hard task, my love, that we are born to. (*P*, p. 175)

Adam’s final allusion to the Fall is an attempt to appease Cain’s guilt after his slaying of Abel:

*Cain.* This is the history then, my father, is it?  
This is the perfect whole?  
*Adam.* My son, it is.  
And whether a dream, and, if it were a dream,  
A transcript of an inward spiritual fact  
(As you suggest, and I allow, might be),  
Not the less true because it was a dream.  
I know not, O my Cain, I cannot tell,  
But in my soul I think it was a dream,  
And but a dream; a thing, whence e’er it came,  
To be forgotten and considered not. (*P*, p. 182)

This self-contradictory speech, with its syntactic hesitations and verbal repetitions (the five times repeated ‘dream’ alone suggests a desperate attempt at self-conviction) exposes the extent of Adam’s uncertainty<sup>40</sup> every time he is forced to confront the issue of Original Sin. In spite of the apparent self-confidence of his assertions, his conscience still occupies a borderline state between the God-dependant dream-world of the Garden of Eden and a new world in which he feels obliged to exert his own will and self-dependence.

Adam’s soliloquy in scene II undoubtedly contains the most explicit indication of his ontologically schizophrenic personality:

Misery, oh my misery! O God, God!  
How could I ever, ever, could I do it?  
Whither am I come? where am I? O me, miserable!  
My God, my God that I were back with Thee!  
O fool! O fool! O irretrievable act!

Irretrievable what, I should like to know?  
What act, I wonder? What is it I mean?-

O heaven! the spirit holds me; I must yield;  
Up in the air he lifts me, casts me down;  
I writhe in vain, with limbs convulsed, in the void.  
Well, well! Go idle words, babble your will;  
I think the fit will leave me, ere I die. (*P*, p. 168–9)

The extreme shifts of linguistic register – underlined in his agonising interrogations on the one hand, and bemused rhetorical questions on the other – enact a tension between the lyrical and satirical poles of Clough’s poetical spectrum. At the same time, the incorporation of different linguistic codes effectively conveys the simultaneous self-consciousness and emotionalism of Adam’s re-evocation of the scene in the Garden of Eden:

His tread is in the garden! hither it comes!  
Hide us, O bushes, And ye thick trees, hide!  
He comes on, on. Alack, and all these leaves,

40 Interestingly, in this case, it is Cain who offers the suggestion that the Fall may be the “transcript of an inward spiritual fact”, whilst Adam seems loath to invest it with any special significance.

These petty, quivering and illusive blinds,  
Avail us nought: the light comes in and in,  
Displays us to ourselves; displays, ah, shame,  
Unto the inquisitive day our nakedness.  
He comes. He calls. The large eye of His truth,  
His full, severe, all-comprehending view  
Fixes itself upon our guiltiness. (*P*, p. 169)

It may be no accident that Clough tends to reserve the melodramatic, pseudo-romantic language reminiscent of his undergraduate poetry for Adam's guilt-ridden speeches. Thus, once he reverts to rational thinking, the almost comical deflation to a prosaic discourse is not without its intention of self-parody:

What is all this about, I wonder now?  
Yet I am better, too – I think it will pass.  
'Tis going now, unless it comes again;  
A terrible possession while it lasts;  
Terrible, surely; and yet indeed 'tis true  
E'en in my utmost impotence I find  
A fount of strange persistence in my soul;  
Also, and that perchance is stranger still,  
A wakeful, changeless touchstone in my brain,  
Receiving, noting, testing all the while  
These passing, curious, new phenomena [...] (*P*, p. 169)

With a detached self-analysis lacking in the speaker of *Blank Misgivings*, Adam provides a lucid outline of the contrasting forces of flux and constancy that typify the existential manifestations of the superficial and buried self. Hovering between incredulity and the desire to believe<sup>41</sup>, agnostic man senses that the dilemmas of his spiritual traumas may be empirically resolved: "Though tortured in the crucible I lie, / Myself my own experiment [...]" (*P*, p. 169). Indeed, through access to knowledge the individual soul is able not only to discover his real self but, in doing so, become God-like:

41 The recurrent recourse to the dream element emphasises Clough's intention to represent the Fall as an event recurring within man's consciousness rather than a referential world.

I or a something that is I indeed,  
A living, central, and more inmost I  
Within the scales of mere exterior me's,  
I – seem eternal, O thou God, as Thou;  
Have knowledge of the Evil and the Good,  
Superior in a higher Good to both [...] (*P*, p. 169)

In spite of the fact that Adam's fleeting perceptions of divine truth allow him to intuit the existence of an integral, buried self beneath his superficial fragmented self, his lack of faith in a transcendental reality ultimately excludes him from this dimension. Clough provides a delightful moment of sardonic humour as Adam, in his despondency, chauvinistically places the blame of his shortcomings upon Eve:

Really now, had I only time and space,  
And were not troubled with this wife of mine,  
And the necessity of meat and drink,  
I really do believe,  
With time and space and proper quietude,  
I could resolve the problem on my brain. (*P*, p. 170)

The stiff formality and tortuous syntactic inversions of Adam's prayer to God, with which this speech concludes, underline his embarrassing estrangement from his maker:

[...] O thou Power unseen,  
In whom we live and move and have our being,  
Let it not perish; grant, unlost, unhurt,  
In long transmission, this rich atom some day,  
In some futurity of distant years –  
How many thou intend'st to have I know not-  
In some matured and procreant human brain may  
Germinate, burst, and rise into a tree. (*P*, p. 170)

Although Adam himself has no hope in salvation from the empirical perspective of his faith in historical progress (and, by implication, his denial of the timelessness of divine truth), he gauges that it may be granted to a future 'perfected' generation. In this sense, the conflict between Cain and Abel, which occupies scenes V to XIII, is dramatically highlighted as a cruel ironic response to Adam's faithful presage. More significantly, the brothers represent an extension of the estrangement

between Adam and Eve, with Cain following in the footsteps of his father's secular pragmatism and Abel embracing his mother's obsessive religiousness. Their mutual hostility is further underlined by the absence of dialogical exchanges. Granted the fragmentary nature of the poem, Clough's dramatisation of the story of Cain and Abel is a masterpiece of psychological intensity, all the more intensified by Adam's various admonishments to the members of his family: first to Eve, from putting her "strange whim and misconstruction" into her sons' minds (*P*, p. 76); second to Cain, from striking his brother for fear of the "heavy curse" (*P*, p. 176) that will befall them, and finally to Abel to avoid provoking Cain's anger (*P*, p. 176). Adam's warnings are an ironic replication of God's prohibition in the Garden of Eden, since having disobeyed God himself, his attempt to forestall the knowledge of sin from being passed on to his sons is inevitably futile.

Appropriately – since it is his contempt for Cain that triggers the latter's anger – scene VI opens with Abel's self-righteous rant against his profane father and brother:

*Abel.*            At times I could believe  
My father is no better than his son:  
If not as overbearing, proud and hard,  
Yet prayerless, worldly almost more than Cain.  
Enlighten and convert him ere the end,  
My God! spurn not my mother's prayers and mine.  
Since I was born, was I not left to Thee,  
In an unspiritual and godless house  
Unfathered and unbrothered – (*P*, p. 176)

After his initial condemnation, Abel's soliloquy drifts into a rhetorical accumulation of negative adjectives and inversions which echo the self-contradictory pronouncements of his father. His lexical repetitions and convoluted syntax are also reminiscent of the most dramatically self-conflicting moments in *Blank Misgivings*:

Am I not feeding spiritual pride,  
Rejoicing over sinners inelect  
And unadmitted to the fellowship  
Which I, unworthy, most unworthy, share?  
What can I do – how can I help it then?

O God, remove it from my heart – pluck out,  
Whatever pain, whatever [wrench] to me,  
these sinful roots and remnants, which whate'er  
I do, how high so e'er I soar from earth  
Still, undestroyed, still germinate within. (*P*, p. 177)

However, Abel's double-sidedness is distinguishable from that of Adam. For, although his prayer is motivated by a quasi-evangelical fear of the consequences of his sin – in contrast with the artificially loquacious rhetoric of his father's address to God – it is underscored by a sincere struggle to come to terms with his own limitations.

In contrast to his brother, Cain follows Adam's alternative path in seeking Truth in the world of action. His opening soliloquy is a purely mono-referential discourse expressing a wild desire to unleash the darkest forces of his individual nature:

Uncontrollable angers take the waves  
Of my deep soul and sweep them, who knows whither  
And a strange impulse, struggling to the truth,  
Urges me onward to put forth my strength,  
No matter how. (*P*, p. 178)

Cain's indifference towards moral discrimination (“[...] to be able to do this or that / Seems cause enough, without a cause for doing it” *P*, p. 178) finds a contrary response in Abel's maniacal distinction between sin and virtue (“In my repentance I have joy, such joy / That almost I could sin for it” *P*, p. 177). As a result, both brothers bear the guilt for taking the mutual hostility of their parents to their logical destructive conclusion: Abel kills Cain figuratively, just as Cain kills Abel literally. Given the intellectual emphasis on the poem as a dramatic debate, Clough deliberately draws the attention away from the act of the killing to focus on its psychological impact on Cain. His first response of astonishment at the ease with which he has performed the deed brings him a new knowledge<sup>42</sup>:

What? Fallen? so quickly down, so easily felled,  
And so completely? Why, he does not move [...]   
Dead is it then? O wonderful! O strange!

42 Cf. R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 258.



Dead! dead! And we can slay each other then?  
If we are wronged, why we can right ourselves;  
If we are plagued and pestered with a fool  
That will not let us be, nor leave us room  
To do our will and shape our path in peace,  
We can be rid of him [...] (*P*, p. 179)

As John Schad observes, “Faced by the world’s very first corpse, Cain neither weeps nor laughs, instead he simply reasons, he draws on the resources of logic.”<sup>43</sup> And his cold-hearted reasoning over the consequences of his action culminates in the bitter disappointment that it was not hard-earned: “He should have writhed and wrestled in my arms, / And all but overcome, and set his knee / Hard on my chest [...] But he went down at once, without a word, / Almost without a look” (*P*. p. 179). From the elliptic phrases of his wonderment to the co-ordinate clause of his logical deduction, Cain arrives at a post-orgasmic state of dejection that leaves no room for triumph but only brings home the horror of his violent act. The broken, irregular lines of his discourse, with its haunting rhetorical questions that culminate in his painful remorse, parallel Adam’s self-conflicting account of the Fall in scene II<sup>44</sup>:

Ah, hush! My God,  
Who was it spoke, what is this questioner?  
Who was it asked me where my brother is?  
Ha, ha! Was I his keeper? I know not.  
[...]  
My God!- it will not be at peace – my God!  
It flames, it bursts to fury in my soul.  
What is it I have done? – Almighty God!  
What is it that will come of this? Ah me!  
I see it, I behold it as it is,  
As it will be in all the times to come:  
Slaughter on slaughter, blood for blood, and death,  
For ever, ever, evermore!  
And all for what?  
O Abel, brother mine,  
Where’er thou art, more happy far than me! (*P*, p. 180)

43 J. Schad, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–4.

44 Genesis 4 9–10: “And the Lord said unto Cain, where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Cain does not equate the inner voice of his conscience with God (his desperate invocations are merely expletives). Indeed, he is, appropriately, the only character who never directly addresses his maker. Furthermore, he does not share the comforting illusions of his father's mundane faith in "Time and great Nature" (*P*, p. 184) that heals all, and can only envision a nightmarish expansion of his evil act on a universal level. In spite of his bitter self-reproach, Cain becomes inflated with a perverse pride at his mythical status that carries no remorse: "Alas! I am not of that pious kind, / Who, when the blot has fallen upon their life, / Can look to heaven and think it white again" (*P*, p. 183). With no faith in transcendental ethics his trust can only lie with the empirical laws of the physical world where: "To lose with time the sense of what we did / Cancels not that we did" (*P*, p. 184). There is a certain poetic justice behind this vindication of his deed since, as Chorley has rightly observed, repentance would only entail a denial of action, for, having killed his brother, he has now "released himself from the passive, undifferentiated life of ordinary men"<sup>45</sup>. With a sidelong glance at Arnold and Newman, Clough draws the line between Cain's fondness for and dependence upon his own intellectual 'hero', with his realisation that to continue to be led by him after his destructive act of self-assertion and to seek to atone for Abel's murder would be akin to denying the reality of his own self: "That which I did, I did, I who am here: / There is no safety but in this; and when / I shall deny the thing that I have done, / I am a dream" (*P*, p. 185). The positivist work ethic that is Adam's *raison d'être* becomes, in Cain, an uncompromising form of metaphysical adversity.

On one level, the concluding scene of the poem may be read as an ironic response to Adam's optimistic prophecy to Cain: "Much is now dark which one day will be light" (*P*, p. 185). Far from projecting a dream of regeneration or illumination, "Adam's vision"<sup>46</sup> is a disturbing discourse in which images of formlessness and disintegration nullify

45 K. Chorley, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

46 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 262 suggests the speech may belong with the biblical poems of 1850–1. Yet, in spite of its distant tone and the "evasive consolations of the last five lines", the speech is not only consonant with the character of Adam, but its images of nullification and fluidity are functional to the indeterminateness of the poem in general.

the values of pragmatism and labour that characterise the principles of his earthly existence. Furthermore, the very nature of Adam's vision is problematic:

O Cain, the words of Adam must be said;  
Come near and hear your father's words, my son.  
I have been in the spirit, as they call it.  
Or dreaming, which is, as others say, the same. (*P*, p. 186)

His earlier dismissal of dreams as the "cloudiest of clouds" is contradicted by his claim to have received a spiritual revelation, although, of course, it is nothing of the kind. Moreover, there is no suggestion that Cain, to whom Adam addresses his speech, is present – a factor which only underlines the impossibility of forgiveness. Adam, the anti-hero of *The Mystery of the Fall*, who embodies several of Clough's own religious qualms, remains, significantly, alone, the sole witness of a vision he can share with no-one. His opening description of the three family members framed as in an artwork, is indicative of his self-conscious awareness of their mythical importance and his own need for fixity and permanence:

I sat, and you were with me, Cain, and Eve  
(We sat as in a picture people sit,  
Great figures, silent, with their place content);  
And Abel came and took your hand, my son,  
And wept and kissed you, saying, 'Forgive me, Cain.  
Ah me! my brother, sad has been thy life,  
For my sake, all through me – how foolishly;  
Because we knew not both of us were right;'  
And you embraced and wept, and we too wept. (*P*, p. 186)

The recurrent lexemes *sat* and *wept* recall the verse from Psalms: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion"<sup>47</sup> and the scene is pervaded by the same painful nostalgia for a lost promised land that can no longer be celebrated. The apparent discrepancy between the silence and contentment of Adam, Cain and Eve in the first three lines, and their subsequent sorrow and weeping at Abel's appearance anticipates the convulsive nature of the rest of Adam's soliloquy. In the reconciliation scene between Cain and

47 Psalm 137:1.

Abel, it is Abel who acknowledges co-responsibility for his own murder precisely because, as Adam himself had forewarned, it was his hostility and superiority which goaded Cain into performing his evil act in the first place. It is therefore sufficient for Cain to express his grief in order to be fully expiated for his sin. However, the vision of harmonious reunification is immediately replaced by the sudden disappearances of Cain and Abel:

Then I beheld through eyes with tears suffused,  
And deemed at first 'twas blindness thence ensuing;  
Abel was gone, and you were gone, my son –  
Gone, and yet not gone; yea, I seemed to see  
The decomposing of those coloured lines  
Which we called you, their fusion into one,  
And therewithal their vanishing and end. (*P*, p. 186)

From this point until the end of his soliloquy, Adam is trapped in a vortex of ontological confusion as the coordinates of existence and non-existence become blurred: “Gone, and yet not gone [...] I was alone, yet not alone [...] As at the first; and yet not wholly [...] I slept, / I did not dream” (*P*, p. 186). Consequently, no sooner does he describe the forms of Cain, Abel and Eve vanishing into a cosmic void, than he feels himself a part of the same phenomenon: “This fusion, and mutation and return, / Seemed in my substance working too” (*P*, p. 186). The stress is on *seemed*, given the indeterminate nature of Adam’s discourse in which nothing can be clearly fixed or defined. In the metaphysical angst of his state of constant flux, Adam’s perception of God ambiguously oscillates between unquestioned acknowledgement and essential disbelief:

Though lacking knowledge alway, lacking faith  
Sometimes, and hope; with no sure trust in ought  
Except a kind of impetus within,  
Whose sole credentials were that of trust itself [...] (*P*, p. 187)

Whilst *Blank Misgivings* concludes with a tentative hope in heavenly salvation through positive action, *The Mystery of the Fall* ends with Adam’s assertion of his earthly self: “Life has been beautiful to me, my son, / And I, if I am called, will come again” (*P*, p. 187). Through

the turmoil of his delirious discourse, Clough symbolically destroys the fixed order of the old world-view of traditional Christianity to leave a *tabula rasa* upon which to re-compose a true religious sense that lies at once within and beyond the individual. Adam may remain the victim of his own empiricism, but Clough continues to adopt the same approach as the fundamental guiding principle of his own spiritual search.

### 3.3 *Easter Day I and II*

Whilst *The Mystery of the Fall* problematises the concept of Original Sin as the foundation of mankind's metaphysical dilemma, in *Easter Day* (1849) Clough lays bare for the first time in a subjective lyrical poem the religious scepticism that becomes the central outlook of his mature works. The poem may be described as a disconcerting exposé of the fiction of "Atonement" by a crucified Saviour" in a poetic language that provocatively subverts the prime message of the Bible<sup>48</sup>. Yet, embedded within its critique, is an attempt to recuperate the core values of the Christian faith through a positivist evaluation of the metaphorical significance of the most powerful message in the Gospel<sup>49</sup>.

Despite its division into two separate sections, a close reading reveals that, far from being, what one critic has described "complementary

48 A. Kenny, *God and Two Poets – Arthur Hugh Clough and Gerard Manley Hopkins*, cit., p. 89. The speaker's retention of capitals, at the same time, (Christ, Him, His, Holy, One) suggests, on the one hand, the power of convention on a linguistic level that he is unable to relinquish and, on another, a means of undermining the figure of Christ even more.

49 Clough's unfinished poem "I Dreamed a Dream" confronts the same theme of the Resurrection in a more biting satirical manner. In the opening lines, Jesus is seen sitting "Upon a stone that was not rolled aside" and later claims to the incredulous apostles "I am that Jesus whom they slew / Whom ye have preached, but in what way I know not" (*P*, pp. 370–1). Clough vents some of his harshest scorn against the church whose exploitation of the myth is seen in terms of economic profit: "And dignitaries of the Church came by. / It had been worth to some of them, they said, / Some £100,000 a year a head" (*P*, p. 372).

contributions to a positive religious approach”<sup>50</sup>, *Easter Day I* and *II* trace a psychological trajectory in which an initial rejection of the facile or supernatural elements of religious convention is ultimately undercut by a reaffirmation of Christian ethics. The opening lines immediately establish the uncompromising discourse of the speaker who, alone and far from home, is forced to confront the reality of his loss of faith:

Through the great sinful streets of Naples as I past,  
With fiercer heat than flamed above my head  
My heart was hot within me; till at last  
My brain was lightened, when my tongue had said

Christ is not risen!

Christ is not risen, no,  
He lies and moulders low;  
Christ is not risen. (*P*, p. 199)

Lines 3 and 4 contain direct references to Psalm 39:3: “My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue”. Ironically, the biblical passage opens: “I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue [...]” whilst Clough’s poem proceeds with a positivist (i.e. ‘sinful’) denial of Christ’s physical resurrection that is reiterated throughout *Easter Day I* in the refrain “Christ is not risen”. Yet, at the same time, a tension is established throughout in which the almost rampant metrical variations vie with lexical repetition to highlight the clash between the aspirations of the spirit and the flesh. Syllabic irregularity in particular (the hexameter of the first line anticipating the form of Clough’s two most important works) becomes intrinsically functional to the dominant tone of emotional anguish that runs throughout the poem produced by the systematic refutation of the veracity of the biblical events pertaining to the Resurrection myth<sup>51</sup>:

50 M. Timko, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

51 The speaker’s other references are contained in the following lines: “What if the women, ere the dawn was grey,/Saw one or more great angels, as they say,/Angles, or Him himself? [...] nor at all/Hath He appeared to Peter or the Ten/Nor, save in thunderous terror, to blind Saul [...] // what if e’en, as runs the tale, the Ten/Saw, heard, and touched again [...] // What if at Emmaüs’ inn and by Capernaum’s lake/

What *though* the stone were rolled away, and *though*  
     The grave found empty *there!* –  
     If not *there*, then *elsewhere*;  
 If not *where* Joseph *laid Him* first, why then  
     Where other men  
*Translaid Him* after; in some humbler *clay*  
     Long ere to-*day*  
 Corruption that sad perfect work hath *done*,  
 Which here she scarcely, lightly had *begun*.  
     The foul engendered *worm*  
 Feeds on the flesh of the life-giving *form*  
 Of our most Holy and Anointed *One*. (*P*, p. 199)

Clough's rhetorical strategies draw on hauntingly insistent lexical echoes, internal rhyme and closely knit rhyme sequences, verging on monorhyme, to create an escalation of 'shocking' realisations that culminate, each time, with the same desolate pronouncement. The reversal of religiously symbolic values and biblical references is conspicuous. Thus, for instance, the story of Jesus' entombment by Joseph of Arimathea (narrated in all four of the gospels) is replaced by a more discrete burial by "other men [...] in some humbler clay", and the 'sacrilegious' image of "[T]he 'foul engendered worm' which 'Feeds on the flesh of the life-giving form / Of our most Holy and Anointed One'" (*P*, p. 199), has an effect of incongruity through its intermeshing of sacred/profane elements in which all possibility of eternal life is negated. The Anglican burial service formula based on Genesis<sup>52</sup>, consequently becomes the reiterated death knell not only for Christ, but for Christianity itself:

    Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;  
 As of the unjust, also of the just –  
     Christ is not risen. (*P*, p. 199)

Besides Clough's deconstruction of the Gospels<sup>53</sup>, the poem proceeds to reduce the whole episode of the Resurrection to a question of rumour

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Came One the bread that brake./Came one that spake as never mortal spake [...]" (*P*, p. 200).

52 *Genesis* 3:19," [...] for dust thou *art*, and unto dust thou shalt return".

53 Clough's reading of Strauss is clearly behind this process. See D.S. Strauss, *op. cit.*, Vol. 11, pp. 809–93. In his conclusion to the conflicting and contradictory accounts of the resurrection in the gospels Strauss comments: "[...] nothing but

as opposed to historical fact. If Newman is able to confidently assert the undoubted historical veracity of the Resurrection when he states in his sermon “The Resurrection of the Body” that its witnesses were “few in number” precisely “because they were on the side of Truth”<sup>54</sup>, Clough can only query the premises on which that historical ‘truth’ is grounded:

As circulates in some great city crowd  
A rumour changeful, vague, importunate, and loud,  
From no determined centre, or of fact,  
Or authorship exact,  
Which no man can deny  
Nor verify;  
So spread the wondrous fame;  
He all the same  
Lay senseless mouldering low.  
He was not risen, no,  
Christ was not risen! (*P*, p. 200)

The suspicion that the Resurrection is in reality the product of a false rumour becomes tenable once its fixed points of reference are logically seen as bogus. Just like any story recounted, the message has been altered from its original telling. Yet, the story’s persuasive power lies precisely in the fact that it occupies a grey area between fantasy and reality since it can neither be verified nor doubted. The shocking realisation that the most powerful message in the Gospel may constitute nothing more than an unsubstantiated myth in which Christians have, incredibly, invested all their spiritual energies may be sober in its rationality, but it carries no joy of discovery: “We are most hopeless who had once most hope / We are most wretched that had most believed” (*P*, p. 201). Far from offering humankind hope of eternal salvation, the Christian message of the Resurrection, because it had fostered so much expectation, flounders abysmally into a cruel deception in which justice is negated to both “good and bad alike” (*P*, p. 201). All that remains, for the speaker, is the prospect of an earthly existence of which heaven

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wilful blindness can prevent the perception that no one of the narrators knew and presupposed what another records; that each again had heard a different account of the matter; and that consequently at an early period, there were current only uncertain and very varied reports concerning the appearances of the risen Jesus.”

54 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, cit., p. 288.



and hell are the mutually exclusive poles: “Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is bliss! / There is no Heaven but this / There is no Hell [...] – / Save Earth, which serves the purpose doubly well”<sup>55</sup> (*P*, p. 201). With sardonic irony the speaker incites the fictional protagonists of the Resurrection myth to desist from following Jesus and spreading his message:

Weep not beside the Tomb,  
Ye women, unto whom  
He was of great solace while ye tended him [...]  
And thou that bars't Him in thy Wondering Womb.  
Yea, Daughters of Jerusalem, depart,  
Bind up as best ye may your own sad bleeding heart;  
Go to your homes, your loving children tend,  
Your earthly spouses love

[...]

Ye men of Galilee!  
Why stand ye looking up to heaven, where Him ye ne'er may see,  
Neither ascending hence, nor hither returning again?  
Ye ignorant and idle fishermen!  
Hence to your huts and boats and inland native shore,  
And catch not men but fish [...] (*P*, p. 202)

The warning to pay no heed to such “an idle tale” (*P*, p. 202) extends to “good men of ages yet to be” (*P*, p. 202) and all clergymen who “would preach, because another heard” (*P*, p. 203). Undoubtedly, this outpouring of disillusion is fuelled by a pragmatic necessity to see into the nature of religious truth by means of first-hand experience and systematic observation rather than the a priori assumptions that, for Clough, typify conventional forms of religious belief.

*Easter Day II* is a continuation and modification of the thematic preoccupation of *Easter Day I*. The spatial-temporal coordinates of the sub-title (*Naples, 1849*) are immediately focalised in the circumstantial details of the opening sequence. These are elaborated in a series of

55 A reference to St Paul to the Corinthians, 1:15:32; “If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for Tomorrow we die.”

clauses (marked by the reiterated conjunction ‘so’) which syntactically delay the development of the main discourse:

So while the blear-eyed pimp beside me walked,  
And talked,  
For instance, of the beautiful danseuse,  
And ‘Eccellenza sure must see, if he would choose’  
Or of the lady in the green skirt there,  
Who passes by and bows with minx’s air,  
Or of the little thing not quite fifteen,  
Sicilian-born who surely should be seen.  
So while the blear-eyed pimp beside me walked  
And talked, and I too with fit answer talked,  
So in the sinful streets, abstracted and alone,  
I with my secret self held self-communing of my own.

So in the southern city spake the tongue  
Of one that somewhat overwildly sung;  
But in a later hour I sat and heard  
Another voice that spake, another graver word. (*P*, p. 203)

Clough’s decision to include the date in the title is significant. On an autobiographical level, 1849 was a key year, which saw not only his break with the ecclesiastical world of Oxford, but also a newly-discovered passion for political issues, particularly the republican revolutions that were taking place on the continent<sup>56</sup>. Spatially, the initially enigmatic description of “the great sinful streets of Naples” is also elucidated, becoming, on a figurative level, an extension of the speaker’s own sinful condition. His reference to the “fiercer heat” raging in his heart can now be disambiguated as an indication of sexual desire<sup>57</sup>. In this sense, his bitter declamations in *Easter Day I* become the symptoms of a guilty conscience that arises from his momentary encounter

56 Clough travelled to the continent in order to witness the republican revolutions of 1848–9.

57 The connection between eroticism and religion is not casual, as testified by Clough’s sacrilegious parody of the Vulgate text of the Apocalypse which is rife with sexual imagery. See A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet’s Life*, cit., pp. 122–3.

and complicit dialogue with the pimp<sup>58</sup> on the very holy day that celebrates the salvation of the Christian soul. More importantly, *Easter Day II* dramatises the speaker's awareness of an inner conflict between a self "that somewhat overwildly sung" and another "that spake, another graver word". The counter-reaction of resistance to this external pressure ("abstracted and alone") forces a re-consideration of the poem's initial hypothesis. As a result, the tragic denial of the Resurrection in *Easter Day I*, asserted by the first 'voice', is superseded by the second with a re-evaluation of its spiritual significance:

Hope conquers cowardice, joy grief:  
Or at the least, faith unbelief.  
    Though dead, not dead;  
    Not gone, though fled;  
    Not lost, not vanished.  
    In the great Gospel and true Creed,  
    He is yet risen indeed;  
    Christ is risen. (*P*, p. 204)

The insistence on Christ's physical death is now tempered by a simultaneous acceptance of the symbolic valence of the Resurrection in order to derive an important spiritual lesson from the myth. However, this realisation is not without its limitations as is revealed on a textual level. For by omitting the verb *conquers* – to avoid its repetition – in the second line of the final stanza, Clough juxtaposes the contrary nouns "faith unbelief" as if to suggest a progression that is the very inverse of his intended statement. Thus, in spite of the attempt to offer a positive resolution to the spiritual desolation of *Easter Day I*, *Easter Day II* concludes with a tangible sense of regret for the loss of a faith that can only be sustained by a blind acceptance of its religious myths and superstitions. Clough's ambivalence towards religious belief, although characteristic of several late-Victorian writers, was, as has already been commented, by no means widely manifested in the 1840s when such an attitude could only entail social exclusion, given the tight connection between the religious and social world. And whilst it may be true that the poem's ambivalence may speak powerfully to modern day believers

58 J. Schad, *op. cit.*, p. 12 sees the pimp as a Christ-like figure in accordance with Clough's "re-imagining the resurrection in non-transcendental, humanistic terms".

and non-believers alike<sup>59</sup>, for Clough, it was the sign of a spiritual irresolution which no aesthetic posturing could recompense. It also marks an ambiguity that becomes a hallmark of his mature work which conducts the reader into intriguingly complex territories.

59 Cf. A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet's Life*, cit., p. 184.

## Chapter 4

### Political and Satirical Verses

*A.H.C.*  
*Le citoyen malgré lui*<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4.1 Carlyle, Emerson and Republicanism

Between 1842–48 Clough’s attention increasingly shifted from the anxieties of his religious predicaments to the turbulent events of the national and international political scenario<sup>2</sup>. His discovery of Thomas Carlyle in 1839 was instrumental in shaping his awareness of the social inequality underlying Victorian capitalism and commerce which led to his sympathy for the Chartist cause in England and republican revolutions abroad. It was not until the Peel government’s debate over the Corn Laws in 1846, however, that Clough put pen to paper to publish six letter-articles in *The Balance*<sup>3</sup> which questioned the direction of the government’s proposed policies<sup>4</sup> and suggested corrective political-economic measures<sup>5</sup>. These articles, which demonstrate a realistic understanding of

1 C, I, p. 264.

2 This critical and eventful period included the reintroduction of income tax, Parliament’s rejection of the Second Chartist Petition, the Irish famine, food riots in England, the establishment of the Liberal Party and the republican revolutions on the continent.

3 *The Balance* was a liberal periodical with philanthropic views. It ran for only 20 issues. Clough’s interest in the Corn Laws can be traced back to June 1841 (see *OD*, p. 167).

4 B. B. Trawick, *op. cit.*, p. 211: “We use our arithmetic for moneygetting, but, without arithmetic, can we do justice? Even so with political economy: we may use it to get rich, we must use it to be honest”.

5 Although Clough’s political sympathies originally lay with the Whig party of Lord John Russell, he gradually became impatient with the essentially aristocratic

socio-economic realities, recognise the merits of luxury according to the different needs of each social class. But they also underline the necessity for a just distribution of wealth among the lower classes<sup>6</sup>. Clough's social denunciation was not solely directed at the government, however, but also extended to include the unwittingly hypocritical efforts of charity organisations to alleviate the suffering of the poor and needy, (one in which he himself was actively involved<sup>7</sup>). His lecture "A Consideration of Objections Against the Retrenchment Association at Oxford During the Irish Famine in 1847" begins with the pointed question: "Cannot we be temperate without joining a temperance society? Cannot we give alms without printing our names?"<sup>8</sup> – a disarming jibe at wealthy Oxford undergraduates who sought appeasement of conscience and approval through public donations. With self-righteous indignation, he appeals to the consciences of the privileged classes that he sees as being either too ignorant of or indifferent to the suffering and deprivation of their less fortunate fellow beings<sup>9</sup>. What lesson, he asks, can the wealthy classes pass on to a generation so mindless in its excess and superfluity?

Shall it say, your business as a member of the best part of the English nation is to entertain, to give good dinners, and see the world, to have houses larger than you want, servants more than you want, carriages more than you use, horses more than you have work for? Is this to be the talismanic tradition handed down from

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stance of the two major parties and his republican leanings and support for the Chartist cause reflected his optimism inspired by the continental revolutions during the years 1848–9. The four great interconnecting problems that hounded the governments of Robert Peel and John Russell were; free trade; the Condition of England question; the Irish famine and the international role of the British Empire.

- 6 B. B. Trawick, *op. cit.*, p. 212. "In this very corn-law subject now before the country, one question, it is true, is whether the nation will be richer; but another, most palpably more important, inquires, whether a part of the community be not receiving unfair wages".
- 7 On Clough's voluntary activity for the Oxford Mendicity Society see A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life*, cit., p. 77.
- 8 Blanche Smith Clough (ed), *Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, cit., p. 283.
- 9 Roma Notebook, p. 11 contains the following level-headed conception of charity: "In the matter of charity – if one is open handed, of course there is danger of men depending on it: But per contra there is such a thing as wise encouragement, & a stitch in time saving nine."

chivalrous days to the new generation; is this the torch of wisdom and honour which our feudal aristocracy transmits to the new one that succeeds it? Is this all which they can give us whose boast it is to belong to the historic being of England – to be the conducting medium through which the past sends its electric power into the present [...]”<sup>10</sup>

Significantly, there is no questioning of the hierarchical order in which the wealthy form “the best part of the English nation”. But it was precisely because their privileges came with moral responsibility that Clough denounced this blind pursuit of pleasure. His vehement outburst against the gross materialism of the age and rhetorical invocation of a past feudal order with which it is negatively assessed is drawn directly from Carlyle who had become, by this time, a crucial alternative model to Newman and Arnold. For Carlyle, the Victorian philosophy of *laissez-fair* capitalism was grounded in a concerted effort on the part of political and religious institutions to harbour the interests of the wealthy to the detriment of the lower classes. Moreover, this new order, based on the destruction of the old arrangement undermined the very spirit of truth<sup>11</sup>, its premise being precisely a “sorrowfulest disbelief that there is properly speaking any truth in the world; that the world was, has been or ever can be guided, except by simulation [...]”<sup>12</sup>. Clough was in complete sympathy with Carlyle’s disregard for teleological assumptions and his stress on the quest for truth through an intellectual self-enlightenment that would be the measure of a great social transformation<sup>13</sup>. Carlyle’s adamant conclusion in “Signs of the Times”: “[T]o reform a world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; and all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on *himself*”<sup>14</sup> is taken up in a central passage from

10 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

11 Clough read *On Chartism* in the year of its first publication in 1839.

12 *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, (30 vols.) London, Chapman and Hall, 1896, Vol. XXIX, p. 151.

13 *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, p. 77. Carlyle’s censure of the modern church as a pursuit for “profit, a working for wages; not reverence, but vulgar Hope or Fear” certainly found a corresponding response in Clough for whom the inability of religious establishments to reach out to the poor was a grave embarrassment.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 82. Carlyle’s italics.

*Sartor Resartus*, which may be seen as an appropriate summation of Clough's own spiritual and intellectual struggle:

To each is given a certain inward Talent, a certain outward Environment of Fortune; to each, by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum of Capability. *But the hardest problem were ever the first: to find by study of yourself, and ever the ground you stand on, what your combined inward and outward Capability specially is. For, alas, our young soul is all budding with Capabilities, and we see not yet which is the main and true one.* Always too the new man is, in a new time, under new Conditions; his course can be the fac-simile of no prior one, but is by its nature original. And then how seldom will the outward Capability fit the inward: though talented wonderfully enough, we are poor, unfriended, dyspeptical, bashful; nay, what is worse than all, we are foolish<sup>15</sup> (italics mine).

Clough not only replicates Carlyle's arguments in his own prose writings, but a good deal of the latter's fiery social satire feeds into his poetry. Nevertheless, despite the fact that, from a rhetorical-argumentative point of view, Carlyle had few peers, Clough lamented his failure to provide practical solutions to his forlorn depiction of contemporary society beyond a staunch advocating of duty and labour<sup>16</sup>. It was not until his encounter with the self-confident meliorist views of Ralph Waldo Emerson that he began to understand more clearly the limitations of Carlyle's position.

The pattern of Emerson's early life bears a strong resemblance to Clough's own. As a self-dependent, unorthodox thinker, he had also distanced himself from the conventional beliefs of the Church, eventually rejecting an ecclesiastical career to pursue a deeper line of spiritual and intellectual inquiry which developed into the transcendentalist philosophy that made him an internationally renowned figure. Clough's first

15 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 96.

16 One may recall his complaint to Emerson that "Carlyle has led us all out into the desert and he has left us there" See A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life*, cit. 130. See also M. Timko, *op. cit.*, p. 89. who rightly distinguishes the different emphasis the two writers placed on work: "[...] Clough does not put the stress on work per se, like Carlyle. He emphasizes the importance of working *for* others. Thus, he gives the notion an essentially Christian interpretation". This view of work as service to others, and ultimately to God, is borne out by Clough's various acts of charity, the most notable of which, his service to Florence Nightingale.



letter to him, dated November 26 1847, already invokes a familiarity that is an augury of their future friendship<sup>17</sup>:

Your name is not a thing unknown to us – *I do not say it would be a passport in a society fenced about by Church Articles*. But amongst the juniors there are many that have read and studied your books and not a few that have largely learnt from them, and would gladly welcome their author. (C, 186, italics mine)

Clough's readings of Emerson's essays *History* and *Self-Reliance* are recorded (significantly in French!) in his Oxford diary<sup>18</sup>. Although he adds no comments, he undoubtedly recognised in Emerson's combination of moral directive, intimate address and transcendental vision a sensibility and ethics akin to his own. Comparisons between the American philosopher's pragmatism and the fearless teachings of Clough's bemoaned Rugby headmaster<sup>19</sup>, not to mention his disparities with Carlyle, would also not have failed to escape him. For, unlike Carlyle, the predominant paradigm of Emerson's approach is one of positive faith in man's nobler aspirations and wonder at the endless possibilities open before him:

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the Genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark<sup>20</sup>.

Carlyle's belief in the importance of heroic figures in an age of faithlessness, as agents of Divine Providence and his essential mistrust of the masses is also antithetical to Emerson's progressive world-view in

17 Clough later introduced him to Matthew Arnold in London as well as Carlyle. See A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life*, cit., pp. 126–7.

18 *OD*, 181–2 where Clough notes reading both “History” and “Self-Reliance” between November 1–6 1841.

19 Coincidentally, Emerson had also worked as a schoolmaster.

20 *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, (2 Vols.) London, George Bell and Sons 1876, Vol. 1, p. 19.

which history is an aggregate of individual experience and genius a quality inherent in every man: “There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same”<sup>21</sup>. That Clough should have chosen to endorse Emerson’s ideas to a more exhaustive extent than the essentially aristocratic and conservative views of Carlyle<sup>22</sup> is axiomatic in view of his insistence on social morality, his sympathy with the common man and support of republicanism.

#### 4.2 Matthew Arnold: *Say Not The Struggle Nought Availeth*

Clough’s rejection of dogma and convention, his urge to transcend the narrow boundaries of a self-satisfied world that was hopelessly blind to the real problems of society, lead him to adopt an increasingly radical political position<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, the close friendships he cultivated during this period, notably with J. C. Shairp, Matthew and Tom Arnold and Theodore Walrond, provided him with a congenial platform upon which he could discuss or share his views. Meeting at breakfast every Sunday morning in Clough’s rooms the men would discuss Peel, Carlyle, Emerson, the Irish problem and George Sand who represented a new spirit of rebellion and with whom they shared “a subtle pleasure of feeling just a trifle wicked in reading”<sup>24</sup>. Clough maintained a life-long bond with Tom Arnold, but he also established one of the most important literary relationships of the Victorian period with his brother Matthew. Their friendship, marked by an alternation of mutual enthusiasm

21 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

22 E. B. Greenberger, *op. cit.*, p. 38, who recalls that “It was also Ward who contributed in eradicating from Clough’s mind the notion that history could be used to prove the truth about Christianity. History was to be used not to discover God, but Man”.

23 Clough’s disillusionment with both the Liberal and Conservative parties led to his sympathy for John Bright and the Radical Party’s attempts to impose reforms.

24 H.F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, p. 20 (Introduction).

and profound disagreement, is poignantly, (albeit falsely), represented in Arnold's *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis* and can be partially traced in Arnold's letters<sup>25</sup>. Whilst both writers concurred on fundamental issues; the essentially un-poetical nature of the age, the alienation of the poet in the Babel-like cultural confusion of Victorian society and the need for an objective mode to counter the excesses of subjectivism, their methods of overcoming these problematics revealed profound divergences in their aesthetics. Although they both conceived of poetry as a vehicle for exploring ideas through an investigation into the spiritual condition of the real, buried self, they differed fundamentally in their ways of accomplishing such a mission in their verse, Clough scorning Arnold's use of classical models and Arnold deriding what he called the "deficiency of the beautiful in your poems"<sup>26</sup>. He was particularly irritated by Clough's dealings with worldly matters: "[...] to solve the universe as you try to do is as irritating as Tennyson's dawdling with its painted shell is fatiguing to me to witness"<sup>27</sup> (Arnold's italics). Clough's irresolute temperament and apparent detachment from a cultural continuity with the great tradition of classical literature (a central factor in Arnold's verse) were at the centre of a rift that would never be completely healed<sup>28</sup>.

25 Unfortunately none of Clough's letters to Arnold have survived and one can only catch occasional glimpses of his point of view through references to Arnold in his letters to other correspondences.

26 H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

27 *Ibid*, p. 63.

28 It is not the purpose of the present study to examine in detail the conflicting, yet fascinating dialogue between Arnold and Clough which has been amply and variously discussed. The reader is directed to the following selective list of critical studies in chronological order: Stopford A. Brooke, *Four Poets: A Study of Clough, Arnold, Rossetti and Morris*, New York and London, G.P. Putnam's sons, 1908; Paul Turner, "'Dover Beach' and 'The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich'", *English Studies*, December, vol. 28, 1947; Buckner B. Trawick, "The Sea of Faith and the Battle by Night in 'Dover Beach'", *PMLA*, LXV, December, 1950; David Allan Robertson, Jr., "Dover Beach and 'Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth'", *PMLA*, December 1951 vol. LXVI; W. Stacy Johnson, "Parallel Imagery in Arnold and Clough", *English Studies*, vol. 37, 1956; Wendell V. Harris, *op. cit.*, ("Clough, Arnold and a Perspective" pp. 139–53); Dorothy Deering, "The Antithetical Poetics of Arnold and Clough", *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 16, 1978; Donald J. Weinstock, "Say we are not on a darkling plain': Clough's rejoinder to 'Dover Beach'", *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 19, 1981; Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*.

This ideological tension is particularly borne out in Clough's most well-known<sup>29</sup> and anthologised, albeit uncharacteristic poem, *Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth*:

Say not the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been, things remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;  
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,  
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back through creeks and inlets making  
Came, silent, flooding in, the main,

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright. (*P*, p. 206)

The poem was originally conceived after the failure of Mazzini's republic in 1849, and the optimism that drives its positive call to action contrasts with the indifference and cynicism towards the revolutionary struggle that pervades *Amours de Voyage*. On this level, *Say Not the Struggle* may be read as a disillusioned response to the thwarted attempt for national unity that underlay the republican cause. On another level, however, the double negatives with which the poem opens in medias res (“[...] not [...] nought [...]”) clearly indicate an ongoing argument between the speaker and an antagonistic voice that, from outside the poem, has expressed the impossibility of political change and social

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*Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, especially the chapters “Individualism Under Pressure”, “The Radical in Crisis” and “The Liberal in Crisis” pp. 165–231; Anthony H. Harrison, “Victorian Cultural Wars: Alexander Smith, Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold in 1853”, *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 42, 2004.

29 Winston Churchill used its final line in a 1941 war-time speech.

renewal<sup>30</sup>. As Isobel Armstrong notes: “‘Say not’ is Clough’s celebration of a hero’s ideal, and yet is rooted in common sense reality”<sup>31</sup>. For, Clough avoids the facile heroics of the “well-worn metaphor of battle”<sup>32</sup> by tempering the speaker’s confidence with a counter voice that is all too ready to offer a rebuttal to his remarks thereby creating a tension in the poem that is never completely dispelled. Furthermore, the fact that military imagery appears only in the first two stanzas and that Clough draws on no specific temporal-spatial coordinates that can be said to relate incontestably to the events of the republican revolution anywhere in the poem (unlike the later explicit historical references in *Amours de Voyage*) suggests a context in which the notion of battle and warfare has an essentially figurative valence. This becomes clearer when one considers the substantial alterations he made in the final version of the poem. The two most significant of these concern the last lines of the second and fourth stanzas which originally read: “E’en now upraise the victor cry” and “Behind you, look, the field is bright”<sup>33</sup> (*P*, p. 677). In the first case, the superfluous repetition of an augury of victory is substituted in the final version by an implicit moral accusation (“And, *but for you* possess the field”). The victory, no longer conceived in purely military terms, is achieved in spite of the addressee’s non-commitment and in the face of his destructively defeatist attitude. However impossible and obscure it may appear (“It may be in yon smoke concealed”) victory is possible through combined effort (though not thanks to the addressee who has become one of Emerson’s “cowards fleeing before a revolution”). In this sense the poem’s pressing need for renewal through action to counter the addressee’s passively fatalistic notion that “[...] as things have been, things remain” is all the more reinforced. It is not until the third stanza that Clough appears to initiate what appears to be a fascinating intertextual dialogue with Arnold’s most famous poem

30 See I. Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 194, who equates Clough’s poem with “its images of toil, light and growing possibility” with the “impersonal language of hope and Energy” of Chartist lyrics.

31 Isobel Armstrong, *Arthur Hugh Clough*, London, Longman’s Green & Co., 1962, p. 16.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

33 Roma Notebook, p. 13, has ‘field’ crossed out and ‘land’ written above it which suggests a sudden change of mind.

*Dover Beach*. Indeed, the first two lines: “For while the tired waves, vainly breaking, / Seem here no painful inch to gain,” are eerily reminiscent of the central stanza of Arnold’s poem in which the “sea of Faith” is described as having been:

[...] once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy long withdrawing roar,  
Retreating to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world<sup>34</sup>.

Clough’s ‘rejoinder’ represents a negation of this disconcerting night-time scene. First, the single verb “Seem” alone belies the veracity of the vision of dejection and hopelessness that dictates Arnold’s lines and second, the contrasting imagery of natural forces in the following two lines of Clough’s stanza: “Far back through creeks and inlets making / Came silent, flooding in, the main [...]” is confirmation, for the speaker, that man, like the unpredictable forces of nature, is capable of altering his own destiny. Whether or not Clough was aware of the existence of *Dover Beach* has been an object of critical speculation (Arnold’s poem was probably composed in 1851 but it was not published until 1867, six years after Clough’s death<sup>35</sup>). But this does not detract from the fact that such intertextual coincidences may be symptomatic of the intellectual dialogue that characterised their close-bond and that, familiar as they were of each other’s thoughts, common images and themes were inevitably picked up, consciously or sub-consciously and reworked into their verses. In the case of *Say Not the Struggle*, the alterations Clough made to accommodate his discourse to a dialogical confrontation with Arnold would have signified a deliberate diversion from the original theme of his poem (the republican revolution) since political action generally has no place in Arnold’s works, and is only alluded to cursorily in *Dover Beach* (it is certainly not the main topic of the poem). In this respect, the pragmatic optimism behind Clough’s description becomes his answer to Arnold’s evocation of spiritual aridity. Furthermore, the

34 Matthew Arnold, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth Allot, *cit.*, p. 256.

35 A draft of the poem appears in Clough’s 1849 Roma Notebook.

encroaching menace conveyed in the military disorder of the final lines of *Dover Beach* (“And we are here as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight / Where ignorant armies clash by night”<sup>36</sup>) has a cosmic valence that transcends earth-bound, temporal factors, whilst the positive radiance conveyed in the final line of Clough’s poem (which is void of any military connotation): “But westward, look, the land is bright”, confirms his faith in positive human action. Although *Say Not the Struggle* may not necessarily be a direct response to *Dover Beach*, as such, the fact that it does engage in a dialogical exchange with Arnold to the extent that it repudiates his essentially elitist and non-committed stance towards problems which, for Clough, were of utmost urgency is evident. This urgency is reflected in the metaphorical representation of the last line of Clough’s poem: “But westward, look, the land is bright”. For it is no accident that he places his hopes for the failed revolution in that “westward” direction which alludes, on a literal level, to America, the country of his childhood, of Emerson and political democracy.

#### 4.3 *Duty – that’s to say complying; The Latest Decalogue; Natura Naturans*

As a consequence of this cross-section of intellectual, political and philosophical influences, the works of Clough’s maturity cover a considerable epistemological and ontological range, underscored by stylistic and

36 *Ibid.*, p. 257. The image derives from the night battle scene in Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War. It is also used by Newman in his sermon “The Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason”. See John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Between 1826 and 1843*, London, Longmans, Green and Co, 1909, p. 201: “Controversy, at least in this age, does not lie between the hosts of heaven, Michael and his Angels on the one side, and the powers of evil on the other; but it is a sort of night battle, where each fights for himself, and friend and foe stand together. When men understand each other’s meaning, they see, for the most part, that controversy is either superfluous or homeless”.

prosodic features that signal a definite departure from his early verse. In his new poetics satire is increasingly adopted as a weapon to brandish against the oppressive forces of authority which, as he states in an essay on the topic, lead people to feel “engendered of love for truth and right, wearied and all but overcome in a world of falsehood and wrong [...]”<sup>37</sup>. Although his words refer to Imperial Rome, they are equally applicable to his own age. For the fact that nineteenth-century England exercised no less imperialistic control to preserve an unjust status quo was axiomatic to Clough. Nevertheless, his caution that satire is “rather adapted for temporary and transient than for unchanging and abiding purposes” and that as it “descends lower and lower in the regions of Comedy, the value of its moral effects becomes proportionally less and less”<sup>38</sup> is an ominous anticipation of a problematic feature of his own satirical works.

Strictly interrelated with Clough’s notion of comedy and satire is his detection of a democratic movement in language and his belief that poetic language must emerge from the living tissue of the spoken tongue (a view reminiscent of Wordsworth’s preface to *Lyrical Ballads*). However, whilst for Wordsworth, such a language may be seen as a given, for Clough, the linguistic intersection between its use and usage is an ongoing process that is far from complete:

We have something new to say but we do not know how to say it. The language has been popularised but has not yet vindicated itself from being vulgarised. A democratic revolution is effecting itself in it, without that aristocratic reconstruction that pertains to every good democratic revolution. Everybody can write, and nobody writes well. We can all speak, and none of us know how<sup>39</sup>.

The passage bristles with paradoxes (in what sense can language be popularised, yet require, at the same time, to be de-vulgarised? Is it not a contradiction in terms to achieve a process of linguistic democratisation through an “aristocratic reconstruction” of its elements? How can language be simultaneously popular yet inaccessible to its speakers?). Clough’s intention is to register what he sees as a yawning gap between use and usage that underlies the problem of reconciling the ‘formless’

37 B. B. Trawick (ed), *Selected Prose Works of Arthur Hugh Clough*, cit., p. 63.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6.



expression of spoken discourse with a ‘perfected’ written (i.e. poetic) form. Spoken language becomes the ideal vehicle for uniting “a manner suitable to our new matter”<sup>40</sup> since it is not “a copy of written words”<sup>41</sup>, but the manifestation of the needs of its living speakers. Satire plays an important role in Clough’s objective of giving a poetic form to spoken language whilst maintaining a necessary equilibrium between tradition and innovation, since it provides a means of expression that allows for a reinterpretation of values within an acknowledged conventional form that can, at the same time, be challenged. This dynamic lies at the heart of his own linguistic ‘democracy’. For the diachronic axis of Clough’s evaluation of language not only coincides with the synchronic dimension of his sense of its adaptability for poetic composition, but also for the very content that the language should reflect. To forge a language to express the concerns of everyday life that, in turn, reflects the eternal issues that lie at the heart of his search for truth. These key factors, the need for social justice and “a determined attempt to make poetry a vital source for good”<sup>42</sup>, are the driving forces behind the political and moral orientation of all the great poems of his maturity.

An early example of Clough’s satire is *Duty – that’s to say complying* (1840):

Duty – that’s to say complying  
With whate’er’s expected here;  
On your unknown cousin’s dying,  
Straight be ready with the tear;  
Upon etiquette relying,  
Unto usage naught denying,  
Lend your waist to be embraced,  
Blush not even, never fear;  
Claims of kith and kin connection,  
Claims of manners and honours still,  
Ready money of affection  
Pay whoever drew the bill. (*P*, p. 27)

40 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

42 M. Timko, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

Described by one critic as “Clough’s bitterest indictment of his age”<sup>43</sup>, the poem’s unrelenting attack on Victorian codes of conventional behaviour revolves around the fact that duty, far from embodying bona fide moral fortitude, has become an ingrained habit coarsened by insincerity and hypocrisy. In the charade of social conventions, manners and reputation take precedence over genuine and loyal feelings and actions: “straight be ready with the tear / Upon etiquette relying / Unto usage naught denying”<sup>44</sup>. As Walter Houghton comments, “to make conformity a duty is a tacit repudiation of the real nature of duty”<sup>45</sup> and Clough dwells on the negative consequences of this distortion to denounce a spiritual vacuity that recalls the final spirit’s melancholy submission in *The Questioning Spirit*. The satirical effects of the poem emerge through the incongruity between the light-hearted rhythm of persistent trochaic tetrameters and closely knit rhyme scheme, and deliberately affected and stilted hyperbaton with which the otherwise informal discourse of everyday speech is rendered. In the central part of the poem, the speaker’s sarcastic diatribe is reinforced by the exclusive adoption of rhyming couplets:

With the form conforming duly,  
Senseless what it meaneth truly,  
Go to church – the world require you,  
    To balls – the world require you too,  
And marry – papa and mama desire you,  
    And your sisters and schoolfellows do.  
Duty – ‘Tis to take on trust  
What things are good, and right and just;  
    And whether indeed they be or be not,  
    Try not, test not, see not, feel not:  
    ‘Tis walk and dance, sit down and rise  
    By leading opening ne’er your eyes;  
Stunt sturdy limbs that nature gave,  
And be drawn in a bath chair along to the grave. (*P*, p. 27)

43 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

44 W. David Shaw, *The Lucid Veil. Poetic Truth in the Victorian Age*, London, The Athlone Press, 1987, p. 269 notes how the matching sounds of Clough’s feminine rhymes becomes “a mocking imitation of mindless conformity.”

45 Walter Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967 (1957), p. 396 n.3.

The metrical shift that occurs from the initial iambic substitutions: “To balls – the world require you / And marry – papa and mama desire you” to the halting effect of the irregular syllable numbers in the intermittent lines: “And your sister and schoolfellows do” [...] And whether indeed they be or be not” [...] ‘Tis walk and dance, sit down and rise [...] By leading opening ne’er your eyes [...] And be drawn in a bath chair along to the grave” enacts an increasing sense of disdain that becomes exasperation in the quasi-riotous finale:

‘Tis the stern and prompt suppressing,  
 As an obvious deadly sin,  
 All the questing and the guessing  
 Of the soul’s own soul within:  
 ‘Tis the coward acquiescence  
 In a destiny’s behest,  
 To a shade by terror made  
 Sacrificing aye the essence  
 Of all that’s truest, noblest, best;  
 ‘Tis the blind non-recognition  
 Or of goodness, truth, or beauty,  
 Save by precept and submission  
 Moral blank and moral void,  
 Life at very birth destroyed,  
 Atrophy, exinanition! (*P*, pp. 27–28)

The third stanza sees the speaker drop his satirical mask as unctuous appreciation is exchanged for a thunderous denunciation against the total reliance on social conventions and rituals which are a negation of the value and meaning of religious experience. One may recall Jeremy Bentham’s remark about duty ending where interests begin: “[...] to interest, duty must, and will, be made subservient”<sup>46</sup>. But of course the brutal truth of this observation cannot be manifested publicly, only hypocritically masked. Thus, the triple repetition of the word ‘duty’ in the final three lines, merely confirms its empty value and brings the poem round full circle to the speaker’s original attack:

46 Jeremy Bentham, *Deontology of The Science of Morality* (2 vols.) Vol. I, London, Longman, 1834, p. 11.

Duty! –  
Yea, by duty's prime condition,  
Pure nonentity of duty! (*P*, p. 28)

The exclamatory tone underlines the speaker's impotent rage at its real significance being continually eluded. Its manifestation remains the same as it was at the beginning of the poem, but the shift from apparent accord ("Duty – that's to say complying [...]") to final condemnation ("Pure nonentity of duty!") completes its Janus-like manifestation that is a result of its social appropriation.

In spite of its relatively early date of composition, Clough's satire on duty anticipates what becomes a dominant note in his later poetry. Another short poem deserving of mention is *The Latest Decalogue*, a sardonic deconstruction of the ten commandments of Moses, the humour of which anticipates the central mood of *Dipsychus*:

Thou shalt have one God only; who  
Would be at the expense of two?  
No graven images may be  
Worshipped, except the currency.  
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse  
Thine enemy is none the worse.  
At church on Sunday to attend  
Will serve to keep the world thy friend.  
Honour thy parents, that is, all  
From whom advancement may befall.  
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive  
Officiously to keep alive;  
Do not adultery commit:  
Advantage rarely comes of it.  
Thou shalt not steal – an empty feat  
When it's so lucrative to cheat.  
Bear not false witness; let the lie  
Have time on its own wings to fly.  
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition  
Approves all forms of competition.

The sum of all is, thou shalt love,  
If anybody, God above:  
At any rate, shalt never labour  
*More* than thyself to love thy neighbour. (*P*, p. 205)

The lively satire of the poem is underscored by the skilful interplay between its rigid iambic tetrameters and rhyming couplets and recurrent caesuras and enjambments. The nature of the counter voice reflects a duplicity inherent in the poet himself. For on the one hand, it sacrilegiously exposes with a systematic ruthlessness the monomaniacal austerity of each commandment; on the other, it simultaneously denounces the way man in actuality interprets them in order to justify his disobedience of them. Thus, the satire is double-edged, aimed both at the commandments themselves as well as their mischievous distortion by man. Any doubts regarding Clough's intentions in the poem are dispelled by its final couplet in which the colloquial expression "At any rate" immediately deflates the solemnity of "Thou shalt love [...] God above" and the inverted syntax of the final line comically places the stress on "More than thyself" as a negation of the commandment "love thy neighbour". This deliberate ambiguity, that recurs in all of Clough's satirical works, is a feature of his poetry which modern readers are able to appreciate more fully than his contemporaries for whom such an aesthetic manifestation was regarded as a disconcerting sign of moral uncertainty.

Clough's religious and political dissatisfaction was paralleled by his sexual frustration which found an outlet in several erotic poems<sup>47</sup>. The most interesting composition of this kind is undoubtedly *Natura Naturans* (1847)<sup>48</sup>. Written in iambic tetrameter octaves with an alternating rhyme scheme, it celebrates the primal sexual instinct in all living beings. The poem is divided into two sections, the first of which describes the silent encounter on a train between the speaker and a young woman:

47 These include a satirical parody of the Vulgate text of the Apocalypse, "Addenda to the Apocalypse" which figures a female carnal figure named Pandemia who offers herself to all men: "Lo, I am not spirit, I have body and flesh and limbs and substance. / Blessed are those that lie with me./ And she said, I am the life and the way and the truth [...]" A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet's Life*, op. cit., p. 123 (Kenny's translation from the original poem in Latin preserved in an unpublished manuscript in the Bodleian library).

48 The poem was originally dated 1846 but appears in an 1847 notebook in a considerably revised form. Cf. Malthusser in *P*, p. 587.

Beside me, – in the car, – she sat,  
She spake not, no, nor looked to me:  
From her to me, from me to her,  
What passed so subtly stealthily?  
As rose to rose that by it blows  
Its interchanged aroma flings;  
Or wake to sound of one sweet note  
The virtues of departed strings.

Beside me, nought but this! – but this,  
That influent as within me dwelt  
Her life, mine too within her breast,  
Her brain, her every limb she felt:  
We sat; while o’er and in us, more  
And more, a power unknown prevailed,  
Inhaling, and inhaled, – and still  
‘Twas one, inhaling or inhaled.

Beside me, nought but this; – and passed;  
I passed; and know not to this day  
If gold or jet her girlish hair,  
If black, or brown, or lucid grey  
Her eye’s young glance: the fickle chance  
That joined us, yet may join again;  
But I no face again could greet  
As hers, whose life was in me then.

As unsuspecting mere a maid  
As, fresh in maidenhood’s bloomiest bloom,  
In casual second-class did e’er  
By casual youth her seat assume;  
Or vestal, say, of saintliest clay,  
For once by balmiest airs betrayed  
Unto emotions too too sweet  
To be unlingeringly gainsaid:

Unowning then, confusing soon  
With dreamier dreams that o’er the glass  
Of shyly ripening woman-sense  
Reflected, scarce reflected, pass,  
A wife may-be, a mother she  
In Hymen’s shrine recalls not now,  
She first in hour, ah, not profane,  
With me to Hymen learnt to bow (*P*, pp. 35–6).

The Latin title is an oblique reference to Spinoza's *Ethics* in which the two words are given the following definition: "[B]y *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, that is [...] God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause"<sup>49</sup>. Spinoza's systematic critique of philosophical and religious traditions and defence of intellectual freedom are central tenets of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophical positions that shaped Clough's thinking. But at the same time, this deterministic view of God as the intrinsic unity of all things constitutes an ironic frame to the poem<sup>50</sup>. For, from the beginning, the subtle power the speaker feels passing between himself and the girl, is necessarily concealed because of the public context in which it occurs ("in the car"). Not only, but the oppressive environment impedes the possibility of eye-contact, such that the speaker's description of her is inevitably limited to a few hypothetical fragments ("I passed and know not to this day / If gold or jet her girlish hair, / If black, or brown, or lucid-grey / Her young eye's glance [...]"). Ultimately, in view of the situation, his consciousness of her sexual desire ("[...] mine too within her breast, / Her brain, her every limb she felt") is only a projection of his own fantasy. What is more important, however, is that the impersonal nature of the encounter in the railway carriage means that the speaker's attention is focussed, not so much on the girl (whom, for the sake of etiquette, he outwardly feigns to notice) but on the indeterminate nature of the force itself, which, apart from the aroma of the rose, explains the notable absence of an erotically charged lexicon. Moreover, Clough's continual recourse to inverted syntax creates a stiffness that plays out the awkward combination of boldness and embarrassment in the speaking voice, which is symptomatic of his frustrated need to express his sexual desire. Ironically, the manifestation of sexual impulse becomes deferred to other life forms in the second section of the poem:

49 Benedict De Spinoza, *Ethics*, Trans: Edwin Curley. London: Penguin, 1996, pp. 20–1.

50 This point is overlooked by critics who focus exclusively on the aspect of sexual desire. See, for example, A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet's Life*, cit., pp. 118–20 and R. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 42–3. See also D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–4 who sees "some quite extraordinary anticipations of D.H. Lawrence's way of looking at the sexual situation."

Ah no! –Yet owned we, fused in one,  
The Power which e'en in stones and earths  
By blind elections felt, in forms  
Organic breeds to myriad births;  
By lichen small on granite wall  
Approved, its faintest feeblest stir  
Slow-spreading, strengthening long, at last  
Vibrated full in me and her.

In me and her – sensations strange!  
The lily grew to pendent head,  
To vernal airs and mossy bank  
Its sheeny primrose spangles spread,  
In roof o'er roof of shade sun-proof  
Did cedar strong itself outclimb,  
And altitude of aloe proud  
Aspire in floreal crown sublime;

Flashed flickering forth fantastic flies,  
Big bees their burly bodies swung,  
Rooks roused with civic din the elms,  
And lark its wild reveillez rung;  
In Libyan dell the light gazelle,  
The leopard lithe in Indian glade,  
And dolphin, brightening tropic seas,  
In us were living, leapt and played:

Their shells did slow crustacean build,  
Their gilded skins did snakes renew,  
While mightier spines for loftier kind  
Their types in amplest limbs outgrew;  
Yea, close comprest in human breast,  
What moss, and tree, and livelier thing,  
What Earth, Sun, Star of force possest,  
Lay budding, burgeoning forth for Spring.

Such sweet precluding sense of old  
Led on in Eden's sinless place  
The hour when bodies human first  
Combined the primal prime embrace,  
Such genial heat the blissful seat  
In man and woman owned unblamed,  
When, naked both, its garden paths  
They walked unconscious, unashamed:



Ere, clouded yet in mistiest dawn,  
 Above the horizon dusk and dun,  
 One mountain crest with light had tipped  
 That Orb that is the Spirit's Sun;  
 Ere dreamed young flowers in vernal showers  
 Of fruit to rise the flower above,  
 Or ever yet to young Desire  
 Was told the mystic name of Love. (*P*, pp. 37–8)

The negative interjection in the opening of the central stanza, sets off an imaginary dialogical confrontation between the speaker and the girl who in a future time, will no longer recall how “She first in hour, ah, not profane, / With me to Hymen learnt to bow”). But “Ah no!” also co-refers to “not profane” underlining the speaker’s insistence not only in acknowledging and condoning the sexual impulse they have experienced, but, even more importantly, to reject the idea of its *sinfulness*. The celebration of the sexual energy that is a manifestation of the godly power that runs through all forms of life is characterised by a reversal in the metaphysical analogy from human → nature in the first section to nature → human in the second. This celebration is synaesthetically conveyed through a rhetorical flourish of archaisms that combines inverted syntax with the insistent use of alliteration: “Its sheeny *primrose spangles spread*” [...] “*Flashed flickering forth fantastic flies* / Big bees their *burly bodies swung*” [...] “In *Libyan dell the light gazelle*, / The *leopard lithe* in Indian *glade*”). The artificial poeticisms, which in Clough’s early verse represent a weakness, here play a performative function that is symbolically suggestive of the remoteness of “Eden’s sinless place” where Adam and Eve were united in “the primal prime embrace” and “unblamed / [...] naked both [...] / walked unconscious and unashamed”. The negative adjectives (a recurrent Cloughian trait) refer by indirection, to the guilt and shame which, up to this point, have only been inferred by the speaker. Man’s awakening into knowledge is therefore rendered in terms of growth and change in the natural world in order to highlight the contrast with his own natural, prelapsarian state. Clough’s conclusion poses a problematic that alludes to the Spinozian concept of ontological unity as manifested in a self-governing modal system, rather than an external cause to man: “In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of

the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way”<sup>51</sup>. It is precisely because of the cognitive nature of post-Eden man’s striving for divine truth (of which Spinoza himself is evidence!), that any sense of sexual desire as paradigmatic of his connection with divine nature, is undermined by orthodox Christian teaching. Through his speaker, Clough censures love – a post-Eden word and the central message of Christ – as symptomatic of the consciousness that has caused the split between man and the rest of creation. The adjective ‘mystic’, which purposefully confounds and separates love and sexuality, is emblematic of man’s attempt to sublimate sexual passion to atone for his feelings of shame and guilt. For Clough, such mysticism is a fallacy, for it is ultimately only by delving deeper into himself and understanding his place in a divine whole that man can reach his true essence.

51 B. De Spinoza, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

## Chapter 5

### *The Bothie of Toper-na-Fuosich*

*This poem is a high gift from angels that are very rare in our mortal state.*  
(R.W. Emerson)<sup>1</sup>

#### 5.1 Clough's Hexameters

The period of restlessness and uncertainty which characterised Clough's existence following his departure from Oxford<sup>2</sup> led to an extraordinary outburst of poetic activity. In the space of only two years (1848–50), he composed all of his main works: *The Bothie of Toper-na-Fuosich*, *Amours de Voyage*, *Easter Day I and II*, the first drafts of *Dipsychus*, and *Mystery of the Fall*<sup>3</sup>. *The Bothie* marks a definite turning point in his poetic development. Nothing he had hitherto composed anticipated in any way the astonishing range of technical skill, thematic treatment and verbal polyphony that was to be evidenced in this long narrative poem in hexameters. Moreover, on the discourse level, the morally paralysed poetic subject of Clough's earlier lyrics is now transformed into a

- 1 Michael Thorpe (ed.), *Arthur Hugh Clough: The Critical Heritage*, London Routledge, (1972), 2002, p. 33.
- 2 Deprived of the protection and privileges of Oxford, Clough's future was, at this point, full of doubt and uncertainty. His life in London where he moved from place to place with no fixed abode and, initially, no profession, was the loneliest of his life.
- 3 F. L. Mulhauser, *P*, p. ix, observes that the poetry of this period, due in large part to the confusion and disorganisation of Clough's manuscripts, "is the most difficult to date". Besides the works above, Clough also wrote the seven sonnet sequence, *That Children in Their Loveliness Should Die*. It may be added here that both *The Bothie* and *Amours de Voyage* were re-worked after their first editions and re-published with significant alterations and exclusions.

detached omniscient narrator whose satirical gaze renders the very idea of a moralising perspective problematic.

*The Bothie* has been justly described as “the most youthfully exuberant of the great Victorian poems”<sup>4</sup> and one of the finest romps in English literature<sup>5</sup>. It was published to the genuine surprise of all those familiar with Clough’s religious quandaries at Oriel<sup>6</sup>. To Emerson, who teasingly reproached him for having kept his poem a secret, Clough replied candidly: “How could I tell you of my Pastoral-to-be, when it had not been thought of? It was only begun in September: and when I left you on the deck of your Steamer, I had *no thought of* that or any other new poem” (C, 1, p. 240<sup>7</sup>, italics mine). Clough had indeed begun composing the poem in September, completing it after two weeks of intense writing. However, its nucleus can be traced to an entry in his Oxford diaries one month previously (August 15), comprised of jottings of hexameter lines (complete with empty gaps reflecting the technical difficulties posed by their metrical demands)<sup>8</sup>. By adopting the classical form, which had been revived through the influence of the quantitative experimentations of eighteenth century German verse, Clough was entrusting his poem (or “dooming” it, as one critic has put it!<sup>9</sup>) to the nineteenth century debate on its suitability for English poetry as one of two solutions in producing non-rhyming metre (the other

4 R. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

5 Cf. R. K. Biswas, *op.cit.*, p. 284.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 265. Biswas observes: “It supplies and embodies Clough’s justification for quitting Oxford: only it is not the religious apologia that might have been expected.”

7 Letter dated 10 February, 1849. Clough was responding to Emerson’s letter of 16 January, 1849 in which the latter playfully accused him of having been deliberately secretive about his new composition.

8 *OD*, p. 255.

Oh if your high born girls only know the charm the attraction...

Or high-kilted perhaps – interposed the in anger.

Or high-kilted perhaps, as once at Dundee I saw them.

Petticoats to the knee or indeed a trifle over.

Shewing their thighs were more white than the clothes they trod in.

their washtub.

9 W. Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

being “rhymeless measures in English rhythm not limited to tens”<sup>10</sup>). It was a common critical complaint that the irregular ratio of syllables to accents in the six-foot measure, particularly with the addition of caesuras and enjambments, tended to lapse too frequently into prose. In his magisterial study on English prosody, George Saintsbury actually turns the question humorously around on its face: “English prose has by no means, from Chaucer’s Boethius downwards through the numerous passages in the English Bible, shown any objection to ‘dropping into hexameter’”<sup>11</sup>. Yet, his final dismissal of Clough’s hexameters (and, by extension, all English hexameter verse) as “quite beautiful *prose* of the modern descriptive type”<sup>12</sup> (*italics mine*) begs the question of why they should be used in poetry at all.

As far as the nineteenth-century was concerned, the hexameter revival began twenty-seven years before Clough’s poem, with Robert Southey’s *A Vision of Judgement*<sup>13</sup>. Unperturbed by most readers’ unfamiliarity with this classical form, Southey was confident of its efficacy in English: “[...] any one who reads a page of these hexameters aloud, with just that natural regard to emphasis which the sense of the passage indicates, and the usual pronunciation of the words requires, will perceive the rhythm, and find no more difficulty in giving its proper effect, than in reading blank verse”<sup>14</sup>. Southey’s hexameters reflect the natural stresses and pauses of spoken language whilst managing to sustain a metrical scansion with alternating dactylic and trochaic feet:

10 George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody. From the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, (3 vols.), London, Macmillan, 1910, Vol. III, p. 38.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 407.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 408. Saintsbury is more generous to Clough in his general evaluation of his metrical merits: “[...] I do not think that the man who could impress on his mere verse, the rest and struggle of sea-faring in “Qua Cursum Ventus”; the quiet scorn of “The Latest Decalogue”; the rise of tide and dawn in the two famous last stanzas of “Say not the struggle”; and the wandering, restless quest of “Easter Day”, was a contemptible artist. At least, in this long research of mine, and the longer readings which have led up to it, I have not found so many artists who could present these results; and I have found so many who could not.” (p. 264).

13 Imitation of Latin hexameters stretches back to the Elizabethan Age with, amongst others, Sidney, Spencer and Campion.

14 Robert Southey, *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey*, London, Longmans, Green and Co, 1884, p. 767. Southey’s confident observations were lambasted by *The Edinburgh Review*. See note below.

$\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x}$   
 'Twas at that sober hour when the  
 $\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 light of day is receding.

$\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 And from surrounding things the  
 $\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 hues where with day has adorn'd them

$\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x}$   
 Fade like the hopes of youth, till the  
 $\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 beauty of earth is departed:

$\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 Pensive, though not in thought, I  
 $\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 stood at the window, beholding

$\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 Mountain and lake and vale; the  
 $\underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x} \underline{x} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{x}$   
 valley disrobed of its verdure.<sup>15</sup>

Southey's confidence was by no means unanimously shared<sup>16</sup>, however, and the ensuing quarrel, punctuated with underlying doubts over the appropriateness of a quantitative system for the accentual-syllabic tradition of English verse, became intensified to the point of acrimony. In his own contribution to the argument in an essay titled "Illustrations of Latin Lyrical Metres", Clough ponders on the arbitrariness of traditional metrics with disarming considerations on the vocal dynamics of the English language:

15 *Ibid*, p. 767.

16 *The Edinburgh Review*, July 1821, p. 424, in a lengthy, stinging analysis of Dryden's poem commented: "[...] we really have no hesitation in saying, without reserve or qualification, that we are confident that the hexameter line never can be made a legitimate English measure, and that Mr Southey's pretended improvements serve only [...] to render it more inadmissible".

We cannot, I suppose, in strictness divide syllables merely into short and long. Some longs are longer, and some shorts are shorter than others. If *way* be long, *ways* must be longer, and *sways* longer yet. If *sit* be short, is it as sort as *it*? There are not two times, one double the other, but rather an infinite number. Is the line of demarcation, drawn by classical rules, broader than any other line? Are we to accept it for English?<sup>17</sup>

His insistence on separating quantitative metre and speech stress as opposed to making them coincide<sup>18</sup>, is central to the overall efficacy of his own adaptation of the scheme. As he otherwise warns: “it is not an easy thing to make readable English hexameters at all”<sup>19</sup>, particularly if this entails adapting the classical form to a language whose phonemic system does not produce equivalent metrical results.

By Clough’s own admission, it was Longfellow’s poem *Evangeline* that inspired his experimentation with hexameters<sup>20</sup>, convinced as he was that the American poet had succeeded in rendering them readable in English<sup>21</sup>. However, as is evident from the opening lines of the poem, which can be considered as representative of its general rhythmic structure, the result is a decidedly tauter and more stilted effect than Southey’s, in spite of Longfellow’s efforts to reproduce the natural inflections of the language within the classical form:

17 B. B. Trawick, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 77. See also p. 76, where Clough discusses the fundamental question of accent which “with us is fixed, with them (i.e. the ancients) was in metre arbitrary. So on the other hand, with them, the quantity was fixed and carefully observed; with us it is variable and greatly neglected”.

18 Cf. Patrick Scott (ed.), *The Bothie* by Arthur Hugh Clough, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1976, p. 6 (Editor’s Introduction) who notes that the attempt to conform to quantitative metres was general tendency among modern hexametrists.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 181. “On Translating Homer”.

20 *C*, p. 240: “Will you convey to Mr Longfellow the fact that it was a reading of his *Evangeline* aloud to my Mother and sister which [...] occasioned this outbreak of hexameters. *Evangeline* is very popular here [...]” (to R.W. Emerson, Feb 10, 1849). Clough had read the poem aloud to his family in the summer of 1848.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 183. “*Evangeline* is the true Hexameter”. However, in a conversation with J. M. Ludlow, he also confessed to finding the poem “monotonously regular” (quoted in P. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 7, “Editor’s Introduction”).

/ x x / x / \* x x / x x / x x / x  
 In the Acadian land, on the shores of the Basin of Minas,

/ x \* x / x \* / \* x / x / x x / x  
 Distant, secluded, still, the little village of Grand-Pré

/ x x / x / x \* x / x / x x / x  
 Lay in the fruitful valley. Vast meadows stretched to the eastward,

/ x x / x x / \* x / x x / x x / x  
 Giving the village its name, and pasture to flocks without number.<sup>22</sup>

The inclusion of numerous caesuras (\*)<sup>23</sup> and anapaestic substitutions to avoid rhythmic monotony does not detract from the fact that the predominant metre is a dactylic foot alternating with trochees. Furthermore, all of Longfellow's lines tend to be end-stopped (or at least heavily paused) – a factor which accentuates the rhythmic sameness he seeks to avoid. As Derek Attridge has noted, the hexameter tends to “break into two halves, partly because of the lurking inclination to slip into a four-beat rhythm by introducing virtual beats” which “encourages a slightly sing-song movement”<sup>24</sup>. This is precisely the case in *Evangeline*.

To understand Clough's appreciation of the technical skills involved in transporting the classical form into English, one may recall Tennyson's *Translations of Homer*, which conveys a ludicrously comic effect through widely divergent (albeit possible) metrical sequences<sup>25</sup>.

22 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline*, Boston, Tickner & company, 1847, p. 9.

23 Joseph Patrick Phelan, “Radical Metre: The English Hexameter in Clough's *Bothie of Toper-na-Fuosich*”, *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 50, n. 198, 1999, pp. 176–7: “Perhaps the most important aspect of *Evangeline* from the metrical point of view is its demonstration of the centrality of the caesura to the accentual hexameter [...] His (i.e. Longfellow's) hexameters literally cannot be read as poetry without the caesura.”

24 Derek Attridge, *Poetic Rhythm*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 157.

25 *Tennyson. Poems and Plays*, ed., Frederick Page, London, Oxford University Press, 1975, (1971), p. 226.

These lame hexameters the strong wing'd music of Homer!

No – but a most burlesque barbarous experiment.

When was a harsher sound ever heard, ye muses, in England?

When did a frog coarser croak upon our helicon?



It is to his credit that Clough, unfazed by the “burlesque barbarous experiment”, transforms its rhythmic possibilities into a poetic asset through a subtle gradation of effects and emotional tones that belie its strangeness<sup>26</sup> at the same time as evoking it. As Joseph Patrick Phelan has rightly observed: “The short-lived hexameter movement was not, in Clough’s hands at least, a sterile imitation of the Classics, but an attempt to reinvigorate English poetry similar in kind to Hopkins’s later use of the ‘sprung rhythm’ of Anglo-Saxon verse”<sup>27</sup>. For, besides testifying to his understanding of the essentially translinguistic nature of all styles, Clough’s cross-cultural experimentation in *The Bothie* reveals an originality and foresight that derives from the intersection between linguistic heterogeneity and the foreign metre of the poem, as he artfully side-steps the restrictions and demands of the hexameter in a tongue-in-cheek preface note that provides the clue to its reading:

The reader is warned to expect every kind of irregularity in these modern hexameters: spondaic lines, so called, are almost the rule; and a word will often require to be transposed by the voice from the end of one line to the beginning of the next”<sup>28</sup>.

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Hexameters no worse than daring Germany gave us,  
Barbarous experiment, barbarous hexameters!

- 26 M. Timko, *op. cit.*, p. 126 suggests that the fact that “the English hexameter metre cannot be naturally adapted to the English language is exactly the point that Clough is utilizing with his ‘anglo-savage’ verse form, as he labelled it”. This view, in my opinion, undermines the complexities of Clough’s achievement. D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 115 suggests that Clough used hexameters precisely because they could be made “anti-poetic”. K. Chorley, *op. cit.*, p. 149, makes the initial observation that Clough’s handling of hexameters “is often crude and clumsy and, try as one will, it is sometimes impossible to scan a line reasonably” only to follow this up with a contrary, positive evaluation: “But the metre is vital in his hands, pulsating with a kind of half-tamed life [...] The frequent resulting tension between words and metre does give his verse a rough rich texture and a remarkable flexibility for emotional expression”. More recently, Richard Cronin, *Reading Victorian Poetry*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 82 directly equates Clough’s hexameters with the Oxford undergraduate “whose education was so firmly centred on the study of the classics”. Thus, they “work to place the Oxford undergraduates at a bookish remove from the pressing realities of life as it is lived outside the universities.”
- 27 J. P. Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
- 28 P. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 4. Henceforth all quotations will refer to this edition, which is the text of the original 1848 version, with the initial *B* followed by the page number in the text.

Clough's insistence on oral performance ("by the voice") is crucial for an appreciation of the prosodic achievements of his work (as his own recitation of *Evangeline* to his family suggests). Consequently, in *The Bothie*, the reading process is conditioned by an organising principle that induces the continual expectation of syntactic inversion, lexical repetition and verbal superfluity. These idiosyncratic verbal features supply much of the comedy that dominates the initial sections, (in which the manner of composition is the foregrounded feature), though they decrease towards the latter part of the poem in which the tone becomes increasingly more earnest and solemn. A consideration of three extracts, which are respectively representative of the satirical, dialogical and psychological dimensions of *The Bothie*, will be sufficient to illustrate the extent to which Clough's skilful technical handling of the hexameter contributes to enhance the rhetorical and semantic levels of his poem.

The lively opening sequence immediately evidences the poet's bold departure from the conventional scansion of the classical hexameter form:

$\underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \quad / * \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad}$   
 It was the afternoon; and the sports were all but over.

$\underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} /$   
 Long had the stone been put, tree  
 $\underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad}$   
 cast, and thrown the hammer:

$\underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad}$   
 Up the perpendicular hill, Sir Hector so  
 $\underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad}$   
 called it,

$\underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad}$   
 Eight stout shepherds and gillies had  
 $\underline{\quad} / \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad} \quad \underline{\quad} \underline{\quad}$   
 run, two wondrous quickly. (*B*, p. 6)

The irregularities of the metrical pattern are evident at various levels. First, there is a parallelism between the first clauses of the first two lines, since a natural cadence forces the dactylic feet into anapaests ("[...] was the aff[ternoon and the sports [...] / had the stone [...]").

Furthermore, the vowels in the first stresses of each line are of contrasting length: the short clipped vowel in *It* receives a secondary stress with respect to the long vowel in *Long* – and thus flies in the face of quantitative measures which relies, precisely, on vowel length – . The initial stress position of the adjective *Long* is also an effective rhetorical marker. Not only is it a temporal reference to underline the conclusion of the events, but, as it is stretched over the whole clause through the semi-echo of the velar nasal [ŋ] to the alveolar nasal [n] and reiterated diphthong [əʊ] in (*long* [...] *stone* [...] *been* [...] *thrown*) – also underlines on a phonic level the sense of physical exertion and distance involved. The second clauses of each line, on the other hand, differ decidedly in their metrical scansion. Whilst the first contains an overlay of anapaests and iambs, the second, with its caesura break after “tree cast” and syntactic inversion of “thrown the hammer”, conveys a stilted, uncertain movement that detracts from the dynamics involved in the activities by their being merely listed, as well as delaying the galloping rhythm established by the metrical movement of the previous line. The metrical movement becomes even more uncertain in the third and fourth lines. Whilst the third allows no alternative readings, being almost entirely taken up by the polysyllable “perpendicular”, in the fourth, the first two monosyllable words (“Eight stout”) are given equal stress weight to suggest a spondaic substitution. Furthermore, the overlaid anapaestic foot in the fourth line occurs within a complete sense-phrase (“gillies had run”), whilst in the third, it begins on the last three syllables of *perpendicular* (“[...] cular hill”). Nevertheless, both clauses convey the fatigue of a race (underlined by the fact that the clause is humorously dominated by the mathematically connoted adjective *perpendicular*). The lack of synchronisation between the metrical units of the second parts of the third and fourth lines with their clause elements, in comparison with those of the first two lines, contributes a certain light-heartedness (particularly in the phrase “Sir Hector so called it” which is phonically underlined by the alliteration [s| |k|) and swift glide in ‘wondrous’). These metrical enactments of speed and agility, on the one hand, and stiffness and effort on the other, are paradigmatic of the range of rhythmic possibilities within the poem which, on an actantial level, are dramatically manifested in the main

protagonist's progression from the mobility of intellectual speculation to the stability of moral commitment.

*The Bothie* abounds in lively fast-paced dialogue and Clough's hexameters successfully render the intonations of spoken discourse. An apposite example is Sir Hector's after-dinner toast to the Oxford party:

/   x    x   /   x x   /  
 Fill up your glasses once more,  
x   /            x   x   /   x  
 my friends with all honours

/   x x   /     x   x   x   /  
 There was a toast which I forgot,  
x   x   /   x        /   x  
 which our Highland homes have

/   x    / x     x   /   x  
 Always welcomed the stranger,  
  x x /    x /   x   x   /  
 may I say, delighted to see

/   x            / x   x   / x   x  
 Fine young men at my table my  
/     x   x   / x   x        /   x  
 friends! Are you ready? The Strangers.

/   x   /   x    /     x    /       x   x  
 Gentlemen, I drink your healths, - and I  
/   x     x   /   x   /   x  
 wish you - with all the honours. (*B*, p. 8)

Besides the humour of his contradictory appellative (friends/Strangers) and his near exclusion of the Oxford men in his toasts, the stress patterns mimic the disjointed discourse of the drunken Sir Hector by means of phrasal repetition (“with all the honours”), ungrammatical connection (“which our gallant Highland homes have / Always welcomed the stranger”), and abrupt clause shifts (“may I say, delighted to see”). Finally, the underlying metrical cadence humorously gives way to prose in the final three unstressed syllables of “[deligh]ted to see”. The second caesura break in the third line also contains an overlaid iambic foot in

“delight(ted)” which leads to a final extra syllable to convey the sense of a disarticulated discourse. The first three feet of the fourth line then recover this temporary metrical imbalance only to create a further lack of correspondence between metrical and phrase unit in “My friends! Are you ready? The strangers” which is, in turn, once more retrieved in the first three feet of the fifth line. The caesura break after the fourth foot (“and I wish you –”) is suggestive of a pause while raising a glass before making a toast. But it also represents a hiatus, since Sir Hector does not complete his wishes for the Oxford group which, on a metrical level, continues with an overlaid anapaestic foot (“you with áll”) into the conventional phrase with which he concludes.

Precisely because of its teasing tendency to lapse into prose, Clough brilliantly succeeds in adapting the hexameter to the subdued and reflective tone that characterises the latter part of the poem, as in the following tender exchange between Elspie and Philip:

x / x x / x  
 But while she was speaking,

x / x x / x x  
 So it happened, a moment, she  
 / x x / x  
 paused from her work and  
 / x  
 pondering

/ x / x x / /  
 Laid her hand on her lap: Philip  
x / x / x / x /  
 - lip took it: she did not resist:

x x / x / x x /  
 So he retained her fingers the knit-  
x / x / x x / x  
 ting being stopped. But emotion

/ x / x x / x /  
 Came all over her more and more,  
x x / x x / x  
 from his hand, from her heart, and

/ — x — x    / x / x x    / x  
 Most from the sweet idea and image  
 x — /    x x    / x  
 her brain was renewing. (B, 41)

Although the first three lines are end-stopped, their breaks are initially non-emphatic with poetic line and syntactic unit coinciding to reflect the natural flow of discourse until “she did not resist”. On the other hand, the heavy pauses created by the three separate clauses to highlight the emotional tension between Elspie and Philip: “Philip took it: she did not resist” can yield as many as five stresses. Clough overrides the rhythmic lightness of the English hexameter here to create a complex scansion that is particularly suggestive, since maintaining the six-foot pattern, would require a glide over “Philip” and “she did not re” that jars with the emotional suspense of their tentative moment of tenderness as well as creating five consecutive unstressed syllables (together with “it” of the previous clause). In the second part, the enjambment “But emotion / / Came all over her more and more” enacts an intensity which, as it spills over into the next line, reverberates from Elspie to Philip (as conveyed in the double overlay of anapaests in “from his hand, from her heart”) before the recovery of the dactylic metre in “Most from the sweet idea and image her brain was renewing” enacts Elspie’s own restoration of the idea of love.

## 5.2 *The Bothie of Tober-na-Fuosich*

*The Bothie* is divided into nine cantos and runs to approximately two thousand lines. The poem begins just as the Highland Games are coming to a close and a group of Oxford undergraduates on a reading vacation in the Scottish Highlands<sup>29</sup> are making preparations for a dinner to which they have been invited with other guests of honour by the local

29 This is the location of two of Clough’s three reading parties. The first was at Grasmere in the Lake District in 1843, whilst the following two were at Castleton, in 1846, and at Drumnadrochet, in 1847.

landlord, Sir Hector. During the celebration, a series of complimentary speeches are made between host and guests and the Oxford student Philip Hewson (who is, like his creator, a poet with radical views), volunteers a toast on behalf of the university men in which he makes an ambiguous call for friendship and union between Scots and English before adding a sly condemnation of the local game-keeping laws – a polemical intent that is lost on most of the company.

When the festivities are over, and the undergraduates are making their exit, Philip is addressed by a plainly-clad Highlander who tells him to look out for a dwelling place named the Bothie-of Toper-na-fuosich. At the beginning of Canto II the Oxford men engage in a discussion on the nature and merits of feminine beauty. The radical Philip embarks on a long diatribe against refinery and vanity, praising the virtues of physical labour, particularly when performed by a young working-class or rural female. Adam, the tutor, (and surrogate father-figure to Philip<sup>30</sup>) counsels him to seek out goodness rather than beauty *per se*. The discussion concludes with a proposal by most of the members of the group to take a break from their studies on the following day and each of them set off for different destinations. Canto III sees the return of the students, with the exception of Philip and Hope. Lindsay and Arthur attempt to clarify the mystery of Philip's absence by informing the party that, after taking refuge in a house during a storm, he had fallen in love with the owner's daughter, Katie. No sooner does Adam decide to go out in search for him the following day, than Hope arrives bringing them the news that Philip has already left Katie's house.

Canto IV finds Philip wandering fugitive-like through the Highland mountains whilst his friends are carousing at Katie's house. Adam learns, to his consternation, that he has fallen in love with an aristocratic girl named Lady Maria. Canto V returns to the company as they continue to read and bathe without Philip who, in the meantime, has written a letter renouncing all his previous praise of lowly life and physical

30 See Rod Edmond, *Affairs of the Hearth. Victorian Poetry and Domestic Narrative*, London, Routledge, 1988, pp. 57–64 for a discussion of the family relationship between the group and a comparison between Clough's poem and *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Edmond also suggests (p. 62) that the "hermetic language of slang and nicknames" in the poem "constitutes a kind of patois characteristic of large family groups."

labour and justifying the necessity of the latter for the maintenance of the wealthy. Canto VI opens with a description of the Bothie of Toperna-Fuosich where Adam is walking with David Mackaye, (the Scot whom Philip previously met at the doorway after Sir Hector's dinner party), Philip and Mackaye's daughter Elspie. The reader learns that Philip, who had encountered Elspie one day whilst out walking with Katie, has met her again and fallen in love with her. Delighted that he has found in Elspie, a woman of goodness as well as beauty, Adam acts as a parental go-between and closely monitors their courtship. Canto VII focuses on two encounters between Philip and Elspie; the first in which he confesses to having been captivated by her look when he first encountered her and she reveals her suffering for his having initially wrongly chosen Katie, and the second in which she expresses an initial regret for having opened her heart to him.

At the beginning of canto VIII, Elspie's qualms have still not completely subsided as she expresses doubts regarding their class differences. During the ensuing discussion, Adam's influence is crucial in convincing Elspie of Philip's serious intentions. It is eventually agreed that the couple wait for a year during which Philip can return to Oxford to complete his studies. Finally, in Canto IX Philip passes his degree and returns to the Bothie where he and Elspie are visited by the members of the Oxford party who bring them wedding gifts before they sail away to begin a new life in New Zealand.

The most striking feature of Clough's first major poem is undoubtedly a linguistic heterogeneity that reflects his idea of a democratic representation of language. As a result, colloquialisms, idiolects and neologisms sit side by side with Oxonian slang, archaisms, and Scottish place names. In spite of his own niggling preoccupations over what he deemed to be obscure "local references"<sup>31</sup>, they were generally overlooked

31 C, p. 224 (to Tom Arnold 6 November 1848): "My poem 'The Bothie of Toperna-fuosich' in about 2000 Hexameters, 'A long-vacational pastoral' has appeared, and has tolerable success in Oxford. But that its local allusions might readily give it: a larger success is quite problematical". Clough would be surprised to find copies of the poem studiously placed on the drawing-room tables of the houses he visited in the United States.



in the wave of unanimous praise when the poem was published<sup>32</sup>. One of the most laudatory reviews, by Charles Kingsley, began with an acidic attack on the dominant Oxford cultural milieu to which Clough's poem is seen as refreshingly antithetic:

When our readers hear of an Oxford poem, written, too, by a college fellow and tutor, they will naturally expect, as usual, some pale and sickly bantling of the *Lyra Apostolica* school; all Mr Keble's defects caricatured, without any of his excellences – another deluge of milk-and-water from that perennial fount of bad verses, which, if quantity would but make up for quality, would be by this time world-famous, – and that is just what *The Bothie* is not like 'at all, at all'<sup>33</sup>.

Kingsley's praise was significant. Besides sharing Clough's anti-Tractarianism, his own novel *Yeast*, (published in the same year), has certain stylistic and ideological features in common with *The Bothie*<sup>34</sup>. What is more, both writers saw a radical transformation in the intellectual pursuits of the average young man of the time which they considered indicative of the crisis of values in Victorian society<sup>35</sup>. Kingsley's narrator justifies the idiosyncratic structure of his novel as the reflection of the "very yeasty state of mind" that typifies the mental activities of young

32 In contrast with the comparatively muted response to *Ambarvalia* the following year.

33 Charles Kingsley, "The Bothie", in Michael Thorpe (ed.), *op cit.*, p. 37. Other positive responses included those of Thackeray, Longfellow, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and W. M. Rossetti.

34 The main protagonists of both works hold radical political beliefs grounded on equality and justice and fall in love with women of a lower social rank who emerge as their intellectual and spiritual counterparts. They also develop along a similar narrative progression, with initial joviality and frivolity giving way to a moral earnestness that, in Kingsley, descends into tragedy (at the end of the novel, its hero, Lancelot, is bereft of the woman he loves, who dies of a fever, deserted by nearly all of his companions except one who commits suicide after a domestic 'scandal'). Finally, a concern with the rapid transformations of the age is evident in their politically motivated intention to dramatise the social interactions of people from different classes, which entails an appropriate vocabulary to convey their different speech habits.

35 Charles Kingsley, *Yeast*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1994 (1848), p. 190. "Do not young men think, speak, act, just now, in this very incoherent fragmentary way; without methodic education or habits of thought; with the various stereotyped systems which they have received by tradition, breaking up under them like ice in a thaw".

men who are no longer able to depend on a traditional cultural system with which to confront and evaluate the “thousand facts and notions [...] pouring in on them like a flood”<sup>36</sup>. Rooted within this notion of cultural fragmentation, Clough’s work is also grounded on experimentation with hybrid forms as his main character strives against the same ontological uncertainty in his attempt to gain an assuring moral standpoint.

Clough’s adoption of the hexameter enhances the expressive and ideational dimensions of his poem whilst highlighting his “extraordinary language”, to borrow Isobel Armstrong’s term<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, the poem’s variety of speech cadences and linguistic registers (which, with the exception of Browning, lies outside the realm of most Victorian verse), bears out his notion of a democratic revolution in language. As he himself affirms: “poetry should deal, more than at present it usually does, with general wants, ordinary feelings, the obvious rather than the rare facts [...] with which our every-day life is concerned.”<sup>38</sup> *The Bothie* is a unique attempt to incorporate such so-called ‘un-poetical’ features within a larger framework of ideological and epistemological assumptions. The title of the poem<sup>39</sup> is itself indicative of the semantic drift evoked in the fluctuations of the main protagonist’s continually shifting opinions and ideas. On the one hand, it recurs throughout the poem as a humorous refrain. On the other it comes to encapsulate a set of alternative moral values towards which the narrative is inexorably directed. The subtitle also (“A Long-Vacation Pastoral”) which points to the bucolic elements of the poem and the Latin epigraphs that head each canto, from the pastoral world of Virgil’s *Georgics* and Catallus’s epithalamium to the real world of Horace’s *Epodes*, provides a frame

36 *Ibid.*, p. 190. Kingsley’s metaphorical title also alludes to the slow mature growth of the novel itself.

37 I. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, cit., p. 181.

38 B. B. Trawick, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

39 Toper-na-Fuosich, was the name of a forester’s hut in which Clough stayed in September 1847 during one of his reading parties. Earlier that month, Shairp and Tom Arnold had also stayed there. However, Clough later learned to his deep embarrassment that it also meant ‘bearded well’ and was a vulgar reference to the female sexual organ. Years later in a letter to W. Allingham (4 April 1855) he commented: “As for the poor ‘Bothie’, I was so disgusted with the mishap of the name, that I have never had pleasure in it since” (C, II, p. 498). In subsequent editions he altered the name to the meaningless Toper-na-Vuolich.

that summarises the development of the main protagonist<sup>40</sup>, from his ontological naivety, to his marriage and social integration.

Clough's concern with contemporary issues is also reflected in the setting of the poem. The Scottish Highlands had become a popular tourist attraction in the 1840s and the opening sequence gives a humorous description in *medias res* of the conclusion of the Highland Games with the prize for best costume involving a panel of aristocratic lady judges "Turning the clansmen about, who stood with upright elbows; / Bowing their eye-glassed brows, and fingering kilt and sporran" (*B*, p. 5). This apparently benign portrayal contains an ominous political significance. By 1848 the Games had become a popular tourist attraction, in part due to Queen Victoria's regular visits to the Highlands<sup>41</sup>. However, their revival, far from representing a celebration of Scottish nationality, followed the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Not only, but Scottish defeat had also led to forced displacement of entire populations of Scots and the virtual destruction of the clan system by the government of George II. Clough underlines England's ironic appropriation of this emblematic feature of Scottish culture on a rhetorical level, by suggesting an immobility that detracts from the vigour and strength that traditionally marked the Games through the recourse to hyperbaton, past perfect tenses and participles:

Long *had* the stone *been put*, tree *cast*, and *thrown* the hammer;  
Up the perpendicular hill, Sir Hector so called it,  
Eight stout shepherds and gillies *had run*, two wondrous quickly  
Run too the coarse on the level *had been*; the leaping was over (*B*, p. 5).

In an article that explores the political context of the poem's setting, R. B. Rutland points out that most of Clough's educated readers would have understood his references to Game Law and trespassing: "They

40 Cf. Thomas A. Hayward, *The Latin Epigraphs in The Bothie of Toper-Na-Vuolich*, *Victorian Poetry*, 21, 1983, pp. 145–55, who traces in detail the sources of these references and lucidly illustrates their function in the poem.

41 Queen Victoria, *Leaves from the Journal of our life in the Highlands from 1848 to 1861*, New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1869, p. 124 notes the same events of the Games during her Highland holiday in 1848: "There were the usual games of "putting the stone", "throwing the hammer" and "caber" and racing up the hill [...]".

are reminders that the Highland lairds were [...] but modern capitalist landlords, claiming absolute right of property over their demesnes and intent on maximizing their profits”<sup>42</sup>. The contemporary reference does not necessarily undermine the fundamentally universal issue of exploitation of the poor by the wealthy and, in any case, Clough’s contrasting representations of the Scottish Highlander and English aristocrat and intellectual are sufficiently clear to the modern reader. What is significant is that Philip Hewson’s conflicting aspirations are played out in terms of the relative values of these two cultural coordinates. In this respect, the device of the reading party, which allows Clough the scope to develop his aesthetic and sociological arguments, functions as a testing ground for his own radical views. Furthermore, the Oxford men themselves occupy the ambivalent position of privileged tourists wrapped in a self-enclosed world of intellectual speculation and scepticism, and appreciative participants, in essential sympathy with the people and the natural delights of the Highlands, with its “amber torrents” and mountainous scenery and opportunity for revelry. Their ideological detachment is conveyed in a language characterised by undergraduate slang and Homeric epithets:

Be it recorded in song who was first, who last, in dressing.  
 Hope was the first, black-tied, white-waistcoated, simple, His Honour;  
 [...]

Hope was first, his Honour, and next to his Honour the Tutor.  
 Still more plain the Tutor, the grave man, nicknamed Adam,  
 White-tied, clerical, silent, with antique square-cut waistcoat  
 Formal, unchanged, of black cloth, but with sense and feeling beneath it;  
 Skillful in Ethics and Logic, in Pindar and Poets unrivalled;  
*Shady* in Latin, said Lindsay, but topping in Plays and Aldrich.

Somewhat more splendid in dress, in a waistcoat work of a lady,  
 Lindsay succeeded; the lively, the cheery cigar-loving Lindsay  
 [...]

Airlie descended the last, splendent as god of Olympus;  
 Blue, half-doubtfully blue, was the coat that had white silk facings,  
 Waistcoat blue, coral buttoned, the white-tie finely adjusted,  
 Coral moreover the studs on a shirt as of crochet of women [...](*B*, pp. 5–6)

42 R. B. Rutland, “Some Notes on the Highland Setting of Clough’s *Bothie*”, *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 14, 1976, p. 133.

From the plain, sober dress of Hope and Adam, to the home-spun elegance of Lindsay (“a waistcoat work of a lady”), the crescendo of textile sumptuousness culminates in the vain, pompous Airlie who keeps the group waiting for ten minutes before descending towards their carriage “like a god [...] leaving his ample Olympian chamber” (*B*, p. 6). Besides his undoubted elegance, Lindsay remains the most vividly drawn character of the group:

Lindsay succeeded; the lively, the cheery, cigar-loving Lindsay,  
 Lindsay the ready of speech, the Piper, the Dialectician,  
 This was his title from Adam because of the words he invented,  
 Who in three weeks had created a dialect new for the party,  
 Master in all that was new, of whate'er was recherché and racy,  
 Master of newest inventions, and ready deviser of newer;  
 This was his title from Adam, but mostly they called him the Piper.  
 Lindsay succeeded, the lively, the cheery, cigar-loving Lindsay

(*B*, pp. 5–6).

The insistent regularity of the dactylic foot, sustained for the first four and a half lines before the pause in the final vowel in “whate'er” falls on the awkward alliteration of the rhotic /r/ in “recherché and racy”, enacts a clash, on a metrical level, between classical and contemporary worlds. With his unbridled zest for newfangled coinages and contemporary slang, Lindsay is the spirited embodiment of everything that is modern and *à la mode* and his introduction is an anticipation of the heterodox language that characterises Clough's subversion of Victorian poetic decorum<sup>43</sup>, as amusingly evoked during Sir Hector's dinner party at which men of all ranks of Scottish and English society are assembled:

Here were clansmen many in kilt and bonnet assembled;  
 Keepers a dozen at least; the Marquis's targeted gillies;  
 Pipers five or six among them the young one, the drunkard;  
 [...]  
 Here too were Catholic priest, and Established Minister standing,  
 One to say grace before, the other after the dinner;  
 [...]  
 Hither anon too came the shrewd, ever-ciphering Factor,  
 Hither anon the Attaché, the Guardsman mute and stately,  
 Hither from lodge and bothie in all the adjoining shootings

43 Cf. R.K. Biswas, *op. cit.* p. 272.

Members of Parliament many, forgetful of votes and blue books,  
 Here, amid heathery hills, upon beast and bird of the forest,  
 Venting the murderous spleen of the endless Railway Committee.  
 Hither the Marquis of Ayr, and Dalgarnish Earl and Croupier,  
 And at their side, amid murmurs of welcome, long-looked for, himself too  
 Eager, the gray, but boy-hearted Sir Hector, the Chief and the Chairman.  
 (B, pp. 6–7)

like a theatrical roll call, the marching hexameters herald the entrance (in hierarchical order) of each guest after which keepers and gillies are to be seen momentarily brushing shoulders with parliamentarians and aristocrats in democratic unison as the sumptuous feast of venison, mutton, grouse, whiskey and sherry is devoured by all with equal relish. In passing, it is a nice irony that one of the few overt references to religion (the figures of the Catholic priest and Established Minister) is a satirical jibe at its pedantic differentiations, not to mention cutting dismissal of its functions. As has been noted, this is humorously rendered by the fact that both men occupy the same line whilst being separated by the caesura and “the opposing falling and rising rhythm of their respective halves of the line”<sup>44</sup>. What is more, behind the curt explanation “for many still clung to that Ancient Worship”, B, p. 6) lies Clough’s own hostility towards Catholicism (and perhaps an indirect mockery of Newman’s Tractarianism).

But the real focus of Clough’s satire is the grotesque ceremony of the after-dinner speeches given by the English aristocratic landlords and Scots:

Spare me, O mighty Remembrance! For words to the task were unequal,  
 Spare me, O mistress of Song! Nor bid me recount minutely  
 All that was said and done o’er the well-mixed tempting toddy,  
 Bid me not show in detail, grimace and gesture painting,  
 How were healths proposed and drunk with all the honours  
 [...]
 Bid me not, grammar defying, repeat from grammar-defiers  
 Long constructions strange and plusquam-thucydidëan,  
 Tell, how as sudden torrent in time of speat in the mountain  
 Hurries six ways at once, and takes at last to the roughest,  
 Or, as the practised rider at Astley’s or Franconi’s  
 Skilfully, boldly bestrides many steeds at once in the gallop,

44 J. P. Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

Crossing from this to that, with one leg here, one yonder,  
So, less skilful, but equally bold, and wild as the torrent,  
All through sentences six at a time, unsuspecting of syntax,  
Hurried the lively good-will and garrulous tale of Sir Hector (*B*, p. 7).

The narrator resists directly reporting these ludicrously verbose discourses, which underline the pretentiousness of what is ultimately an all-male political ceremony, by comically reversing the classical invocation to the muses and adopting Homeric epithets to describe a situation marked by linguistic pomposity (“Long constructions strange and plusquam-thucydidēan”) as each toaster competes to outdo the other in their praise and enthusiasm. In this display of verbal extravagance, the semantics of language are reduced to grade-zero such that their extra-discursive description makes more sense than the actual speeches themselves.

With his radical hatred of the aristocracy (“Feudal tenures, mercantile lords, competition and bishops, / Liveries, armorial bearings, amongst other things the Game-laws”, *B*, p. 8), Philip Hewson is in enemy territory. His carefully articulated speech, is therefore not only a retort at the Marquis of Ayr, who has vowed never to renounce deer-hunting, but also a challenge to the linguistic barbarism of the elite company:

I am, I think, perhaps the most perfect stranger present.  
I have not, as two or three of my friends, in my veins some tincture,  
Some few ounces of Scottish blood; no, nothing like it.  
I am therefore perhaps the fittest to answer and thank you.  
So I thank you, sir, for myself and for my companions,  
Heartily thank you all for this unexpected greeting,  
All the more welcome as showing you do not account us intruders  
Are not unwilling to see the north and south forgather.  
And, surely, seldom have Scotch and English more joyously mingled;  
Scarcely with warmer hearts, clearer sense of natural manhood,  
Even in tourney, and foray, and fray, and regular battle,  
Where the life and the strength come out in the tug and tussle,  
Scarcely, where man confronted man, and soul clasped soul,  
Close as the bodies and intertwining limbs of athletic wrestlers  
When for a final bout are a day's two champions mated, –  
In the grand old times of bows, and bills, and claymores,  
At the old Flodden-field – Bannockburn – Culloden.  
– (And he paused a moment for breath, and because of cheering,)

We are the better friends, I fancy, for that old fighting,  
Better friends inasmuch as we know each other better,  
We can now shake hands without subterfuge or shuffling (*B*, p. 9).

Philip's deceptive discourse, which is skilfully articulated through a combination of interlinear caesuras and parenthetical statements, commences with a reply to Sir Hector's unwittingly ironic appellation of the Oxford party as "the strangers". Philip not only lays claim to being the most perfect stranger in the company, but underlines his assertion with reiterated negatives ("I have not [...] no, nothing [...]") as if to plead innocent dissociation. The remainder of his toast is no less ambiguous, containing implicit presumptions of Scottish anti-English sentiment ("All the more welcome as showing you do not account us intruders") and, what is obviously inappropriate to the hospitable occasion, explicit references to famous brutal battles between the English and Scots ("At the old Flodden-field – Bannockburn – Culloden"). In response to the confusing metaphorical verbosity of his previous speakers, Philip offers his own ironic simile of unison by "turning the clichés of battles against themselves"<sup>45</sup> through an alliterative discourse ("bows, and bills, and Claymores [...] Bannockburn – Culloden") and the ambiguous martial/sporting image of two wrestlers locked in a tight struggle. The "great tornado of cheering" (*B*, p. 9) is a cringing indication of the communicative hiatus produced by his indirect, Oxonian discourse. Indeed, beside the Oxford party themselves, no-one, fully grasps the sarcastic portent of his concluding remark ("For I am not a game keeper, I think, nor a game preserver", *B*, p. 9), besides one person:

But, as the doorway they quitted, a thin man clad as the Saxon,  
Trouser and cap and jacket of home-spun blue, hand woven,  
Singled out, and said with determined accent to Hewson,  
Resting his hand on his shoulder, while each with eyes dilating  
Firmly scanned each: Young man, if ye pass through the Braes o' Lochabar,  
See by the loch-side ye come to the Bothie of Toper-na-fuosich (*B*, p. 9).

Whilst no channel of communication can flow between the radical Philip Hewson and the ultra-conservative authorities, the former's speech is clearly apprehended by the (significantly) Saxon-clad David Mackaye

45 I. Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, cit., p. 184.



who, as he singles him out at the doorway (in a manner similar to the way in which the ancient mariner blocks the wedding-guest's entrance at the beginning of Coleridge's poem) and pronounces the strange place-name, effectively sows the seeds of Philip's journey towards self-realisation.

The first stage of this ontological process is represented by Philip's diatribe against sophistication and refinement in Canto II, which may be regarded as an extension of his antagonistic after-dinner speech. In this case, linguistic doubleness gives way to a forthrightness verging on monomania as he pontificates about his notions on sexual relations to the amusement and bemusement of his colleagues:

Sick of the very names of your Lady Augustas and Floras  
Am I, as ever I was, of the dreary botanical titles  
Of the exotic plants, their antitypes in the hothouse:  
Roses, violets, lilies for me! the out-of-door beauties;  
Meadow and woodland sweets, forget-me-nots and heartsease! (*B*, p. 10)

By invoking the literary convention of floral symbolism to drive home his preference for Anglo-Saxon plainness against Latinate sophistication, Philip indirectly introduces the description of his own sexual discovery that is implicitly determined by a radical ideology comprising support of republicanism and the rights of labour<sup>46</sup>:

Never I properly felt the relation of man to woman,  
Though to the dancing-master I went, perforce, for a quarter,  
Where, in dismal quadrille, were good-looking girls in plenty,  
Though, too, school-girl cousins were mine – a bevy of beauties, –  
Never (of course you will laugh, but of course, all the same I shall say it,)  
Never, believe me, revealed itself to me the sexual glory,  
Till in some village fields in holidays now getting stupid,  
One day sauntering 'long and listless', as Tennyson has it,  
Long and listless strolling, ungainly in hobbadiboyhood,  
Chanced it my eye fell aside on a capless, bonnetless maiden,  
bending with three-pronged fork in a garden uprooting potatoes.  
Was it the air? who can say? or herself, or the charm of the labour?  
But a new thing was in me; and longing delicious possessed me,

46 Cf. Christopher Matthews, "A Relation, Oh Bliss! unto Others": Heterosexuality and the Ordered Liberties of *The Bothie of Toper-na-Fuoisich*", *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 58, 2004, p. 479.

Longing to take her, and lift her, and put her away from her slaving:  
 Was it to clasp her in lifting? or was it to lift her by clasping?  
 Was it embracing or aiding was most in my mind? hard question!  
 But a new thing was in me, I too was a youth among maidens:  
 Was it the air? who can say, but in part 'twas the charm of the labour.  
(B, p. 11)

Philip prudishly postpones his reference to the rustic maiden with a series of parenthetical interruptions: (“Though to the dancing master I went [...] Though, too, school-girl cousins were mine [...] “of course you will laugh [...] “long and listless’, as Tennyson has it [...] Was it the air? [...]”). Although the episode has occurred in a non-specified distant past moment (“One day [...] in hobbadiboyhood”), the fact that he is still unable to decipher the implications of his desires (or to frankly acknowledge them) is comically highlighted in his conflicting self-interrogations: “Was it to clasp her in lifting? or was it to lift her by clasping?”. The passage from self-masturbation (“the growing distress, and celled-up dishonour of boyhood” B, p. 11) to heterosexual attraction (“a relation, oh bliss! unto others” B, p. 11), is seen as a “new thing” which, because it takes place in a rustic context, represents a potential threat to the status quo of Victorian sexual conventions. Philip’s derision of the stuffy oppression of urban middle-class conformity, in which relations between the sexes are reduced to a series of sterile impositions, is reminiscent of Clough’s satirical denouncements in *Duty – That’s To Say Complying*: “Shooting with bows, going shopping together, and hearing them singing, / Dangling beside them, and turning the leaves on the dreary piano, / Offering unneeded arms, performing dull farces of escort / Seemed like a sort of unnatural up-in-the-air balloon work [...] Utter divorcement from work, mother earth, and objects of living” (B, p. 11). In Philip’s sense of the charms of rustic life there is clearly a debt to *The Sorrows of Young Werther*<sup>47</sup>, but without the tragic consequences of Goethe’s epistolary novel. Not only, but the narrative frame of the poem depends upon the external perspective of a third-person omniscient narrator who frequently exposes his character to ridicule, as in this instance in comparing Philip’s passionate discourse to a galloping horse “snorting defiance and force [...] Rein hanging loose to his neck,

47 Published in 1774 and revised in 1787.

and head projected before him” (*B*, p. 12.) and rendering the remainder of his outburst in free direct discourse as he continues, with mounting emotional intensity, to provide romanticised justifications for his erotic desires with an appeal to pre-lapsarian innocence (with an evident wink at *Blank Misgivings* and *The Mystery of the Fall*) and the values of Medieval chivalry:

Oh, if only they knew and considered, unhappy ones! Oh, could they see,  
could,  
 But for a moment discern, how the blood of true gallantry kindles,  
 How the old knightly religion, the chivalry semi-quixotic  
 Stirs in the veins of a man at seeing some delicate woman  
 Serving him, toiling – for him, and the world [...]  
 Oh, could they feel at such moments how man’s heart, as into Eden  
 Carried anew, seems to see, like the gardener of earth uncorrupted,  
 Eve from the hand of her Maker advancing, an helpmate for him,  
 Eve from his own flesh taken, a spirit restored to his spirit [...] (*B*, p. 12)

Philip’s sublimation of his sexual desires through the standpoint of his Chartist empathies is also undermined by his unwitting male chauvinism: “Aye, doing household work, as many sweet girls I have looked at / Needful household work, which someone, after all, must do” (*B*, p. 13). Consequently, his vehement arguments elicit hostile responses from his companions, first with Lindsay’s titillating retort: “Or high-kilted perhaps, as once at Dundee I saw them, / Petticoats up to the knees, or it might be, a little bit higher, / Matching their lily-white legs with the clothes that they trod in their wash-tub!” (*B*, p. 13), then with Hobbes’ mockery of his cultural analogies: “Philip who speaks like a book [...] shall write us a book, a *Treatise upon The Laws of Architectural Beauty in Application to Women*” (*B*, p. 14). This tongue-in-cheek allusion to Pugin’s *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841) is a witty rejoinder to Philip’s categorizations of female beauty (“Where shall in specimen seen be the scullionry stumpy-columnar”, *B*, p. 14), since Pugin’s ‘Catholocizing’ of the Gothic revival parallels his appreciation of women in terms of functionality and essentiality. On the other hand, Adam offers the solemn Aristotelian counter-argument: “to seek the good, to scorn the attractive whether “of rank and fashion”

or “Poverty truly attractive” (*B*, p. 14) and refers to Corinthians<sup>48</sup> in an attempt to adjust the premises of Philip’s political ideology of social equality to a universally verifiable concept of sameness: “Nowhere equality reigns in God’s sublime creations, / Star is not equal to star, nor blossom the same as blossom” (*B*, p. 16). Equality resides only within the same species (or social class) (“There is one glory of daisies, another of carnations”, *B*, p. 16). Rhetorically elaborating on his floral metaphors, Adam slyly shifts the emphasis from being to acting: “We must all do something, and in my judgement do it / In our station; independent of it, but not regardless; / Holding it, not for enjoyment, but because we cannot change it” (*B*, p. 16). For Philip, this position simply sanctions a hypocritical and self-complacent status quo:

Ah! Replied Philip, Alas! The noted phrase of the prayer book,  
Doing our duty in that state of life to which God has called us,  
Seems to me always to mean, when the little rich boys say it,  
Standing in velvet frock by mama’s brocaded flounces,  
Eyeing her gold-fastened book and the chain and the watch at her bosom,  
Seems to me always to mean, Eat, drink, and never mind others. (*B*, p. 16)

Philip’s conclusion recalls the lines from *Easter Day*: “Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is bliss! / There is no Heaven but this [...]”. But instead of spiritual vacuity, his words denounce the selfishness that Adam’s culture leads to in the hands of the privileged classes. Thus, there is a residual bitterness in his request for a rest period from their studies (as opposed to the comparatively light-hearted laments of his fellow-colleagues): “Weary of reading am I, and weary of walks prescribed us; / Weary of Ethic and Logic, of Rhetoric yet more weary”, (*B*, pp. 17–18). Philip’s separation from his tutor signifies temporary liberation from a culture that, far from offering enlightenment, only frustrates his self-development. He becomes a fugitive exile, whilst Adam, the moral settler, is left to observe from a distance the tortuous process of his restless wanderings.

48 I Corinthians, 15:41: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory”.

The dichotomy between Nature and Culture which is at the centre of Adam and Philip's argument is developed in the two opening descriptions of Canto III. The first sequence underlines the meticulous discipline in Adam, Airlie and Hobbes' rigorous timetable: "Reading nine hours a day with the tutor Hobbes and Airlie; / One between bathing and breakfast, and six before it was dinner, / (Breakfast at eight, at four, after bathing again, the dinner) / Finally, two after walking and tea, from nine to eleven" (*B*, pp. 18–19). The mechanical temporal scansion of their cultural and leisurely pursuits is ironically set against the circumstantially detailed wild roaming landscape in the second descriptive sequence:

There is a stream, I name not its name, lest inquisitive tourist  
 Hunt it, and make it a lion, and get it at last into guide-books,  
 Springing far off from a loch unexplored in the folds of great mountains,  
 Falling two miles through rowan and stunted alder, enveloped  
 Then for four more in a forest of pine, where broad and ample  
 Spreads to convey it the glen with heathery slopes on both sides:  
 Broad and fair the stream, with occasional falls and narrows;  
 But, where the lateral glen approaches the vale of the river,  
 Met and blocked by a huge interposing mass of granite,  
 Scarce by a channel deep-cut, raging up, and raging onward,  
 Forces its flood through a passage, so narrow, a lady would step it.  
 There, across the great rocky wharves, a wooden bridge goes,  
 Carrying a path to the forest; below, three hundred yards, say,  
 Lower in level some twenty-five feet, through flats of shingle,  
 Stepping-stones and a cart track cross in the open valley. (*B*, p. 19)

Whilst the I-narrator's mockery of the curious tourist exposes a facetious presumption of his own fame, the fact that the stream is located through precise spatial coordinates ("two miles [...] four more [...] three hundred yards [...] twenty-five feet"<sup>49</sup>) comically undermines his attempt to prevent it from becoming a literary landmark! The narrator's 'mapping' of the "unexplored" landscape functions as a delaying device, the "interval" representing a textual hiatus before the return of the group. The description continues with a blatant metaphorical

49 R.L. Bret and A.R. Jones (eds.), *Wordsworth and Coleridge. Lyrical Ballads*, London, Methuen, 1976 (1963), p. 71: Clough's description recalls Wordsworth's parody of his speaker's empirical observation in *The Thorn*: "I've measured it from side to side / 'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide".

equation between the uncontrollable natural elements (“Forces its flood through a passage”), and the release of repressed sexuality:

But in the interval here the boiling, pent-up water  
Frees itself by a final descent, attaining a basin,  
Ten feet wide and eighteen long, with whiteness and fury  
Occupied partly, but most pellucid, pure, a mirror;  
Beautiful there for the colour derived from green rocks under;  
Beautiful, most of all, where beads of foam uprising  
Mingle their clouds of white with the delicate hue of the stillness. (*B*, p. 19)

The emotionally charged lexical items, ‘boiling’, ‘pent-up’ ‘frees’ and ‘fury’, connotative of sexual frustration and release, also indirectly allude to the turmoil of Philip’s baffled search for the woman who will correspond to his, as yet, imperfectly apprehended ideal. Analogously, the self-eroticism represented by bathing is a counter-image to Philip’s search for mutual sexual experience: “Hid on all sides, left alone with *yourself* and *the goddess of bathing* [...] There in the sparkling champagne, ecstatic, they shrieked and shouted” (*B*, pp. 19–20, italics mine). In this respect, Philip’s separation from the group marks the first stage of his sexual maturity.

The mystery of Philip’s actual whereabouts is comically highlighted in the contradictory accounts of Arthur, Lindsay and Hope:

And it was told, the Piper resuming, corrected of Arthur,  
More by word than by motion, change ominous noted of Adam,  
How at the floating-bridge of Laggan, one morning at sunrise,  
Came in default of the ferryman out of her bed a brave lassie;  
And, as Philip and she together were turning the handles,  
By which the chain is wound that works it across the water,  
Hands intermingled with hands, and at last, as they stepped from the boatie,  
Turning about, they saw lips also mingle with lips; but  
That was flatly denied and loudly exclaimed at by Arthur. (*B*, p. 23)

Their (deliberately?) unreliable narrations<sup>50</sup> humorously obfuscate the nature of the young man’s intentions with Katie, leaving Adam perplexedly “disengaging jest from earnest” (*B*, p. 21). Analogously, Philip’s

50 Unreliable narration is also the tragic paradox behind *Easter Day* and a central preoccupation of *Amours de Voyage*. See also Francis O’Gorman, “Clough’s Difficulties”, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 36, n. 2., 2006, p. 129 who notes

absence forces the poem into acknowledging the portent of his arguments. The recurrent references to the bothie are symptomatic of this interpretative shift. For the derision with which it is surrounded immediately dissipates once it is discovered to be the home of David and Elspie Mackaye:

Finally Philip must hunt for that home of the probable poacher,  
Hid in the braes of Lochaber, the bothie of What-did-he-call-it?

[...]

There shall he, smit by the charm of the lovely potato-uprooter,  
Study the question of sex in the Bothie of What-did-he-call-it. (*B*, p. 18)

[...] Why Hewson we left in Rannoch,

By the lochside and the pines, in a farmer's house, – reflecting, –  
Helping to shear, and dry clothes, and it may be, uproot potatoes,  
Studying the question of sex, though not at What did he call it. (*B*, p. 21)

[...]

Standing beside her, I saw a girl pass; I thought I had seen her,  
Somewhat remarkable-looking, elsewhere; and asked what her name was;  
Elspie Mackaye, she answered, the daughter of David! She's stopping  
Just above there with her uncle. And David Mackaye where lives he?  
It's away west, she replied, they call it Toper-na-fuoisich. (*B*, p. 25)

Although this recurrent inability to pronounce the place name alludes to the linguistic gulf between Scottish and English that pervades the poem, once it is pronounced by (the significantly named) Hope, its aura of foreignness and distance is dispelled and it can finally attain the moral and symbolic valence it is assigned in the poem.

In the opening lines of Canto IV, the first-person narrator posits an ironic contrast between the unbounded scope of the poetic muse and the limitations of modern technology:

But, O Muse, that encompasses Earth like the ambient ether,  
Swifter than steamer or railway or magical missive electric  
Belting like Ariel the sphere with the star-like trail of thy travel,  
Thou with thy Poet, to mortals mere post-office second-hand knowledge  
Leaving, wilt seek in the moorland of Rannoch the wandering hero. (*B*, p. 25)

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how the supplementation of language with more language “is emblematic of the poem’s wider consideration of language’s insufficiency and the place of revision.”

Unable to identify the location of Philip's sudden inexplicable "fierce furious" (*B*, p. 26) roaming through the Highlands, the poet, abandoned to the "mortals mere", reverts to the humorous wordplay of similar-sounding place names: "There is it? Or there? We shall find our wandering hero? / Here in Badenoch, here, in Lochaber anon, in Lochiel, in / Knoydart, Croydart, Moydart, Morrer, and Ardnamurchan, / Here I see him and here: I see him; anon I lose him!" (*B*, p. 26). The narrator's grandiloquent musing preludes Philip's philosophical soliloquy in which, as poet, he ruminates rhetorically over the spiritual essences that constitute inter-relations in both the natural and human world:

Spirits with spirits commingle and separate; lightly as winds do,  
 Spice-laden South with the ocean-born Zephyr; they mingle and sunder;  
 No sad remorse for them, no visions of horror or vileness;  
 Elements fuse and resolve, as affinity draws and repels them;  
 We, if we touch, must remain, if attracted, cohere to the ending,  
 Guilty we are if we do not, and yet if we would we could not:  
 Would I were dead I keep saying, that so I could go and uphold her  
     Surely the force that here sweeps me along in its violent impulse,  
 Surely my strength shall be in her, my help and protection about her,  
 Surely in inner-sweet gladness and vigour of joy shall sustain her,  
 Till, the brief winter o'er past, her own true sap in the springtide  
 Rise, and the tree I have bared be verdurous e'en as aforetime:  
 Surely, it may be, it should be, it must be. Yet ever and ever,  
 Would I were dead, I keep saying, that so I could go and uphold her!

(*B*, p. 27)

As in *Natura Naturans*, the self-governing laws of the natural world are viewed against the dictates of a conscience-ridden humanity. Whereas spirits are free to unite and separate, human relations are conditioned by notions of fidelity which render their sexual interrelations exclusive ("Guilty we are if we do not [...]"). Thus, the naturalistic eroticism of Philip's momentary passion, which is conveyed in a sequence of smooth-running lines and unbroken syntax, is counteracted by the yearning for a hypothetical fidelity (an incongruity grammatically pinpointed by over-emphatic repetition, particularly of the adverb 'surely'<sup>51</sup>) and the awkward juxtaposition of the modal conditionals *could/*

51 In his poem *To Marguerite – Continued*, Arnold uses the same adverb with the opposite effect of underlining the loss of religious faith.



would. Philip's stilted and melodramatic rhetoric is further underlined by the prayer-like iterative structure of his soliloquy, which is quite at odds with his radical temperament. Furthermore, his supplications are not only made ineffective because of the anonymity of the object of his desire but are also set in comic contrast with the jubilant scene at Katie's cottage in which his companions are dancing in carefree ignorance of his whereabouts. These two moments are interlinked on a prosodic level with the skipping rhythm of "Swinging and flinging, and stamping and tramping, and grasping and clasping" counteracting the heavily stressed place names in Philip's soliloquy. The narrator teasingly manipulates diegetic and discourse levels by first humorously delaying the narrative information regarding Philip's fate ("[...] capricious or is it rejected? [...] what is it Adam reads far off by himself in the Cottage?", *B*, p. 28) and then proceeding to unravel the 'mystery' through the indirect report of Philip's letter with the deliberate intention of trivialising his encounter with Katie:

There it was writ, how Philip possessed undoubtedly had been,  
 Deeply, entirely possessed by the charm of the maiden of Rannoch  
 [...]  
 Yea, without touch united, essentially, bodily, with her,  
 Felt too that she too was feeling what he did, – howbeit they parted!  
 How by a kiss from her lips he had seemed made nobler and stronger,  
 Yea, for the first time in life a man complete and perfect,  
 So forth! Much that before too was heard of – Howbeit they parted! (*B*, pp. 28–9)

The verbal mimicry of Philip's words via Adam and the narrator gives way to earnest directness in the second part of his letter:

I was walking along some two miles from the cottage  
 Full of my dreaming – a girl went by in a party with others;  
 She had a cloak on, was stepping on quickly, for rain was beginning;  
 But as she passed, from the hood I saw her eyes look at me.  
 So quick a glance, so regardless I, that although I felt it,  
 You couldn't properly say our eyes met. She cast it, and left it:  
 It was three minutes perhaps ere I knew what it was. I had seen her  
 Somewhere before I am sure, but that wasn't it; not its import;  
 No, it had seemed to regard me with simple superior insight,  
 Quietly saying to itself – yes there he is still in his fancy,  
 Letting drop from him at random as things not worth considering  
 All the benefits gathered and put in his hands by fortune,

Loosing a hold which others, content and unambitious,  
Trying down here to keep-up, know the value of better than he does. (*B*, p. 29)

Philip's brief encounter with Elspie represents the initial stage in his progression towards self-realisation. Her sudden glance, the sensation of which continues after a time-lapse of "three minutes perhaps", accentuates his already acute self-consciousness whilst making him see himself impersonally for the first time in the poem. His misreading of her silent gesture as a reprimand for his callous behaviour, leaves him simultaneously guilt-ridden and unconsciously in love, as well as aware of the pretentiousness of his selfish demands as a wealthy English tourist: "Yes, there he is still in his fancy [...] People here too are people, and not as fairy-land creatures; / He is in a trance and possessed; I wonder how long to continue" (*B*, p. 29). As a psychic response to his self-revulsion, his discourse becomes momentarily stripped of its loquaciousness as he envisions a sordid cityscape of fallen women:

Tell me then, why as I sleep amid hilltops high in the moorland,  
Still in my dreams I am pacing the streets of the dissolute city,  
Where dressy girls slithering-by upon pavements give sign for accosting,  
Paint on their beauteous cheeks, and hunger and shame in their bosoms;  
Hunger by drink and by that which they shudder yet burn for, appeasing,  
Hiding their shame – ah God, in the glare of the public gas lights? (*B*, p. 30)

In this passage, the traditional romantic opposition of pastoral virtue and urban corruption collapses as Philip recognises that his shame of his own lustful desires, which is here projected onto the city prostitutes (metamorphosed into snake-like beings "slithering-by upon pavements"), is not a question of a spatial context, but of individual conscience. Just as the prostitutes' shame is 'hidden' in plain view by the "glare of the public gas lights", so is Philip's own ignominy dramatised by this projection of a lewd night-time city scene which he anxiously seeks to shun ("not daring to look in their faces", *B*, p. 30). This self-conflicting confrontation becomes his undoing with Katie since he is unable to reconcile affection and sexual desire: "You will not think that I soberly look for such things for sweet Katie, / Contemplate really, as possible even, a thing that would make one / Think death luxury, seek death, to get at damnation beyond it" (*B*, p. 30).

The ironic twists in the latter part of the canto evoke a typically Cloughian oscillation between disenchantment and wonder. First, there is the fact that Adam's verbose praise of Elspie's rare gift of insight in his reply to Philip (which subsequent events prevent him from sending) is, in turn, fallacious because it is based on the latter's erroneous interpretation of her mute message:

There are exceptional beings, one finds them distant and rarely,  
Who, endowed with the vision alike and the interpretation,  
See, by their neighbour's eyes, and their own still motions enlightened,  
In the beginning the end, in the acorn the oak of the forest,  
In the child of to-day its children to long generations,  
In a thought or a wish a life, a drama, an epos. (*B*, p. 31)

Although Adam's enthusiastic appraisal of grace and knowledge is actually misplaced here, his intuitive estimation of Elspie will happen to be correct. At the same time, his warning of the degrading effects in the relations between wealthy and poor ("Ignorant they as they are, they have but to conform and be yielding", *B*, p. 32) is answered by the sudden revelation of Philip's infatuation with the aristocratic Lady Maria with which the canto concludes.

Philip's letter from Lady Maria's castle at Balloch, however, is a callous display of bombastic barefaced self-denial:

Often I find myself saying, old faith and doctrine abjuring,  
Into the crucible casting philosophies, facts and convictions, –  
Were it not well that the stem should be naked of leaf and of tendril,  
Poverty-stricken, the barest, the dimmest stick of the garden;  
Flowerless, leafless, unlovely, for ninety-and-nine long summers,  
So in the hundredth, at last, were bloom for one day at the summit,  
So but that fleeting flower were lovely as Lady Maria. (*B*, p. 34)

Embedded within the discourse of his political and moral volte-face, Philip's recourse to floral metaphor here becomes a pretence at coherence and continuity in order to justify a status quo which was previously abhorrent to him. In this bemusing shift "from republican to imperial erotics"<sup>52</sup>, the brutality of a social hierarchy is now viewed as intrinsic to a natural order in which the poor have no part ("Perish the poor and

52 C. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

the weary! what can they better than perish, / Perish in labour for her, who is worth the destruction of empires?" *B*, p. 34), yet must support through their hardship and sacrifice ("Dig, and starve, and be thankful; it is so, and thou hast been aiding", *B*, p. 35). The letter is disseminated with phrases reflecting a schizophrenic recognition of his new self ("Often I find myself saying, and know not myself as I say it [...] And I find myself saying and what I am saying discern not [...] Often I find myself saying, in irony is it, or earnest? [...] Yes, and say, and it seems inspiration – of Good or of Evil!") suggesting the dilemmas of a split-personality hovering between self-denigration and earnestness, – a condition that may be considered as emblematic of the ambiguity of the whole poem.

Philip's letter is answered by Hobbes, who delightedly mocks his sudden lack of self-integrity: "While the pupil alone in the cottage / Slowly elaborates here thy system of feminine graces, / Thou in the palace, its author, art dining, small talking, and dancing, / Dancing and pressing the fingers kid-gloved of a Lady Maria" (*B*, p. 36). The reference to the hunted animal is an ironic reminder of Philip's hatred of aristocratic gamekeepers, whilst the final line of his letter, which echoes Adam's exact words to him during his argument with Hobbes ("We can't know all things at twenty", *B*, p. 35), is revealing of his lack of self-understanding (a point also echoed in his own repetition of Adam's words: "There's truth in what you say, though I don't quite understand you" *B*, p. 17). These verbal interchanges anticipate Adam's gradual authoritative control over the shaping of Philip's destiny after his initial anxieties and self-contradictions.

Canto VI signals a definite shift to the reflective tone and plain style of the latter sections of *The Bothie*. Philip's psychological and moral transformation is figuratively anticipated in the opening description of the barren, elemental landscape: "[...] it is no sweet seclusion; / Blank hill sides slope down to a salt sea loch at their bases [...] Cottages here and there out-standing bare on the mountain, / Peat-roofed, windowless, white; the road underneath by the water" (*B*, p. 36). Against the rugged rustic barrenness of the landscape, Adam and David Mackaye are engaged in a conversation which the narrator reports in a language striking for its matter-of-factness and plainness:

And of the older twain, the elder was telling the younger,  
 How on his pittance of soil he lived, and raised potatoes,  
 Barley, and oats, in the bothie where lived his father before him;  
 Yet was smith by trade, and had travelled making horse-shoes  
 Far, in the army had seen some service with brave Sir Hector,  
 Wounded soon, and discharged, disabled as smith and soldier;  
 He had been many things since that, – drover, school-master,  
 Whitesmith, – but when his brother died childless came up hither;  
 And though he could get fine work that would pay, in the city,  
 Still was fain to abide where his father abode before him. (*B*, p. 37)

Adam, humbled by the elder man's various professional accomplishments, (which include that of school-master) retains a sympathetic silence as he learns of his decision to return to his family home rather than thrive in the city on a more 'respectable' job than as a farmer working on a "pittance of soil". Free indirect discourse and standard word order confer a quiet dignity to David's simple and poignant account as the metrical possibilities of Clough's hexameters are stretched to the very limits, particularly in the enjambed lines: "Yet was a smith by trade, and had travelled making horse-shoes / Far, in the army had seen some service with brave Sir Hector"<sup>53</sup>, and David's spontaneous interruption as he changes the topic to his explanation for his sudden homecoming: "[...] drover, school, master, / Whitesmith, – but when his brother died childless [...]". David's intention to corroborate his familial ties is eventually nullified by Philip and Elspie's departure for New Zealand at the end of the poem. Thus, although the epigraph from Virgil's *Eclogues* for Canto VI, "Ducite ab urbe, domum mea carmina, ducite Daphin" ("Bring him home from the city, my spells, bring Daphnis home") suggests Philip's arrival at the bothie to be a kind of homecoming, this is true only on a figurative level<sup>54</sup>. Moreover, the Latin word *carmina* contains the meaning 'incantation', indicating an external influence behind his accidental discovery of the bothie, which is, in part, due to Philip's own interpretation in his letters to Adam in the flashback sequence of the second section. Here, the shift in Philip's discourse from artificial

53 David's sober evaluation of this, at heart, warm and generous man is a vindication of sorts to his comically ridiculous representation at the dinner-party.

54 As T. A. Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 152, rightly observes: "Not only does he arrive home physically, but emotionally and intellectually he has reached a resting point of sureness and discernment."

verboseness to lexical plainness and directness of tone marks the first stage of his maturity:

Who would have guessed I should find my haven and end of my travel,  
Here, by accident too, in the bothie we laughed about so?  
Who would have guessed that here would be she whose glance at Rannoch  
Turned me in that mysterious way; yes, angels conspiring,  
Slowly drew me, conducted me, home, to herself [...] (*B*, p. 37)

For all his radical positivism, Philip is compelled to realise the limitations of his own attempt to control events and admit the presence of external factors dictating the course of his fate: “[...] the needle / Which in the shaken compass flew hither and thither, at last, long / Quivering, poises to north” (*B*, pp. 37–8). This analogy of his journey to the shaking needle of a compass provides a literal and figurative representation of permanent magnetic attraction which, for him, has both an ideological and subjective valence.

Philip’s happy discovery of his love for Elspie is countermarked by an underlying self-mistrust induced by his absurd infatuation with Lady Maria: (“But I am cautious / More, far more than I was in the old silly days when I left you; / Though I much fear that my eyes betray me” (*B*, p. 38). The awkward syntax reflects his humble struggle to recognise the merits of reciprocity and equality in labour (“Handsome who is, who handsome does, is more so; / Pretty, all is very pretty, it’s prettier far to be useful [...] Stately is service accepted, but lovelier service rendered, / Interchange of service the law and condition of beauty”, *B*, p. 38). From this point onwards Philip’s encounters with Elspie are reduced to a clash of languages in which he is made to learn that, far from being a coy rural maiden ready to submit to his will, she demonstrates a moral tenacity and intuitiveness that reduce him to silence. In an attempt to downplay the shock of Elspie’s female frankness on the Victorian reader, Clough provides an authorial intervention undercut by ironically melodramatic invocations:

Indirect and evasive no longer, a cowardly bather,  
Clinging to bough and to rock, and sidling along by the edges,  
In your faith, ye Muses and Graces, who love the plain present,  
Scorning historic abridgment and artifice antipoetic,  
In your faith, ye Muses and Lovers, ye Lovers and Graces,

I will confront the great peril, and speak with the mouth of the lovers,  
As they spoke by the alders at evening, the runnel below them,  
Elspie a diligent knitter, and Philip her fingers watching. (*B*, p. 39)

In spite of the fact that the narrator's mocking tone appears at odds with his declared intention to abandon poetic artifice and narrative summary in his dealing with the lovers, the shift from mock-mythical (Philip) to realistic/mimetic (Elspie) is precisely the distinguishing feature of the remainder of the poem. Meanwhile, the domestic image of the final line of Canto VI encapsulates the dichotomic poles (Elspie = active, Philip = passive) of their inter-communication<sup>55</sup>.

Philip's disparagement is poetically justified. From his total disregard of Elspie to his discovery of his love for her, the path has been winding, tortuous and not without its moments of embarrassment, all the more for the fact that, until their first real encounter, the narrative focus has been exclusively dedicated to the brash and confused male wanderer, with Elspie a sort of latter-day Penelope awaiting patiently the return of her wildly wandering Ulysses. The question of Elspie's credibility once she emerges as a main character, is not so much a result of her intellectual independence and moral insight, which appear highly implausible for a rustic girl living on a remote Highland farm<sup>56</sup>, but of the eloquence of her speeches, which contain some of the most movingly lyrical utterances in the poem. As a result of her superior moral standing and quiet assertiveness, the outspoken Philip is reduced to a state of passivity in which his fiery radicalism is significantly diminished. It says much about his naivety, for instance, that Elspie is forced to overcome her bashfulness and set him straight with regard to Katie: "Katie is good and not silly [...] she lives and takes pleasure in all, as in beautiful weather / Sorry to lose it, but just as we would be to lose fine weather" (*B*, pp. 39–40). Elspie does not point out to Philip that his choice of Katie was wrong because of selfish jealousy, but because of the purely selfless disappointment that it was wrong for himself to have entertained the idea of making Katie his

55 The grammatical inversions: knitter (= noun), watching (= verb), mitigates the provocative notion of the paradoxical roles (Female/active, Male/passive) in their courtship.

56 See R.K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 279: "The figure of Elspie demands considerable suspension of disbelief". Critics such as Biswas have precisely overlooked Clough's deliberately satirical effects in the confrontations between the couple.

lover: “That was what gave me such pain; I thought it all delusion, / All a mere chance and accident, – Not proper choosing –” (*B*, p. 40). The fact that it takes a lowly rural girl to open his eyes to his mistakes – rather than his enlightened tutor – is one of the delightful ironies of a poem in which male intellectuality is made to be overshadowed by female intuition.

Since Philip can only break his silence on the same terms of open honesty as Elspie, his words now assume an authenticity of feeling that contrasts starkly with his previous conceited discourses:

Elspie, it was your look that sent me away from Rannoch.  
It was your glance, that, descending, an instant revelation,  
Showed me, where I was, and witherward going; recalled me,  
Sent me, not to my books, but to wrestlings of thought in the mountains  
[...]

And he continued more firmly, although with stronger emotion.

Elspie, why should I speak it? You cannot believe it, and should not:  
Why should I say that I love, which I all but said to another?  
Yet should I dare, should I say, O Elspie, you only I love; you,  
First and sole in my life that has been and surely that shall be;  
Could – O, could you believe it, O Elspie, believe it and spurn not!  
Is it – possible, – possible, Elspie? (*B*, p. 40–1)

This passionately authentic interjection is dampened by Elspie’s incongruously abstract response, which is comically reinforced by her absorption in her knitting. Her metaphorical description has the effect of curbing the emotional tension generated by his outburst as well as allowing her to overcome her own embarrassed reaction:

Well, I think of it.  
Yes, I don’t know, Mr Philip, – but only it feels to me strangely  
Like to the high new bridge, they used to build at, below there,  
Over the burn and glen on the road. You won’t understand me.  
But I keep saying in my mind – this long time slowly with trouble  
I have been building myself, up, up, and toilsomly raising,  
Just like as if the bridge were to do it without masons,  
Painfully getting myself upraised one stone on another,  
All one side I mean; and now I see on the other  
Just such another fabric uprising, better and stronger,  
Close to me, coming to join me: and then I sometimes fancy, –  
Sometimes I find myself dreaming at nights about arches and bridges, –  
Sometimes I dream of a great invisible hand coming down, and



Dropping the great key stone in the middle: there in my dreaming,  
There I feel the great key stone coming in, and through it  
Feel the other part – all the other stones of the archway,  
Joined into mine with a queer happy sense of completeness, tingling  
All the way up from the other side's basement stones in the water,  
Through the very grains of mine [...] (*B*, p. 41)

Elspie's architectural analogy is a counter-version of Hobbes' jocular notion that "Every woman is, or should be, a Cathedral, / Built on the ancient plan, a Cathedral pure and perfect" (*B*, p. 35). Elspie's words put to shame his facetious homage to feminine beauty as they testify to her painful growth into maturity ("without masons") and lonely fantasy of "all the other stones of the archway" being "Joined into mine with a queer happy sense of completeness". The extraordinary image of fusion between water and stone in her description conveys a striking eroticism that is a product of her candidness (recalling "the great peril" of the narrator's warning), which is further confirmed in her fear of Philip's passionate urges:

You are too strong, you see, Mr Philip! You are like the sea there,  
Forcing its great strong tide into every nook and inlet,  
Getting far in, up the quiet stream of sweet inland water,  
Sucking it up, and stopping it, turning it, driving it backward,  
Quite preventing its own running: And then, soon after,  
Back it goes off, leaving weeds on the shore, and wrack and uncleanness:  
And the poor burn in the glen tries again its peaceful running,  
But it is brackish and tainted, and all its banks disordered. (*B*, p. 43)

Elspie's sexually explicit simile (underlining the recurrent motif of raging water in the poem) is punctuated by a series of gerunds ("Forcing [...] Getting [...] sucking [...] stopping [...] turning [...] driving [...] preventing [...] running") which reiterate the panic of her mounting anxiety and terror at being deflowered by Philip (a terror reflected in her use of the formal title Mr). But her accusation is immediately countered by the narrator's description in free indirect discourse, of her shocked realisation at her own sexual arousal:

But a revulsion wrought in the brain and bosom of Elspie;  
And the passion she just had compared to the vehement ocean [...]  
Felt she in myriad springs, her sources, far in the mountains,  
Stirring, collecting, rising, upheaving, forth-out-flowing,

Taking and joining, right welcome, that delicate rill in the valley,  
Filling it, making it strong, and still descending, seeking,  
With a blind forefeeling descending, evermore, seeking,  
With a delicious forefeeling, the great still sea before it;  
There deep into it, far, to carry, and lose in its bosom,  
Waters that still from their sources exhaustless are fain to be added. (*B*, p. 44)

Elspie's horrified response is preceded by an underlying presentiment – again rendered though an accumulation of gerunds (“stirring, collecting, rising, upheaving”) which evolves as unashamed eroticism (“forth-out-flowing / taking and joining, right welcome [...] with a delicious forefeeling”). Christopher Matthews' suggestion that her own turbulent hexameters indicate “an ongoing threat of passion-as-assimilation”<sup>57</sup> is true to a certain extent. However, the lines are actually assigned to the narrative voice whose imaginative rendering of Elspie's predicament contrasts with his satirical treatment of Philip's sexual confusion, the implication being that Philip needs to redress the issue of his sexual guilt (as previously evidenced in his nightmarish vision of the city prostitutes) in order to acknowledge Elspie's sexuality. This diegetic shift indicates Clough's awareness of entering risky terrain and his attempt to mitigate its shock effect. For undoubtedly, the explicit sexual symbolism of the passage is expressly designed to scandalise the prudish minds of his middle-class Victorian readers. Even more scandalous is the fact that the erotic imagery is evoked by a female protagonist actively responsible for steering a love relationship towards its proper course.

Moreover, the fact that Elspie expresses misgivings about her future tie with Philip on no less than four occasions forces Philip to confront the apparently insurmountable obstacle of their class differences: “But a revulsion again came over the spirit of Elspie, / When she thought of his wealth, his birth and education [...]” (*B*, p. 44). Elspie not only questions the basis upon which their relationship should be established but, more importantly, doubts its premises as being against the grain of convention: “Should he – he have a wife beneath him? Herself be / An inferior there where only equality can be? / It would do neither for him nor for her” (*B*, p. 45). Far from being a question of ingratitude or inappropriateness, her sense of inferiority expresses a fear of losing an equality which marriage should affirm.

57 C. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

That her judgements are deferred for further confirmation from Adam reiterates the latter's authoritative role as well as partly undermining Philip's credibility as a potential companion for life. It is noticeable how often the names of Elspie and Adam are coupled in the following sequence:

But much was spoken

Now, between *Adam and Elspie*; companions were they hourly:  
*Much by Elspie to Adam, enquiring, anxiously seeking,*  
From his experience *seeking* impartial accurate statement  
What it was to do this or do that, go hither or thither,  
How in the after life would seem what now seeming certain  
Might so soon be reversed; in her quest and obscure *exploring*  
Still from that quiet orb *soliciting* light to her footsteps;  
*Much by Elspie to Adam enquiring, eagerly seeking:*  
*Much by Adam to Elspie, informing, reassuring,*  
*Much that was sweet to Elspie, by Adam heedfully speaking,*  
[...]  
*Much of relations of rich and poor, and true education. (B, p. 45, italics mine)*

Besides the comic detachment of the narrator's indirect discourse and his postponement of the conversation topic ("Much of relations of rich and poor, and true education"), appear the same conspicuous rhetorical features (in italics) that dominate the previous passage (reiterated gerunds, lexical repetition and anaphora). In this case the transference of their semantic function (from erotic confession to rational enquiry) underlines Elsie's tireless probing for truth. Indeed, the question of equality, for her, concerns the intellectual rather than the financial sphere. In this respect, the year she has spent with her father in England has provided her with an inter-cultural awareness that is lacking in Philip. Thus, his refusal to allow her permission to read his books ("This is the way with you all, I perceive, high and low together. / Women must read, – as if they didn't know all beforehand" *B*, p. 47) is offensive to her beyond the fact of its being a woeful outburst of male chauvinism:

What, she said, and if I have let you become my sweetheart,  
I am to read no books! But you may go your ways then,  
And I will read, she said, with my father at home as I used to  
[...]  
What, you suppose we never read anything here in our Highlands,  
Bella and I with the father in all our winter evenings. (*B*, p. 47)

Elspie's determination ultimately sweeps away any preconceptions of feminine naivety and subservience that Philip may have expected of her. The psychological barrier she maintains by insisting on calling him Mr Philip may leave him fraught with exasperation but her realistic attitude towards their relationship ("It may all come, you know, Mr Philip, to nothing whatever", *B*, p. 48) only reinforces her need to be accepted on equal terms.

The epistolary exchanges between Philip and Adam constitute an alternative communicative channel that has its own logical-temporal progression. It is an index of the inconclusive nature of the poem, however, that their quarrel remains essentially unresolved. Philip's final letter to Adam (written well after their sojourn at the bothie) necessarily contains a retraction from the outrageous remarks in his letter from Balloch Castle and the apparent espousing of a newly-acquired Providentialism: "Only let each man seek that for which Nature meant him [...] / Do his duty in that state of life to which God, not man, shall call him" (*B*, p. 50). In spite of the fact that Adam's reply contains an analogous appeal to God: "There is a great Field-Marshal, my friend, who arrays our battalions; / Let us to Providence trust, and abide and work in our stations" (*B*, p. 51), Philip chooses to pick an argument with him by quibbling over the tenuous link between providence and circumstance:

Where does Circumstance end, and Providence where begins it?  
In the revolving sphere which is upper, which is under?  
What are we to resist, and what are we to be friends with?  
If there is battle, 'tis battle by night: I stand in the darkness,  
Here in the *melée* of men, Ionian and Dorian on both sides,  
Signal and password known; which is friend and which is foeman? (*B*, p. 51)

The reference to the battle by night in Thucydides seems to initially accord here (unlike in *Say Not the Struggle*) with Arnold's representation of cosmic confusion at the end of *Dover Beach*. However, Philip's lamentation of the non-existence of such a battle reveals a complete negation of Arnold's metaphorical interpretation: "Would that the armies indeed were arrayed, O where is the battle! / Neither battle I see, nor arraying, nor King in Israel, / Only infinite jumble and mess and dislocation" (*B*, p. 51). For Philip, as for Clough, any struggle is better than no struggle at all. This longing for battle is conducive to his optimistic vision of the return of Philip's own sea of faith (as opposed to the retreat of the "Sea

of Faith” in *Dover Beach*): “So in my soul of souls through its cells and secret recesses, / Comes back swelling and spreading, the old democratic fervour” (*B*, p. 52). Once again Clough responds to Arnold’s ontological pessimism with a vision of political regeneration which, for him, represents the groundwork for moral and spiritual recovery. This cyclic return to the ideological preoccupations of the main protagonist is emblemised in his vision of the city scene which, with its blend of realism and romanticism, contrasts with Philip’s previous night-time description of the city prostitutes. The passage is worth quoting in full since it marks Philip’s transformed poetic and political vision:

But as the light of day enters some populous city,  
 Shaming away, ere it come, by the chilly daystreak signal,  
 High and low, the misusers of night, shaming out the gas lamps, –  
 All the great empty streets are flooded with broadening clearness,  
 Which, withal, by inscrutable simultaneous access  
 Permeates far and pierces, to very cellars lying in  
 Narrow high back-lane, and court and alley of alleys:  
 He that goes forth to his walk, while speeding to the suburb,  
 Sees sights only peaceful and pure; as, labourers settling  
 Slowly to work, in their limbs the lingering sweetness of slumber;  
 Humble market carts, coming-in, bringing-in, not only  
 Flower, fruit, farm-store, but sounds and sights of the country  
 Dwelling yet on the sense of the dreamy drivers; soon after  
 Half-awake servant maids unfastening drowsy shutters  
 Up at the windows, or down, letting-in the air by the doorway;  
 School-boys, school-girls soon, with slate, portfolio, satchel,  
 Hampered as they taste, those running, these others maidenly tripping;  
 Early clerk anon turning out to stroll, or it may be  
 Meet his sweetheart – waiting behind the garden gate there;  
 Merchant on his grass-plot haply, bare-headed; and now by this time  
 Little child bringing breakfast to “father” that sits on the timber  
 There by the scaffolding; see, she waits for the can beside him;  
 Mean-time above purer air untarnished of new-lit fires:  
 So that the whole great wicked artificial civilized fabric, –  
 All its unfinished houses, lots for sale, and railway outworks, –  
 Seems reaccepted, resumed to Primal Nature and Beauty. (*B*, p. 52)

As has been pointed out, this idyllic evocation of the urban world at dawn is reminiscent of *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*<sup>58</sup>. The

58 See D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

difference lies in the fact that Wordsworth's dormant "mighty heart" is here presented in terms of its daily activities and interrelations. The first three lines recall Philip's nocturnal description of the city prostitutes in Canto IV. These now become residual figures 'shamed' away by the all-encompassing and omnipresent daylight, Its complete permeation of every aspect of the cityscape through "inscrutable simultaneous access" is a symbolic projection of his newly conceived democratic outlook of society (as opposed to his radical republicanism) in which each individual has its allotted place. The dreamy sensation which runs throughout is suggestively conveyed on a phonic level in the recurrence of liquids, sibilants and nasals, particularly in the following lines: "[...] as labourers settling / Slowly to work, in their limbs the lingering sweetness of slumber; / Humble market-carts, coming-in, bringing-in, not only / Flower, fruit, farm-store, but sounds and sights of the country / Dwelling yet on the sense of the dreamy drivers". The lazy atmosphere of languid awakening even exerts a peaceful and purifying influence on those who, in contrast, are "speeding to the suburb". The sympathetic gaze of Philip's scrutinising poetic eye encompasses various social categories (labourers, farmers, servant-maids, school-children and collar workers) as each resumes its daily routine. Of course, it cannot escape the reader's attention that this depiction of social relations and occupations, which suggests a conservative acceptance of a fixed hierarchical order, is exclusively devoted to the working classes. It is essentially a 'humanscape' in which sentiments and bonds of affection (here depicted in the clerk strolling out to meet his "sweetheart" and the "Little child", reminiscent of *An Incident*, bringing breakfast to 'father'") find a natural expression. Conversely, Philip's euphoric vision of urban society clashes with his contrary perception of the city as a locus of falseness and corruption ("the whole great wicked artificial civilized social fabric") in which industrialisation and technology only spawn deficiency and crisis ("unfinished houses, lots for sale, and railway outworks"). Nevertheless, the realisation that the scene he is envisaging is merely a semblance, the result of his own solipsistic illusions, (as indicated in the final line) does not detract from the fact that he has now acquired a mature understanding of the ambivalent nature of civilisation which, in spite of the injustices perpetrated by its ruling

classes, contains the potential to transform itself (however momentarily) through the activities of the mass humanity it encompasses.

Paradoxically, despite the fervour with which he plunges into his own social commitments (returning to Oxford where he reads “like fury” in order to pass his degree and marry Elspie), Philip ultimately rejects western industrial and capitalistic society for a self-sufficient, Eden-like existence in New Zealand<sup>59</sup>: “There he hewed, and dug; subdued the earth and his spirit; / There he built him a home; there Elsipe bare him children” (*B*, p. 55). The mock-biblical tone reinforces the ambiguousness of the poem’s conclusion, which is compounded by the third of three references in the poem to the story of Jacob’s bigamous marriage to Rachel and Leah in Genesis 29, which originate in Philip’s apparently innocent description of farm girls “Milking the kine in the fields like Rachel, watering cattle, / Rachael, when at the well the predestined beheld and kissed her” (*B*, p. 13). The fact that Philip makes no mention of Leah is subsequently mocked by Hobbes in Canto III: “Is not Katie as Rachel and is not Philip a Jacob? [...] Shall he not, love entertained, feed sheep for the Laban of Rannoch? / O happy patriarch he, the long servitude ended of wooing, / If when he wake in the morning he find not a Leah beside him!” (*B*, pp. 24–5)<sup>60</sup>. Hobbes’ taunt is in reality a warning that once Philip has possessed *Katie* he may lose all interest in her. But Philip’s marriage to Elspie now provokes Hobbes to expound directly on the dual nature of marriage which the story dramatises:

For this Rachel-and-Leah is marriage; which, I have seen it,  
Lo, and have known it, is always, and must be, bigamy only,  
Even in noblest kind a duality, compound and complex,  
One part heavenly-ideal, the other vulgar and earthly:  
For this Rachel-and-Leah is marriage, and Laban their father  
Circumstance, chance, the world, our uncle and hard taskmaster (*B*, p. 54).

59 The episode is based on Tom Arnold’s departure for New Zealand in 1847 in the search for a freer society. See A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet’s Life*, cit., pp. 121–2.

60 In the biblical story, Laban initially gives Jacob his less attractive daughter Leah as a wife, after making him work for him for seven years, instead of Rachel whom he loved. Subsequently, after making him work another seven years, he also gives him Rachel.

Behind the figurative interpretation of Hobbes' exegetic analysis is an augury of absolute fidelity and constancy which can only be achieved through complete acceptance of the other in marriage. Although Elspie, as a character, virtually disappears from the poem, her strong personality is a guarantee that Philip will have abundant opportunity to be tested in his love for her.

To conclude on a bibliographical note, it has been a critical commonplace to regard Philip as Clough's alter ego and to interpret his intellectual quibble with Adam as a fictional projection of the poet's ideological disputes with Arnold. Although Clough's age at the time he wrote the poem<sup>61</sup> may encourage such an interpretation, there is ample indication of detachment in his depiction of the character to contest the idea of a playfulness indicative of loss of nerve<sup>62</sup>. The fact that the Bothie converges with the antipodes in the final line of relocation and restoration: "And the Antipodes too have a Bothie of Toper-na-fuosich" (*B*, p. 55), places the utopian conclusion at an ironic distance so that Philip and Elspie are consequently left to their own destiny. However, from *The Bothie* onwards, Clough begins to construct his poetic discourse much more firmly around the unresolved issues of his own ontological uncertainties<sup>63</sup>. To be sure, Philip's self-conflicts are positively overcome, mainly because of his readiness to act upon the different psychological states to which he is induced in his relationships with Katie, Maria and Elspie. But the dichotomy between action and inaction initiated in *The Bothie* becomes a problematic issue presenting irresolvable moral consequences in Clough's subsequent two great works.

61 Clough's age, being thirty at the time of composition, was exactly in-between Philip Hewson, who is twenty, and Adam's who is nearing forty. Humphry Ward, *A Writer's Recollections*, London, Collins sons & co. 1918, p. 13, makes the following biographical claim: "The Philip of the poem [...] was in broad outline drawn from my father, and the impression made by his idealistic, enthusiastic youth upon his comrades. And Philip's migration to the Antipodes at the end [...] was suggested by my father's similar step in 1847, the year before the poem appeared." P. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 82 also lists other suggestions besides Mary Augusta Ward's father, Tom Arnold.

62 R.K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

63 C. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 484 one of the few voices outside this chorus, more sensibly remarks: "if Clough might be said to represent himself anywhere in *The Bothie*, it is as the argument itself that fluctuates between Adam and Philip"



## Chapter 6

### *Amours de Voyage*

*Action will furnish belief, – but will that belief be the true one?*<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.1 Clough's Poetic Persona

*Amours de Voyage* (1849), written during Clough's three-month sojourn in Giuseppe Mazzini's short-lived Roman Republic, marks an even more distinct break with Victorian poetic convention than *The Bothie*. The obvious differences between the two works lie in Clough's representation of his main protagonist, where playful affectionate irony is replaced by mordant satire and cynicism. Furthermore, the narrative and thematic development in *Amours de Voyage*, hinges on the juxtaposition of dislocated voices and hermeneutical gaps, rather than clear-cut logical-causal connections. The poem also draws on paratextual and intratextual features (a strategy Clough will also employ in *Dipsychus*) to set up an intriguing interplay between fiction and autobiography which ultimately points to a problematic correlation between authorial voice and poetic persona.

*Amours de Voyage* reflects the darkening mood instigated by Clough's religious misgivings<sup>2</sup> and sense of personal failure at Oxford together with his increasing political disillusionment. By 1847, he had become convinced of the impossibility of social regeneration through

1 *P*, p. 127.

2 Clough refused to conduct morning prayers, for example, during his time as Principle of University Hall, the hall of residence for the new University College in London, which was mainly Unitarian. He was forced to resign from the post at the end of November 1851 as a result of low student numbers which he made no efforts to help increase.

democratic republicanism and, in a letter to his sister dated April 16, gave vent to his bitterness with an uncompromising condemnation of the existing status quo:

Those are indeed happy who can still hope for England, who can find, in identifying themselves with our political or social institutions, a congenial atmosphere; and a suitable machinery for accomplishing at last all that they dream of. Of such sanguine spirits, alas! I am not one. To imagine oneself called upon to 'do good' in the age in which we live, is an illusion to which I was long subject myself, but of the utter fallaciousness of which I am now convinced. (*C*, I, p. 180)

The idea that happiness could be achieved through unquestioning adherence to political and social organisations which perpetrated ruthless competition and social injustice was anathema to Clough's radical liberalism. Moreover, his censure of nationalistic self-righteousness was concomitant with his conviction that the very same institutions of this "suitable machinery" were in cahoots to prevent the realisation of any real form of political democracy. He had witnessed first-hand the momentary triumph of the provisional republican government in Paris<sup>3</sup> only to be informed of its subsequent defeat by a moderate, conservative force after his departure and had watched in frustration as the Chartist movement self-imploded through the lethal combination of internal squabbling and parliamentary repression. Revolutionary failure had become such a familiar spectacle that only two months before his journey to Mazzini's new-founded Roman Republic (on February 15), Clough could comment to his companion in radical politics, Tom Arnold: "Today, my dear brother republican, is the glorious anniversary of 48, whereof what shall we say now? Put not your trust in republics, nor in any institution of man" (*C*, I, p. 244)<sup>4</sup>. For all his latent interest in Mazzini's activities, the Clough who arrived in Rome only two months after its proclamation<sup>5</sup>, was, not surprisingly, a man disenchanted with

3 Clough had travelled to France with Emerson and was with him in Paris for five weeks during the Revolution of 1848.

4 Nevertheless, his disillusionment does not prevent him from signing himself off in a letter to F. T. Palgrave (28 June 1849) thus: "A.H.C. Le citoyen malgré lui" (*C*, I p. 264).

5 Mazzini, who had founded the Giovine Italia movement with the aim of transforming Italy into a united democratic republic, had spent years of political exile in England, where he won the open, though ultimately passive, support of Lord

parliamentary politics and incredulous of ideological agendas that branched the promise of freedom and social equality. *Amours de Voyage*<sup>6</sup>, may have been inspired by the ongoing debate on the Italian Question and liberation of Italy, which had become, in the words of one critic, “the gospel of a generation”<sup>7</sup>, but it is pervaded by a scepticism that sets it apart from pro-Risorgimento works such as Dobell’s *The Roman* (1850) or Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851).

During his Roman ‘vacation’<sup>8</sup>, Clough corresponded with family and friends providing his own accounts of the agitations he witnessed. These letters, which would form the paratextual basis for *Amours de Voyage* (whole sections of which are virtually word-for-word transcriptions of them) testify to his prevailing mood of world-weary scepticism and apathetic detachment during this period. Claude’s first letter to Eustace, in which he describes his initial disappointment of the Holy City, is a case in point:

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Palmerstone’s Liberal government. He was also highly regarded by numerous artists and intellectuals, including Carlyle, Dickens, and J.S. Mill. In 1849, after years of exile and frustrated insurrections, he had succeeded in re-entering Milan, a shrewder, less audacious man, ready to compromise for any political gain. On 29 March, after Pope Pious IX had fled to Naples as a result of his failed attempt to establish a government, he was nominated dictator of the city, together with Carlo Armellini and Aurelio Saffi. It was an older, hardened figure Clough met in 1849 and whose republic was barely two months old on his arrival, though doomed to failure from the start.

- 6 Clough had to wait nine years before the publication of *Amours de Voyage*, which, incidentally, was the only other poem published in his lifetime. It went through various revisions before it was printed serially in the Boston Atlantic Monthly from 1858 and subsequently printed as a whole in 1862. It brought Clough the first money he ever earned for his verse. See *P*, p. 616.
- 7 John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 11. On the same page Pemble points out how Mazzini’s enterprise “inspired Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Algeon Charles Swinburne, Arthur Hugh Clough, Walter Savage Landor, and George Meredith as well as a multitude of minor and minimal bards, to pour out poems, plays, novels, and battle hymns, and the Society of the Friends of Italy, inaugurated in 1851, linked the powerful and the humble in a common pursuit”.
- 8 Clough arrived in Rome at 11 pm on April 15 shortly after Garibaldi’s initial victory against the French incursion and left two weeks after the success of the French siege under the command of General Oudinot and their entrance into the city on July 3.

Rome disappoints me much,—St Peter’s, perhaps, in especial  
 Only the Arch of Titus and view from the Lateran please me  
 [...]
   
 Rome disappoints me much; I hardly as yet understand, but  
 Rubbishy seems the word that most exactly would suit it. (*P*, p. 94)

This reaction may be compared to Clough’s own impressions of Rome in a letter to his mother two days after his arrival:

St Peter’s disappoints me: the stone of which it is made is a poor plastery material. And indeed Rome in general might be called a rubbishy place [...] I have seen two beautiful views since I came, one from San Pietro in Montorio, the other from the Lateran Church over the Campagna. (*C*, I, p. 217)

Both passages contain the same curt observation and supercilious adjective (*Rome/Rubbishy* was evidently too provocative a juxtaposition for Clough to resist including in the poem!). But besides the ‘outrageously’ anti-euphoric reactions of Claude/Clough to the artistic and archaeological wonders of Rome, Clough’s deadpan epistolary accounts also included his reactions to the dangers involving the French siege. One particular letter to his sister (not used for the poem) exhibits a manly forbearance that verges on grim humour: “Perhaps it will amuse you hereafter to have a letter commenced while guns are firing and, I suppose, men falling, dead and wounded. Such is the case on the other side the Tiber while I peacefully write in my distant chamber with only the sound in my ears” (*C*, I, p. 253)<sup>9</sup>. By ironically understating the risks to which he was exposed, Clough seemed to be unwittingly drawing attention to his own plight, thereby creating a paradoxical juxtaposition between self-abnegation and self-drama (a tension which also underlies his characterisation of Claude). At the same time, his own secluded position (“on the other side of the Tiber”) is transmuted into Claude’s essentially distanced, and therefore unreliable, point of view in his narration of the same turbulent events.

Far from indicating a creative deficiency, the overlap between autobiography and fiction as a result of Clough’s adaptations of his

9 In another letter to F.T. Palgrave dated June 21 Clough makes a similar understatement: “It is curious how much like any other city, a city under bombardment looks [...] I wrote you a few lines about ‘the Terror’ but somehow did not send them. Assure yourself that there is nothing to deserve that name” (*C I*, pp. 260–1).

correspondence in the poem is functional to the ambiguous representation of Claude<sup>10</sup> as character and poetic persona. Whilst analogies between Clough and Philip Hewson are relatively circumscribed in terms of playful parody, the idea of a resemblance to his main character in *Amours de Voyage*<sup>11</sup> has disconcerting implications. Although Claude undoubtedly manifests elements of the cynicism and detachment of the real author, he also voices opinions that are often the opposite to those Clough actually endorsed. In effect, Clough's conception of his character/persona is as much an expression of his own anti-authoritarianism and scorn of false morality as it is exemplary of his unbiased quest for truth. Thus, Biswas (who points out the irony of his unprecedented freedom occurring during a siege), rightly observes that Clough: "exploded into a new clarity" after realising "the imprisoning self-definitions into which he had allowed himself to be guided by his responsiveness to the pressures of conformity"<sup>12</sup>. Yet, it is also the case that Clough reveals an element of self-insufficiency through his characterisation of Claude that belies the notion of a liberating experience. In fact, his problematic representation of Claude as character/persona is a question that has engendered divergent critical interpretations<sup>13</sup>. It cannot escape the reader's attention, for instance, that Claude's inactive stance mirrors Clough's own disengagement from the republican cause. In addition, during this lonely period of his life, Clough was also beginning to contemplate the idea of marriage pondering views similar to those expressed by Claude

10 The name derives from the Latin *claudus*, meaning 'limping', a decidedly ironic name for a traveller but one that appropriately refers to his psychological and moral volatility. Claude is also the only character in the poem never referred to by surname, a factor which underlines his condition of exile and disaffiliation.

11 The fact that both names begin with the same two letters and are both monosyllables suggests a similarity that is only partial.

12 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

13 A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet's Life*, *cit.*, p. 173. for example, remarks: "To treat Claude's letters as autobiographical statements is to insult the poet's remarkable creative power. It was no small achievement to make the reader identify with [...] the vexations and sorrows of a character who is presented, initially at least, as a clearly odious person." D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 87, on the other hand, finds a partial correspondence between the poet and his fictional character: "Here is the man he sometimes—not always—felt himself to be: a crippled, paralysed person, someone who had the natural, instinctive man in him throttled into lifelessness by too much indoctrination, too much moralising"

in the poem. Yet, what is of particular relevance, (besides the chicken-and-egg question of where Clough begins and Claude ends) is the fact that, beyond certain shared personality traits, Clough maintains a moral detachment in his representation of his main character which is indicative of a need to shed his own negativity. It is significant that his retort to J. C. Shairp's complaint of the immorality of the poem contains the outburst: "Gott und Teufel, my friend, you don't suppose all that comes from myself! I assure you it is extremely not so!"<sup>14</sup> which surely suggests an implicit recognition of the truth behind those elements of convergence between himself and his poetic persona that he is determined to suppress.

## 6.2 *Amours de Voyage*

The plot of *Amours de Voyage* can be summarised in a few words. Claude, an Oxford don visiting Rome during the newly-established Roman republic, falls into the company of the Trevellyns, a middle-class English family who are also on vacation in the city. He inadvertently finds himself involved with their young daughter, Mary, with whom he conducts a half-hearted and reluctant courtship. Eventually, during the French siege of Rome, Mary escapes with her family to Florence, bemused and offended by his dithering behaviour. Realising he has lost his opportunity with a woman who commanded his respect and admiration, Claude determines to seek her out and, after a series of near-miss encounters, is forced to renounce his search<sup>15</sup>. Whilst the bellicose struggle of the Roman republicans against the invading French army constitutes the sub-plot, rather than the central focus, as would be the case in an epic poem, it is certainly no mere backdrop to the main narrative. For Clough's impressionistic evocation of the defeated rebellion is crucial to the sense of indeterminateness which pervades the poem as its morally and intellectually irresolute main protagonist frets his time away, like a modern Hamlet, in melodramatic self-pity. The twofold

14 Quoted in A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life*, cit., p. 173.

15 The sense of a love affair being doomed even before it starts is also the recurring feature of Arnold's *Switzerland*.

paradox of a failed love affair that is never really initiated, and the political defeat of an ill-fated revolution, belies both the Carlylean notion of the individual hero and the blind optimism of empirical Victorian pragmatism<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, the emphasis on dejection and disenchantment deliberately deconstructs the tenets of such ideological constructions in Clough's attempt to convey the psychological, moral and metaphysical crisis of a sceptical Victorian intellectual.

Despite the thinness of its plot-line, *Amours de Voyage* is a daringly experimental poem, engaging, racy, modern in tone and instilled with a colloquial energy that recalls its immediate predecessor, with the noteworthy difference that its fusion of narrative fiction, philosophical inquiry, religious speculation, socio-political commentary and idle gossip creates a multilevel discourse which corroborates Clough's sense of poetry as a reflection of the confusions and complications of real life. Not surprisingly, his continued preoccupation with a poetry of the zeitgeist (as evident in his merging of fiction and documentary report) again met with the hostility of his friend Matthew Arnold – one of the few friends to whom Clough had sent a copy of the poem in manuscript form<sup>17</sup>. The inconsequential finale of the poem (in contrast to the happy ending of *The Bothie*) was also a puzzle for many of Clough's contemporaries. As in the case of *The Bothie*, Clough was prepared for negative reactions. During an exchange of letters with J. C. Shairp, who had advised him against publishing the poem, he retorted with a sardonic gleefulness: "Your censure of the conception almost provoked me into

16 Stefanie Markovits, "Arthur Hugh Clough, *Amours de Voyage* and the Victorian Crisis of Action", *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 55, June 2000, p. 463 observes: "The Failure of plot in *Amours de Voyage* represents a gesture towards realism: in a laissez-faire world, the courses of actions are to a great degree impossible to read."

17 H. F. Lowry (ed), *op. cit.*, pp. 131–2. "We will not discuss what is past any more: as to the Italian poem, if I forbore to comment it was that I had nothing special to say – what is to be said when a thing does not suit you – suiting and not suiting is a subjective affair and only time determines, by the colour a thing takes with years, whether it *ought* to have suited or no". However, six years later (on August 2 1855), commenting on the publication of Tennyson's *Maud*, he wrote to Clough: "From the extracts I have seen of *Maud*, he seems in his old age to be coming to your manner in the *Bothie* and the Roman poem. That manner, as you know, I do not like: but certainly, if it is to be used, you use it with far more freedom vigour and abundance than he does". *Ibid*, p. 147.

publishing because it showed how washy the world is in its confidences [...] But I probably shan't publish for fear of a row with my Sadduces" (C, I, p. 278)<sup>18</sup>. Even his most sympathetic readers failed to understand its deliberate satirical undermining of Victorian expectations of narrative convention. Emerson's response was perhaps the most stinging: "I cannot forgive you for the baulking end or no end of the 'Amours de Voyage'" (C, II, p. 548). Clough's choice of the epistolary form (in which none of the characters ever engage in correspondence with the other) is a functional device which serves to augment the sense of psychological alienation that is central to the poem's meaning, as well as to stress the importance of the "verbalisation of experience"<sup>19</sup>, as opposed to actual experience. Certainly, the modern reader is in a better position to appreciate the degree to which the ironic interface between the self-preoccupied, vacuous world of its privileged English protagonists and the agitated socio-political situation of a country struggling to construct a national identity prepares the terrain for the poem's deluding conclusion.

From a metrical point of view, Clough adopts a decidedly wider range of scansion in *Amours de Voyage* than those he employs in *The Bothie*. An immediately evident instance concerns the contrast between the traditional metres of the italicised verses which introduce and conclude each canto and the freer rhythmic patterns that characterise the letters which make up the rest of the poem. The resulting stylistic and lexical dichotomy highlights the epistemic and ontological tensions underlying the work (a strategy which anticipates by seventy-two years T.S. Eliot's poetic approach in the *Waste Land*). In this respect, the lyrical verses, which combine the regularity of the traditional dactylic metre with a deliberately archaic and 'poeticised' language, function as an ironic frame to each canto:

18 Clough's reference is to his superiors at University Hall.

19 John Goode, "Amours de Voyage: The Aqueous Poem" in Isobel Armstrong (ed.) *The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations*, London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 292. Goode's essay may be considered the first modern appreciation that puts Clough's poem on the same scale as the great Victorian poems. Goode focuses in particular on what he calls "the richness of its verbal texture" which he connects with the poem's search for continuity (p. 276).



/ x x   / x x   / x x  
Over the great windy waters and

/ x x   / x x   / x  
over the clear crested summits.

/ x x   / x   x /  
Unto the sun and the sky,

x /   x x /   x x /  
and unto the perfecter earth,

/ x x   / x x /   x x  
Come, let us go to a land wherein

/ x x   / x   / x  
gods of the old time wandered,

/ x x   / x x /  
Where every breath even now

/ x x   / x   x /  
changes to ether divine. (*P*, p. 94)

Set against Claude's first letter to Eustace, the metrical and rhetorical differences of Clough's hexameters are immediately apparent:

/ x   / x x   / x   / x  
Dear Eustacio, I write that you may

/ x x   / x  
write me an answer,

/ x   / x   / x x /   x x /   x x   / x  
Or at least to put us again *en rapport* with each other.  
[...]

/ x x /   x /  
Rome disappoints me much,

x /   x x   / x x   / x  
St Peter's, perhaps, in especial:

/ x x / x / x x / x x / x x / x  
 Only the Arch of Titus and view from the Lateran please me:

/ x / x x / x x / x  
 This, however, perhaps, is the weather,

x / x x / x  
 which truly is horrid. (*P*, p. 95)

The movement is natural, the numerous punctuation marks, emphatic caesuras, parenthetic words and phrases, evoking the rhythms of speech rather than reflecting poetic scansion as in the lyrical verses. Only two of the lines from Claude's letter begin with a dactylic foot and various substitutions are possible<sup>20</sup>. So predominant is this principle of metrical irregularity with regard to the letters that scattered instances of regularity (such as the internal rhyme and regular cadence of the final line quoted above) tend to be heavily foregrounded. The metrical contrast between the more traditional scansion of the italicised poems and the looser, rougher rhythm of the letters is maintained throughout, as if to posit, on a prosodic level, the temporal breach between past and present which is of such dramatic focus in the poem. Not only, but in the letters, Clough resumes and refines the prosaic effects he produces so successfully in the latter sections of *The Bothie* in order to cement a series of otherwise dialogically dislocated discourses<sup>21</sup>.

20 For example, the following yields mainly dactylic feet:

/ x / x / x x / x x / x x / x  
 Or at least to put us again *en rapport* with each other.

21 For S. Markovits, *op. cit.*, p. 468, Clough's hexameters create a "generic hybridity, incorporating the skeleton of the epic, the immediacy and inwardness of the lyric, and the colloquialism of the novel." Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 318, considers Clough's hexameters in *Amours de Voyage* to be "infinitely more subtle in movement than the hexameters of *The Bothie*". W. D. Shaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–70, assigns the influence of Clough's metrical discipline to John Keble and goes so far as to ask: "without using metre to shape out channels in which the competing claims of action and knowledge can begin to flow, could Clough write the poem at all?" whilst J. Goode, *op. cit.*, p. 294 suggests that "Clough uses the hexameter to discriminate the conflict of languages". Among the detailed studies of Clough's hexameters see also: Erik Gray, "Clough and His Discontents: *Amours de Voyage* and the English Hexameter." *Literary Imagination* 6.2 (Spring 2004), pp. 195–210; Prins, Yopie.

The four epigraphs which head the poem have three important paratextual functions. First, they are made up of quotations concerning the three countries implicitly or explicitly represented (England, France and Italy). Second, as a juxtaposition of pithy poetic statements they anticipate the fragmented structure and content of the poem. Third, as a series of dogmatic assertions they cumulatively belie the psychological flaws and metaphysical uncertainties of the poem's self-consciously melodramatic protagonist. The first quotation (from *Twelfth Night*) "Oh, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, / And taste with a distempered appetite!" (*P*, p. 94), is a neat summation of the negative traits of Claude's personality, besides anticipating the mood of bitter self-recrimination with which he conducts his relationship with Mary. The second quotation, from an otherwise unidentified French novel ("Il doutait de tout, meme de l'amour" *P*, p. 94) anticipates the broader philosophical scope of his scepticism. For Claude's emotional impotency impedes him to the very end of the poem from deciding whether what he feels for Mary is love or a purely physical attraction. The third quotation, from Horace ("Solvitur ambulando" *P*, p. 94 – "It is solved by walking"), points to the poem's undermining of the self-enlightening experience of travel. Claude's recurrent recourse to his Murray guide<sup>22</sup>, for example, is symptomatic of his fear of adventuring beyond the definitely mapped out territories of a common (and safe) tourist itinerary. In spite of the fact that he is conducting a Grand Tour, the only 'illumination' Claude derives from his travels is the confirmation (or non-confirmation) of what he has already read in his guide book<sup>23</sup>. The last two lines of the quotation ("Flevit amores<sup>24</sup> / Non elaboratum ad pedem" *P*, p. 94 – "He lamented his loves / In unpolished metre") is, on the one hand, a joke by Clough

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"Victorian Meters." *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*. Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2000, pp. 89–113.

- 22 John Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy* was published in 1843. Together with Baedeker, Murray's was one of the most popular guides for Victorian tourists condensing a wealth of information in a relatively compact format.
- 23 Christopher M. Kierstead, "Where 'Byron used to Ride': Locating the Victorian Travel Poet in Clough's *Amours de Voyage* and *Dipsychus*, *Philological Quarterly*, 77, 1998, p. 379, rightly observes in Claude's touristic attitude: "a skeptical avoidance of leaps of faith" and "at odds with the prevailing Victorian ideology of travel as self-affirmation."
- 24 Homer's original word is "amorem".

at his own expense: a mocking self-appraisal of the pounding rhythms of his 'heretical' hexameters. On the other hand, the lines also refer to Claude's forlornness after his wasted opportunity with Mary and the fact that he is also the 'author' twice over of *Amours*: in his letters to Eustace and in the lyrical verses interspersed throughout the poem. In spite of the anticipatory elements provided by the epigraphs, their critical commentary is only partially reliable and, to a certain extent, the poem can be seen as an attempt to retract from their simplistic conclusions through the representation of Claude's self-tortured and convoluted search for Absolute Truth – a search entailing the denunciation of all that is ephemeral and deceptive.

The title of the poem also presents a series of ambiguities. The French words are connotative of romanticism and the French revolution – however those responsible for the suppression of the Roman republic are, ironically, the very representatives of liberty, equality and fraternity! Also, the word *amour* may be connected to travel (which is, as seen, a notion implicitly criticised in the poem) or to the lovers of the poem (none of which declare they are in love). From the outset, the notion of travel is depicted in the duple senses already discussed: on the one hand, the first part of the lyrical evocation in the poem in italics (above) is a romantic celebration of movement, imbued with a Shellyean energy urging the theme forward; on the other hand, the second part introduces an anti-voice that contradicts these bold assertions:

*Come, let us go; though withal a voice whisper 'The world that we live in,  
Whithersoever we turn, still is the same narrow crib;  
'Tis but to prove limitation and measure a cord, that we travel;  
Let who would 'scape and be free go to his chamber and think;  
'Tis but to change idle fancies for memories wilfully false;  
'Tis but to go and have been'. – Come little bark! Let us go. (P, p. 94)*

The counter-whispering voice interrupts the flow (though not the actual scansion) of the hexameters of the first four lines with a heavy caesural pause after the active verbs *come* and *go*. The assumption that it is "to prove limitation [...] that we travel" (P, p. 94) – is taken up again in Claude's first letter: "[...] I could travel to Athens, to Delphi, and Troy, and Mount Sinai, / Though but to see with my eyes that these are vanity also" (P, p. 95). The schism between lyrical/anti-lyrical speaker

prepares the terrain for Clough's representation of the inner conflicts of a disillusioned intellectual sensibility. Thus, Rome (the temporary alienating locus of Claude's journey) only reveals the folly and futility of human vanity. It is a *Rubbishy* place where: "All the foolish destructions, and all the sillier savings, / All the incongruous things of past incompatible ages / Seem to be treasured up [...] to make fools of present and future" (*P*, p. 95). Yet, in spite of the fact that this cultural and historical wasteland is a paradoxical symbol of the impossibility of establishing a vital connection with the past, it must be remembered that, like Clough, Claude is visiting the capital city as a tourist in order to view and admire the remnants of its artistic and architectural heritage. Indeed, by travelling to Rome, Claude finds himself not only forced to confront daunting philosophical and religious questions, but also to take up a position in the political struggle of which he becomes an unforeseeable eye-witness.

Besides his metrical innovations, Clough's choice of the epistolary form also allows him to experiment with an increasingly wider range of language styles. Whilst letter-writing is undoubtedly central to the dialogical development of *The Bothie*, in *Amours de Voyage* its function is to corroborate the essential self-centredness of its characters. Indeed, all of the letters are unidirectional with their addressees remaining silent interlocutors whose replies are, at the very most, inferred<sup>25</sup>. At the same time, Clough skilfully circumvents the risk of creating a series of detached monologic discourses, through the ideological and temperamental dissimilarities of his three letter-writers. The resulting linguistic heteroglossia is compounded by the italicised lyrical poems that appear as the utterances of an omniscient narrator. Whether one agrees or not with the fact that they may be taken as Claude's own compositions<sup>26</sup>

25 The poem underwent numerous revisions before publication, Clough originally including replies by Eustace.

26 Suzanne Bailey, "A Garland of Fragments': Modes of Reflexivity in Clough's 'Amours de Voyage', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 31, 1993, p. 160, suggests that the italicized stanzas may be read "together as a unit, as the actual poem (or poetic fragments) produced by Claude during his experiences in Rome". However, she weakens her argument by allowing that "the relation between these two voices (i.e., the lyrical poems and Claude) is not straightforward. At times, the narrator's voice provides a gloss on Claude's text; yet at other moments, it seems to contradict – subtly – Claude's position". The fact that Claude is such a woefully

(and as such effectively representing his own poetical interpretations of his experiences), they nevertheless provide a crucial contribution to the sense of fragmentation and discontinuity that pervades the poem.

Claude's initial indifference to Rome is paralleled by his equally cold dismissal of England. In contrast to Dickens who, five years previously, could only see London when he beheld Rome<sup>27</sup>, Claude is made to state that: "Rome is better than London because it is other than London" (*P*, p. 96). In his casual rejection of his fellow countrymen he unabashedly includes his friend and confidante Eustace: "It is a blessing, no doubt, to be rid, at least for a time, of / All one's friend's and relations – yourself (forgive me!) included" (*P*, p. 96). No counter-response from Eustace follows, though an early draft of the poem contained Eustace's replies, which Clough, wisely, omitted in the final version. For Claude's letters are in reality a form of self-communing the paradoxical and self-contradictory nature of which would only be weakened by the presence of a direct interlocutor<sup>28</sup>. His need to escape from the rigid orthodoxy and social pressures of English life and culture is expressed in terms of intellectual snobbery: "All the assujettissement of having been what one has been, / What one thinks one is, or thinks what others suppose one" (*P*, p. 96). The comic pretentiousness of his use of the French word in reality serves to indicate a cluster of pejorative meanings impossible to render with a single term in English (including servitude, subordination, dependence and inferiority) to denounce the

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self-contradictory character makes it all the more reasonable to suggest that the poems are written by him. See also S. Malkovits, *op. cit.*, p. 455 who expresses a similar indecision: "The strangely uneven tone of the lyrical passages that begin and end each canto adds to the confusions of voice: while sometimes they seem to represent Claude's own effusions, at other points they read like a third-person narrator's reflections on Claude's progress."

27 Charles Dickens, *Pictures From Italy*, ed. David Paroissien, London, Andre Deutsch, 1973, pp. 160–1: "[...] when, after another mile or two, the Eternal City appeared, at length, in the distance; it looked like—I am half afraid to write the word—like LONDON!!! There it lay, under a thick cloud, with innumerable towers, and steeples, and roofs of houses, rising up into the sky, and high above them all, one Dome. I swear, that keenly as I felt the seeming absurdity of the comparison, it was so like London, at that distance, that if you could have shown it me, in a glass, I should have taken it for nothing else."

28 Clough was surely aware of this when he decided to omit Eustace's replies in the final version of the poem.

oppressive effects of social obligation and conformity of Victorian society. Nevertheless, after only a few days, Claude surrenders to the very same impulse for adaptation and conformity:

Rome disappoints me still; but I shrink and adapt myself to it.  
Somehow a tyrannous sense of a superincumbent oppression  
Still, wherever I go, accompanies ever, and makes me  
Feel like a tree (shall I say?) buried under a ruin of brickwork. (*P*, p. 95)

Although it may have become reduced to “[M]erely a marvellous mass of broken and castaway wine-pots” – *P*, p. 95), Claude’s quasi-surreal arboreal image conveys the suffocating omnipresence of the Roman Empire to which the present context appears as an almost insignificant backdrop. In the attempt to escape its stifling influence, Claude, in candid self-contradiction, turns to the very fellow-compatriots he has been determined to avoid: “Yet, in despite of all, we turn like fools to the English. / Vernon has been my fate; who is here the same that you knew him – / Making the tour, it seems, with friends of the name of Trevellyn” (*P*, p. 95). As the main character, Claude’s letters far outnumber those of Georgina and Mary Trevellyn, which are selected for their direct references to him. Georgina’s opening letter engages in shallow chit-chat and commonplace matters, the facile excitement of her stock response to her surroundings contrasting humorously with Claude’s intellectual fastidiousness:

At last, dearest Louisa, I take up my pen to address you.  
Here we are, you see, with the seven-and-seventy boxes,  
Courier, Papa and Mamma, the children and Mary and Susan:  
Here we all are at Rome, shall and delighted, of course, with St Peter’s,  
And very pleasantly lodged in the famous Piazza di Spagna.  
Rome is a wonderful place, but Mary shall tell you about it;  
Not very gay, however; the English are mostly at Naples [...] (*P*, p. 96)

Like Claude, Georgina is apparently renewing a communication that has been interrupted, though her implicitly apologetic interjection suggests a cordiality and affection for her addressee completely lacking in Claude whose opening words are the demand for an answer. As John Woolford has pointed out, the fact that Claude “can only begin or resume a correspondence by ironic reference to the conventions of

correspondence” indicates “a difficulty of communication within the very frame of communication”<sup>29</sup>. Georgina, who, on the other hand, “punctiliously follows the conventions of letter form”<sup>30</sup> reveals the stock responses of an English tourist in Rome, whilst ultimately betraying a blithe indifference to her surroundings. This is confirmed by her need to seek out other English people (since Rome is “[N]ot very gay” without them!), a topic which takes up three quarters of her letter<sup>31</sup>. Her reference to the “seven-and-seventy boxes” is also an unwittingly humorous disclosure of her callous snobbery. It is hardly surprising that a mutual antipathy emerges between Claude and Georgina before they even meet, with Georgina’s negative summation (“Who can a Mr Claude be whom George has taken to be with? / Very stupid, I think, but George says so *very* clever” – *P*, p. 96), echoed by Claude’s description of Georgina as “too silly in my apprehension for Vernon” (*P*, p. 98). Neither character is immune from Clough’s satiric handling, of course. But Claude’s intellectualism and self-interrogation are clearly closer to his own sensibility than Georgina’s middle-class trivialising<sup>32</sup>. In this respect, when read against Clough’s own frustrated epistolary exchanges with Hawkins over the 39 articles, there is an added poignancy to letters IV and V:

No, the Christian faith as, at any rate, I understand it,  
 With its humiliations and exaltations combining,  
 Exaltations sublime, and yet diviner abasements,  
 Aspirations from something most shameful here upon earth and  
 In our poor selves to something most perfect above in the heavens –  
 No, the Christian faith, as I, at least, understand it,  
 Is not here, O Rome, in any of these thy churches. (*P*, p. 96)

- 29 John Woolford, “Textual Materiality in the Victorian Verse-Letter”, in *Letter(s): Functions and Forms of Letter-Writing in Victorian Art and Literature*, Mariacconcetta Costantini, Francesco Marroni, Anna Enrichetta Soccio (eds.), Rome, Aracne, 2009, p. 28.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 31 This fact is confirmed in Clough’s letter to his mother: “A great many English left about a week ago. This hotel is almost empty; last week it was full [...]” (*C*, I, p. 252).
- 32 See Robert Micklus, “A Voyage of Juxtapositions: The Dynamic World of ‘Amours de Voyage’”, *Victorian Poetry*, 18. 4, 1980, p. 410, who, whilst rightly underlining the principle of juxtaposition as an intricate structural and thematic element of the poem, curiously ignores the negative implications of the character of Georgina.



Behind Claude's verbal repetitions lies an irritation with the grandiose aspirations of religious systems. It is a question he has evaluated cerebrally ("I understand it") rather than experientially. This negative evaluation is countered by his discovery of the religious manifestations in Rome which are: "[...] more *rational* far, more earthly, / Actual, less ideal, devout not in scorn and refusal, / But in a positive, calm, Stoic-Epicurean acceptance"— *P*, p. 96). Although Claude's "Stoic-Epicurean" connection is something of a paradox since the Stoics and Epicureans did not exactly represent the same things, the dependence on supernatural power in the one and the stress on natural desires in the other are embodied in the restrained spirituality he perceives in the art and architecture of Rome. Nevertheless, his realisation that it has been overlaid through the centuries by an adoration made up of cheap and vulgar ornamentation leads to a bitter tirade against the Baroque decadence that followed Martin Luther's reformation, St Ignatius and the Jesuits:

Luther was foolish, – but, O great God! What call you Ignatius?  
 O my tolerant soul, be still! But you talk of barbarians,  
 Alaric, Attila, Genseric; – why, they came, they killed, they  
 Ravaged, and went their way; but these vile tyrannous Spaniards,  
 These are here still, – how long, o ye heavens, in the country of Dante?  
 [...]

Here, with emasculate pupils and gimcrack churches of Gesu,  
 Pseudo-learning and lies, confessional boxes and postures, –  
 Here with metallic beliefs, and regimental devotions, –  
 Here, overcrusting with slime, perverting, defacing, debasing,  
 Michael Angelo's dome, that had hung the Pantheon in heaven,  
 Raphael's Joys and Graces, and thy clear stars, Galileo! (*P*, p. 97)

Claude's profound scorn of Post-Reformation (and Post-Renaissance) fanaticism parallels Clough's own loathing of Catholicism, whilst his outrage at the persistent presence in "the country of Dante" of "tyrannous Spaniards (with their ominously incongruent combination of "emasculate pupils", "metallic beliefs", and "regimental devotions") prepares the terrain for his eventual sympathetic support of the Romans' cause in Canto II. Indeed, Rome gradually impinges itself on Claude in

such a way that he is forced to make his own evaluations of what he perceives to be its true and false identity<sup>33</sup>.

From letter VI the story takes precedence over the discourse elements with Claude's wilting criticism of the Trevellyns:

Middle-class people these, bankers very likely, not wholly  
Pure of the taint of shop; will at table d'hôte and restaurant  
Have their shilling's worth, their penny's pennyworth even:  
Neither man's aristocracy this, nor God's God knoweth!  
Yet they are fairly descended, they give you to know, well connected;  
Doubtless somewhere in some neighbourhood have, and are careful  
to keep, some  
Threadbare-genteel relations, who in their turn are enchanted  
Grandly among county people to introduce at assemblies  
To the unpenned cadets our cousins with excellent fortunes. (*P*, p. 98)

In spite of their middle-class status – during what is in effect the dawn of modern tourism – the Trevellyn's assume the self-conscious pose of would-be aristocrats, and for this reason become the immediate object of Claude's contempt. The description of Vernon as he lightly flirts with the three sisters “So that he trifles with Mary's shawl, ties Susan's bonnet, / Dances with all, but at home is most, they say, with Georgina [...]” (*P*, p. 98) is reminiscent of Clough's mockery of genteel bourgeois domesticity in *Duty – That's to Say Complying*. Yet, in this epistolary poem, where nothing is straightforward, even the effect of Claude's caricature of the Trevellyn's undergoes a reformulation. For no sooner is the ridiculousness of their manners laid bare than the ironic focus backfires onto himself. Obligated to attenuate his acidic comments (“Ah, what a shame, indeed, to abuse these most worthy people!” – *P*, p. 98), undecided whether to condone their “innocent rustic pretensions” and “reverent worship of station” (*P*, p. 98) or “like Iago [...] be nothing at all, if it is not critical wholly” (*P*, p. 98), Claude can only conclude with a denigrating assessment of himself as a “poor critical coxcomb Adam” walking in the Garden of Eden “in coxcomb exaltation” (*P*, p. 98 without “an help-meet for him” (*P*, p. 99). The implicit reference to Genesis 2:18 (“And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; yet will I make him an help meet for him”) is

33 Cfr. J. Goode, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

doubly ironic in view of his proud view of himself as “the childless and bachelor uncle” (*P*, p. 100). In reality, his veneer of contempt for the bourgeois conventions of family life conceals an underlying resentment of his own self-inadequacy. Not only, but as his sarcasm softens to a mild-mannered acquiescence, the Trevellyn’s suddenly appear to him in a sympathetic, even comforting, light: “But this happy, serene coexistence / Is to some poor soft souls, I fear, a necessity simple [...] Meat and drink and life, and music, filling with sweetness, / Thrilling with melody sweet, with harmonies strange overwhelming [...]” (*P*, p. 99).

Claude’s bombastic apostrophe to the statues of Castor and Pollux (the twin brothers of Greek and Roman mythology also known as the Dioscuri) in letter X represents an abrupt shift of focus from obsessive subjectivity to abstract meditation:

O ye mighty and strange, ye ancient divine ones of Hellas,  
 Are ye Christian too? to convert and redeem and renew you,  
 Will the brief form have sufficed, that a Pope has set up on the apex  
 Of the Egyptian stone that o’ertops you, the Christian symbol? (*P*, p. 100)

Claude’s theatrical invocation to the ancient Greek and Roman deities (“Juno and Ceres, Minerva, Apollo, the Muses and Bacchus” – *P*, p. 100) underlines the necessity of establishing a connection between the two apparently irreconcilable consummate experiences in Man’s spiritual history<sup>34</sup>: “[U]tter, O some one, the word that shall reconcile Ancient and Modern!” (*P*, p. 100). Claude does not regard Christianity as superseding paganism, but recognises a correspondence between the two forms of religion which history has distorted into a relation of mutual exclusion. This consideration is incongruously followed up in Claude’s next letter by his petty worldly worries over the Trevellyn’s who, by the end of the first canto, have become the object of his cringingly embarrassing gratitude:

Is it contemptible, Eustace, – I’m perfectly ready to think so –  
 Is it, – the horrible pleasure of pleasing inferior people?  
 I am ashamed my own self; and yet true it is, if disgraceful,  
 That for the first time in my life I am living and moving with freedom.

34 Clearly, Claude is not simply responding “to the spell of antiquity” as suggested by R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

I, who never could to the people I meet with my uncle, –  
 I, who have always failed, – trust me, can suit the Trevellyns;  
 I, believe me, – great conquest, – am liked by the country bankers.  
 And I am glad to be liked, and like in return very kindly. (*P*, p. 101)

Claude's self-centredness, highlighted by the mock-drama of his anaphoric repetition of the first person pronoun, renders his relations with the Trevellyns' unnecessarily complex and problematic: his pleasure in their company vying with his shame of associating with them; his sense of superiority giving way to a blushing self-unworthiness. In the momentary felicity of his social acceptance, Claude ironically invokes the principles of the Victorian economic doctrine so detested by Clough: "So it proceeds; *laissez faire, laissez aller*, – such is the watchword" (*P*, p. 101). In actual fact, it is precisely because Claude is content to do nothing and merely dally with Mary, that their relationship becomes stalled, leaving him to philosophically envisage its dissolution: "Tying I know not what ties, which, whatever they are, I know one thing, / Will, and must, woe is me, be one day painfully broken, – / Broken with painful remorse, with shrinkings of soul, and relenting, / Foolish delays, more foolish evasions, most foolish renewals" (*P*, p. 101, my emphasis). The syntactic gap between subject (ties) and complement (broken) –underlines an unbridgeable distance between memory and desire ("I feel and cannot recall it" – *P*, p. 101). Claude intensifies the theatricality of his discourse with an ostentatious self-comparison to Ulysses on "the magic island" where "the labyrinth closes around me, / Path into path rounding slyly; I pace slowly on, and the fancy, / Struggling awhile to sustain the long sequences, weary, bewildered, / Fain must collapse in despair; / I yield, I am lost and know nothing" (*P*, pp. 101–2). Besides its heavy sexual connotations, this self-indulgent mythical fantasy unleashes an existential alarm through the evocation of a destructive natural world<sup>35</sup>:

35 Ann Marie Ross, "Seeing Through a Glass Darkly: Perspective in *Romantic and Victorian Landscape*, in *Influence and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry*, G. Kim Blank and Margot K. Louis, (eds.) New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993, p. 256, who rightly points out that "Whereas Wordsworth's speaker can retrospectively imbue his experience of 'the summit of a craggy ridge / The horizon's utmost boundary' [...] with the 'Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe [...]' that

Yet in my bosom unbroken remaineth the clew; I shall use it.  
 Lo, with the rope on my loins I descend through the fissure; I sink, yet  
 Inly secure in the strength of invisible arms up above me;  
 Still, wheresoever I swing, wherever to shore or to shelf, or  
 Floor of cavern untrodden, shell-sprinkled, enchanting, I know I  
 Yet shall one time feel the strong cord tighten about me, –  
 Feel it, relentless, upbear me from spots I would rest in; and though the  
 Rope sway wildly, I faint, crags wound me, from crag unto crag re-  
 Bounding, or, wide in the void, I die ten deaths, ere the end I  
 Yet shall plant firm foot on the broad lofty spaces I quit, shall  
 Feel underneath me again the great massy strengths of abstraction,  
 Look yet abroad from the height o'er the sea whose salt wave I have tasted.

(P, p. 102)

This mountainous territory is no “icon for the Romantic ideal of liberty” nor is it a locus of “guaranteed enlightenment”<sup>36</sup>. As he unwittingly lays bare the psychological flaws of his ascetic sensibility, Claude’s only reaction to the demands of emotional commitment is fearful withdrawal to the contemplative detachment of “the height o’er the sea” from which he will be safe to observe the “salt wave” he has already tasted. This self-parodical representation of his ontological confusion is replete with archaisms and poetical clichés: “[...] in my bosom unbroken remaineth [...] Lo, with the rope on my loins [...] I faint [...] I die ten deaths”). The rocking lineation provoked by the numerous enjambments are particularly effective in conveying the uncontrollable oscillations of Claude’s frenzied state of mind (“or / Floor [...] I / Yet [...] the / Rope [...] re- / Bounding [...] shall / Feel”) whilst the negatively qualified sexual connotations (i.e., the image of the fissure) are, in reality, a means of imaginatively circumventing his inhibitions rather than playing out any sexual fantasy on a symbolic level. At the same time, Claude’s self-insufficiency is countered by his pronounced faith “in

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giv’st to forms and images a breath’ [...] Clough’s speaker, shorn of memory and history, is condemned to ‘sway wildly from crag to crag [...] wide in the void’.

- 36 Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind. A History of a Fascination*, London, Granta, 2003, p. 159. A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet’s Life*, cit., p. 166, describes the passage as a metrically skilful rendering of potholing (!) which “did not become popular until the end of the century”. On a more serious level, his interpretation of Claude’s willingness “to let himself indulge in lovemaking” (*ibid*) fails to acknowledge the extent to which the description is qualified by his fear and self-repulsion.

the strength of invisible arms” which will bear him to safety in order to survey “the great massy strengths of abstraction” below. Whatever force Claude intends by this image of salvation, he unwittingly reveals the symptoms of his psychological handicap by concluding with his retreat to a mountain ledge from which distance he can safely observe the world of sensory experience.

Claude’s melodramatic vision of ontological isolation is comically countered by Georgina’s questioning of his sanity in her letter to Louisa:

George declares it absurd, but Mamma is alarmed, and  
insists he has  
Taken up strange opinions and may be turning a Papist.  
Certainly once he spoke of a daily service he went to.  
‘Where?’ we asked, and he laughed and answered, ‘At the Pantheon.’  
This was a temple, you know, and now is a Catholic church [...] (P, p. 102)

Unlike the reader, Georgina has no access to an understanding of Claude’s conduct and is therefore ignorant of his reason for frequenting the Pantheon, which is chiefly connected with his attempt to detect the underlying link between paganism and Christianity that eludes him. This issue is resumed in the lyrical description of the dawn which concludes Canto I:

*Is it religion? I ask me; or is it a vain superstition?  
Slavery abject and gross? Service, too feeble, of truth?  
Is it an idol I bow to, or is it a god that I worship?  
Do I sink back on the old, or do I soar from the mean?  
So through the city I wander and question unsatisfied ever,  
Reverent so I accept, doubtful because I revere. (P, p. 103)*

These lines express an agnostic theism of a sort, as Claude questions a belief which, although it persists, lacks a definition as well as a recognisable object of worship. Yet doubt is not seen as a threatening force, rather a necessary prerequisite in the search for truth. In this sense, the self-discontinuity that characterises Claude’s intellectual speculations does not so much accentuate the incongruities of his inner struggles, as guide him towards a more genuine spiritual awareness.

These interrogative meditations are resumed in the lyrical poem which preludes Canto II. Here his religious doubt finds a degree of

atonement in the idea of a spiritual presence residing among the ruins and urban degradation of the Holy City: *Is it an illusion? Or does there a spirit from perfecter ages, / Here, even yet, amid loss, change, and corruption, abide?* (*P*, p. 103). For the speaker, like Claude, if any historical continuity in such a cityscape of ruins and fragments exists, it can only be envisaged in a spirit of place which is at once omnipresent and illusive: *Here to entice and confuse, tempt and evade us [...]* (*P*, p. 103). The final lines can be seen as an anticipation of the French invasion later in the poem. But they also provide an ominous interpretation of this unique spiritual essence in that, far from residing in any religious appeal, the magnetic attraction of Rome is reduced to the negative paradigms of economic exploitation or war: *Is it illusion or not that allures the barbarian stranger; / Brings him with gold to the shrine, brings him in arms to the gate?* (*P*, p. 103).

Claude's positive reassessment of the Trevellyns is paralleled by his sudden (and on the face of things inexplicable) support for the Republican cause:

I, who avoided it all, am fated, it seems to describe it.  
 I, who nor meddle nor make in politics, – I, who sincerely  
 Put not my trust in leagues nor any suffrage by ballot  
 Never predicted Parisian millenniums, never beheld a  
 New Jerusalem coming down dressed like a bride out of heaven  
 Right on the Place de la Concorde, – I, nevertheless, let me say it,  
 Could in my soul of souls, this day with the Gaul at the gates, shed  
 One true tear for thee, thou poor little Roman republic! (*P*, p. 104)

Even this moment of political awakening is qualified by his intensely subjective response (reinforced by the repetitions of the first-person) as he presumptuously thrusts himself into the centre of a situation in which he has had no place whatsoever (“I, who avoided it all [...] I, who nor meddle nor make in politics, – I who sincerely / Put not my trust in leagues [...] I, nevertheless, let me say it [...]”). Having hitherto exclusively confined his meditations to history, religion and art, Claude is now forced to evaluate his position regarding revolutionary politics and to discover the extent to which it encroaches on his own personal life. Unlike his protagonist, Clough did ‘meddle’ in politics and certainly did put his trust in ‘leagues’ and ‘suffrage by ballot’. But by instilling Claude with an ideological sympathy he initially lacks, Clough

also allows himself the opportunity to implicitly criticise the English government's hypocritical policy regarding Mazzini's republican cause: "[...] and you, my stupid old England, – / You, who a twelvemonth ago said nations must choose for themselves, you / Could not, of course, interfere, – you, now, when a nation has chosen" (*P*, p. 104). Clough's own admiration for Mazzini was to shade into a tentative questioning of the man's underlying nature. On meeting the dictator, whom one noted historian has defined as "a man of the heart rather than head"<sup>37</sup>, Clough noted: "He is a less fanatical and fixed-idea sort of man than I had expected. He appeared *shifty* and practical enough" (my emphasis)<sup>38</sup>. Certainly, Mazzini had been tried by his early years of frustrated rebellion. It was an older, shrewder, man whom Clough met, who was only too aware of the fleeting duration of his present triumph<sup>39</sup>. To compound his own partial revision, Clough also distinguishes Georgina's condemnation of him ("All have been seized everywhere for the use of this dreadful Mazzini" – *P*, p. 110) from Claude's praise of the dictator: "Honour to speech! And all honour to thee, thou noble Mazzini!" (*P*, p. 110) as a way of underlining the contradictory reactions the controversial statesman aroused in the English public.

Despite his newly discovered political interest, Claude's attitude remains that of a sympathetic bystander. Indeed, his second letter to Eustace, which asserts the primacy of the individual over society, cancels any doubts regarding his ultimate position: "Still, individual culture is also something, and no man / Finds quite distinct the assurance that he of all others is called on, / Or would be justified, even, in taking away from the world that / Precious creature, himself" (*P*, p. 104). Claude's justification for non-participation is made on the basis of primal, self-ish needs: "On the whole we are meant to look after ourselves; it is

37 Dennis Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994, p. 151.

38 Quoted in E.B. Greenberger, *op. cit.* p. 127.

39 Clough had no qualms in complaining about his hero's treatment of him when, seeking his help for a special permit to visit the Vatican, he was kept waiting in an anti-chamber for a full hour while the dictator was dealing with a French envoy. Mazzini devoted half an hour of his precious time to Clough, who was admitted through Carlyle's recommendation. Admittedly, in a later letter to his mother of May 28, with French canons blasting against the gates of Rome, Clough does have the presence of mind to realise the embarrassment of bothering "the Dictator any further with my trivial English-tourist importunities" (*C I*, p. 257).



certain / Each has to eat for himself, digest for himself, and in general / Care for his own dear life, and see to his own preservation [...]” (*P*, p. 104). Whilst he concludes, that however “sweet it may be and decorous, perhaps, for the country to die; but [...] the Romans won’t do it, and I shan’t”<sup>40</sup> (*P*, p. 104) he contradicts this assertion in his next letter when, after barricades have been set up in order to keep the French army at bay, he wonders: “Will they fight?” this time to express an unhesitating faith in the people’s collective response: “I believe it” (*P*, p. 105)<sup>41</sup>. The dichotomy between individual preservation and communal unity remains a moot point that cannot be resolved by Claude’s abstract meditations. Furthermore, in denouncing the war as “vain and ephemeral folly” (*P*, p. 105), he contrasts its worthlessness with the real value of “pictures / Statues and antique gems”, that is, ironically, the very things he denounces as “rubbishy” in his first letter!

As he pursues the question of individual intervention, in letter IV Claude strips away the pretensions of male chivalry as he ironises over the reasons why, given the opportunity, he should save a British woman from distress:

Am I prepared to lay down my life for the British female?  
Really, who knows? One has bowed and talked, till, little by little,  
All the natural heat has escaped of the chivalrous spirit.  
Oh, one conformed, of course; but one doesn’t die for good manners  
Stab or shoot, or be shot, by way of graceful attention. (*P*, p. 105)

Clough’s hexameters artfully emulate the oscillations of his anti-hero’s candid self-questioning with its parenthetical observations and blasé remarks. Claude’s refusal to be involved in the struggle is ridiculed by the formal elegance of the comically metonymic image in his self-interrogation: “Should I incarnadine ever this inky pacifical finger” (*P*, p. 105). Not surprisingly, his letter concludes with the suspicion

40 *C*, I, pp. 259–60: “Some desperate partisans there certainly are here who I dare say would as soon blow up the city as not: but I hardly think they will”. (Letter to his mother dated June 17 1849).

41 “Whether the Roman Republic will stand I don’t know, but it has shown under Mazzini’s inspiration a wonderful energy, and a glorious generosity (*C*, I, p. 255). Letter to T. Arnold May 24. In a later letter to Palgrave, dated June 28, Clough is less emphatic: “On the whole I incline to think they will fight it out to the last, but *chi lo sa!*” (*C*, I, p. 263).

that male chivalry is nothing more than “a weak and ignoble refining” (*P*, p. 106). It may be pertinent to wonder whether Clough’s lines are an implicit response to Mazzini’s adamant detestation of neutrality. For Mazzini, such a non-committed position was impossible “without falling into moral degradation”<sup>42</sup> (263). His essay “Faith and the Future” contains an uncompromising condemnation of the kind of intellectual activity in which Claude engages:

Analysis can never regenerate the peoples. Analysis is potent to dissolve; impotent to create. Analysis will never lead us further than the theory of individuality, and the triumph of the individual principle could only lead us to a revolution of Protestantism and mere liberty. The Republic is quite another<sup>43</sup>.

It is no accident that Claude’s single reference in the poem to Mazzini, is in praise, not of the statesmen, but of the writer: “Honour for once to the tongue and the pen of the eloquent writer! / Honour to speech! And all honour to thee, thou noble Mazzini!” (*P*, p. 110)<sup>44</sup> As representatives of a country whose passive support was ultimately ineffective, both Clough and Claude become the unwelcome protagonists of a political confrontation played out on a sub-textual level. Thus, to the extent in which *Amours de Voyage* dramatises Clough’s preoccupation with the influences of circumstance and destiny, Claude and Mazzini can be seen as diametrical opposites. Curiously, Carlyle’s denunciation of the moral laissez-fair of Victorian society in “Signs of the Times” can also be directly applicable to Claude: “By arguing on the ‘force of circumstances,’ we have argued away all force from ourselves; and stand leashed together, uniform in dress and movement, like the rowers of some boundless galley [...] Practically considered, our creed is Fatalism”<sup>45</sup>. Claude’s scepticism, his indecision, passivity and amorality, even his war against conformity, are synonymous of the same fatalistic

42 Giuseppe Mazzini, *Mazzini’s Essays*, ed. Ernest Rhys, London, Walter Scott, 1887, p. 263. (From “On the Condition of Europe”).

43 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

44 As J. Goode, *op. cit.*, p. 284 has observed, the defence of Rome was a sort of rhetorical gesture, not undertaken in the hope of its success, but in order to create a National consciousness: “The disengagement from the defence of Rome is not a refusal to act, but an awareness of the limitations of a particular rhetoric”.

45 T. Carlyle, *op. cit.*, Vol. xxvii, p. 79.

sense of inaction (it is also one against which Clough himself struggles). However, if *The Bothie* can be regarded as Clough's Carlylean poem, *Amours de Voyage* undoubtedly owes more to Emerson. For one thing, Clough takes as one of his premises Emerson's view of history as moral biography: "We are always coming up with the emphatic facts of history in our private experience, and verifying them here. All history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly no history; only biography"<sup>46</sup>. *Amours de Voyage* presents historical events through the eyes of a character who ultimately has no sympathetic identification with them. Not only, but he fails to perceive Emerson's sense of "the application of [man's] manifold spirit to the manifold world"<sup>47</sup>, such that even his descriptions of the battle scenes between the republicans and the invading French troops are marked by an indifference that does not only underline the lack of heroism and triumph in warfare,<sup>48</sup> but also the absence of any connection between the individual and the world:

Yes, we are fighting at last, it appears. This morning as usual,  
 Murray, as usual in hand, I enter the Caffè Nuovo;  
 Seating myself with a sense as it were of a change in the weather,  
 Not understanding, however, but thinking mostly of Murray,  
 And, for today is their day, of the Campidoglio Marbles,  
*Caffè-latte!* I call to the waiter, – and *Non c'è latte*,  
 This is the answer he makes me, and this the sign of a battle.  
 So I sit; and truly they seem to think any one else more  
 Worthy than me of attention. I wait for my milkless *nero*,  
 Free to observe undistracted, all sorts and sizes of persons,  
 Blending civilian and soldier in strangest costume, coming in and  
 Gulping in hottest haste, still standing, their coffee, – withdrawing  
 Eagerly, jangling a sword on the steps, or jogging a musket  
 Slung to the shoulder behind [...] (*P*, p. 106)

Claude's implication of partisanship in his use of the first person plural is ironic since he takes no part in the fighting (his qualifying phrase "it appears" is thus significant). In spite of his sympathy for the Roman republicans, the passage evidences his own liminal position with respect to the struggles. On the one hand, he intuitively senses change in the

46 R. W. Emerson, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

48 *C I*, p. 253 "It would seem very small to you if you saw it as I am doing".

air, but on the other, he is too absorbed reading his Murray guide to really grasp what is happening and realises only much later the ominous co-presence in the café of soldiers and civilians, the former menacingly manoeuvring their weapons in a grotesque attempt at military exhibitionism. Once outside, Claude catches his first ‘sighting’ of a battle which he can only describe in the same impressionistic strain and with the same stress on monotony, detachment and distance<sup>49</sup>:

So we stand in the sun, but afraid of a probable shower;  
So we stand and stare, and see, to the left of St Peter's  
Smoke, from the cannon, white – but that is at intervals only, –  
Black, from a burning house, we suppose, by the Cavalleggieri;  
And we believe we discern some lines of men descending  
Down through the vineyard-slopes, and catch a bayonet gleaming.  
Every ten minutes, however, – in this there is no misconception, –  
Comes a great white puff from behind Michael Angelo's dome, and  
After a space the report of a real big gun, – not the Frenchman's?  
That must be doing some work. And so we watch and conjecture. (*P*, pp. 106–7)

Commenting on this passage, John Schad makes the humorous observation that “talking about the weather is a way of avoiding or undermining any sense of historical moment”<sup>50</sup>. Not only does the sun appear as an incongruous element here, however, but the tourists gathered on the Pincian Hill appear more like spectators at a sports event preoccupied by the possibility of rainfall than first-hand witnesses to acts of war! Furthermore, the event, which none of them are able to actually see, becomes reduced to a question of hearsay: “[...] the report of a real big gun – not the Frenchman's? – / That must be doing some work [...] Shortly, an Englishman comes, who says he has been to St Peter's, / Seen the piazza and troops, but that is all he can tell us [...] The report of small arms frequent, / Sharp and savage indeed [...]” (*P*, p. 107). The scene resonates with an irony that undercuts the horrors of war as the speculating activity of the bystanders counters the invisible fighting in the distance (“So we watch and wonder; but guessing is tiresome very” – *P*, p. 107). As a result of his disconnection from the struggle, Claude

49 *C*, I, p. 253: “I went up to the Pincian Hill and saw the smoke and heard the occasional big canon and the sharp succession of skirmishers' volleys bang, bang, bang – away beyond St Peter's.”

50 J. Schad, *op. cit.* p. 42.

only learns of the Roman's initial victory over the French<sup>51</sup> from "the first bulletin in the morning" (*P*, p. 107). Letter VI, which reveals his response to this, is one of the most disconcerting moments of his linguistic duplicity in the poem:

VICTORY! VICTORY! – Yes! ah, yes, thou republican Zion,  
 Truly the kings of the earth are gathered and gone together;  
 Doubtless they marvelled to witness such things, were astonished and so forth.  
 Victory! Victory! Victory! – Ah, but it is, believe me,  
 Easier, easier far, to intone the chant of a martyr  
 Than to indite any pæan of victory. Death may  
 Sometimes be noble; but life, at the best, will appear an illusion.  
 While the great pain is upon us, it is great; when it is over,  
 Why, it is over. The smoke of the sacrifice rises to heaven,  
 Of a sweet savour, no doubt, to Somebody; but on the altar,  
 Lo, there is nothing remaining but ashes and dirt and ill odour  
 So it stands, you perceive; the labial muscles that swelled with  
 Vehement evolution of yesterday Marseillaises,  
 Articulations sublime of defiance and scorning, to-day col-  
 Lapse and languidly mumble, while men and women and papers  
 Scream and re-scream to each other the chorus of Victory. Well, but  
 I am thankful they fought, and glad that the Frenchmen were beaten.

(*P*, pp. 107–8)

From the thunderously jubilant interjections in capitals<sup>52</sup>, the impact of victory dwindles into the ironically detached indirect report in the penultimate line ("Scream and re-scream to each other") as the historical moment is reduced to an empty *chorus* bawled out in the street. The transition from euphoria to dejection is already instigated at the end of the third line with Claude's insolently blasé remark ("and so forth") which is followed up by his paradoxical observation that victory is harder to celebrate than the sacrifices it involves. Indeed, the initial impact of *victory* is already different from the moment the word is uttered, as Claude's unflinchingly stark reflections lead to a perception

51 C, I, p. 255. On May 24 Clough wrote to Tom Arnold referring to the Roman victory against the French: "You will have heard of our driving back the French [...] Whether the Roman Republic will stand I don't know, but it has shown under Mazzini's inspiration a wonderful Energy, and a glorious generosity [...]"

52 As a dactyl word, the repetition of *victory* can also be seen as a metrically assertive 'celebration', of Clough's hexameters.

of life as a necessary illusion (life in this case leading to death and to the “ashes and dirt and ill odour” of the aftermath). If the only consequence of the collective experience of war is the essentially private grief of each loss (“Of a sweet savour, no doubt, to Somebody”), it follows that “the chant of a martyr” is an easier way of coping with “the great pain” of loss, once it is over, especially when a dead individual can be transformed into a symbol of collective sacrifice. In the last five lines, Claude’s sudden adoption of a deliberately intellectual diction produces an effect of deflation that is just shy of irreverence (“Vehement [...] Articulations sublime of defiance → col/Lapse and languidly mumble”). The enjambment of the verb *col/Lapse* is not only graphically appropriate but also creates another synonym in *lapse* (to descend, to fall). The matter-of-fact statement that concludes Claude’s letter (“Well, but / I am thankful they fought, and glad that the Frenchmen were beaten”) only reaffirms Claude’s position as a sympathetic, but essentially pedestrian bystander of the dramatic historical events he is witnessing.

This position is further confirmed in his subsequent letter. His description of the presumed killing of a priest by a crowd of people, furious at his treacherous attempt to join the Neapolitan army, reads like a parody of dubious journalistic reportage in its perceptual confusion:

So I have seen a man killed! An experience that, among others!  
 Yes, I suppose I have; although I can hardly be certain,  
 And in a court of law could never declare I had seen it.  
 But a man was killed, I am told, in a place where I saw something. (*P*, p. 108)

Finding himself at the heart of historical experience, Claude’s inability (or unwillingness) to furnish an accurate and truthful account of this murderous event is comically evidenced through a gradual retraction of his statements (“I have seen [...] I suppose I have” [...] “I can hardly be certain”). The acceleration of the narrative sequence, rendered through the numerous caesuras and parataxis (“In the air?”, “At what?” “Yes, certainly blood”) underlines further the indistinct, uncertain and chaotic<sup>53</sup> nature of the actions being witnessed:

53 See M. R. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 36, who notes of this passage that “Clough deliberately counterbalances vague diction with prominent placement at the start (and

[...] In the middle they drag at something. What is it?  
 Ha! Bare swords in the air, held up! There seem to be voices  
 Pleading and hands putting back; official perhaps; but the swords are  
 Many, and bare in the air. In the air? They descend; they are smiting,  
 Hewing, chopping—At what? In the air once more upstretched? And  
 Is it blood that's on them? Yes, certainly blood! Of whom, then  
 Over whom is the cry of this furor of exultation? [...]  
 History, Rumour of Rumours, I leave it to thee to determine! (*P*, pp. 196–8)

Although Claude definitely witnesses something, the indeterminacy of his narration is a reflection of his (deliberately?) obfuscated vision<sup>54</sup>. The essence of history vanishes the moment it is interpreted as Claude, in his apparent reluctance to acknowledge the truth of what has occurred passes, again shielded with his Murray under his arm, through the people's legs<sup>55</sup>. As Isobel Armstrong observes: “Both action and manhood are deconstructed here”<sup>56</sup>, as broken syntax, intermittent exclamations and interrogations reinforce the sense of a dramatic series of indistinct impressions and confused images. In spite of the possibility of other killings (“Three or four, or, it may be, five, of these people were slaughtered” – *P*. p. 109), the information is also based on hearsay. Claude can only conclude his report with the ironic sense that the veracity of historical events is tantamount to the rumours that shape them. Thus, the deliberate phonic pun *Rome/Rumour*, implies a semantic connection between “rumour” and “History”, suggesting that historical events are merely glorified rumour (a trivial definition that deliberately banalises the Emersonian concept of the manifold spirit). Indeed, history has no real sense for Claude. But his conclusion that, since man is incapable

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again at the end) of a line, indicating that Claude believes what he saw is significant, even if he cannot be completely certain what it was”.

- 54 Clough's own reports of the battles were essentially based on second-hand information. The episode concerning the apparent killing of the priest, is referred to in a letter to F. T. Palgrave dated July 4: “But a priest who walked and talked publicly in the Piazza Colonna with a Frenchman was undoubtedly killed. I know his friends and saw one of them last night. Poor man, he was quite a liberal ecclesiastic, they tell me: but certainly not a prudent one” (*C*, I, p. 265).
- 55 That Clough himself corrects his version of the priest's fate in the same letter above only to add another story based on hearsay about a man “hewed to pieces for shouting Viva Pio IX, A basso la republica” (*C*, I, p. 266) adds to the irony of his descriptions of the events in the poem.
- 56 I. Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

of establishing the truth of such events, it must be left to the impersonal forces of history (with a capital H) to interpret them, begs the question of whether history is the product of biased human interpretation or an abstract entity somehow independent of human will. Claude's cold-hearted conclusion is really symptomatic of the morally feeble fatalism condemned by Carlyle and confirms the detached stance which, as a foreigner, he can justifiably (but also cowardly) assume<sup>57</sup>. As a final irony, his concluding words reflect a need for restored order and civility which gratifies his touristic demands:

Through the Trastevere walking last night, at nine of the clock, I  
Found no sort of disorder; I crossed by the Island-bridges,  
So by the narrow streets to the Ponte Rotto, and onwards  
Thence, by the Temple of Vesta, away to the great Coliseum,  
Which at the full of the moon is an object worthy a visit. (*P*, p. 109)

That Claude's idyllic night-time scene ends with a reference to the most barbaric of Roman monuments is itself a paradox in view of his relief at the temporary end to the struggles. The image of the Coliseum illuminated by a full moon, has quasi-gothic suggestions, its ancient shadowy presence looming as an ominous reminder of the inescapability of human violence.

In contrast to Claude's vague reconstruction of events, Georgina's letter reports George's clear-cut close-up eyewitness account of Garibaldi:

George has just seen Garibaldi, dressed up in a long white cloak, on  
Horseback, riding by, with his mounted negro behind him:  
This is a man, you know, who came from America with him,  
Out of the woods, I suppose, and uses a lasso in fighting,  
Which is, I don't quite know, but a sort of noose, I imagine;  
This he throws on the heads of his enemy's men in battle,  
Pulls them into his reach, and then most cruelly kills them:  
Mary does not believe, but we heard it from an Italian. (*P*, pp. 119–10)

57 J. Schad *op. cit.*, p. 35 sees the witnessing of history on the part of the British characters as "the *thought* of witnessing history" (italics in text). As Georgina later writes "Only think, dearest Louisa, what fearful scenes we have witnessed!" (*P*, p. 109).



Being denied this Emersonian encounter between history and biography, Georgina resorts to hearsay anecdotes of Garibaldi's faithful negro companion. Mary's refusal to believe the stories Georgina wholeheartedly accepts as truthful<sup>58</sup>, is indicative of an liberal-intellectual unwillingness she shares with Claude, to acknowledge the brutality of war<sup>59</sup>. Meanwhile, her bemused impressions of Claude himself oscillate between an exaggerated sense of his heroism "on the terrible thirteenth of April" (*P*, p. 110), when he offers to help an Irish family in their move "to the Maison Serny" and endeavours to "minister balm to the trembling / Quinquagenarian fears of two lone British spinsters" (*P*, p. 107)<sup>60</sup> – and her bitter complaint of his infuriatingly uncommitted wooing of her sister: "[...] I am really so angry, Louisa, – / Quite out of patience, my dearest! What can the man be intending! / I am quite tired; and Mary, who might bring him to in a moment / Lets him go on as he likes, and neither will help nor dismiss him" (*P*, p. 110). Her outburst

58 George's description of Garibaldi and his negro servant can be readily confirmed by contemporary accounts. *The Illustrated London News* of July 21 1849, p. 36, for example, carries an article with an illustration entitled "Garibaldi and his Negro Servant" depicting Garibaldi dressed in a long white cloak lined with red. His negro servant is sympathetically described: "He was a fine fellow; his dress, a red loose coat and a showy silk handkerchief tied loosely over his shoulders. The poor fellow was shot in the last fight." See also George MacAulay Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, New York, Cosimo, 2008 (1907), p. 141 "Inseparable from the general rode the splendid negro Aguyar, his friend and bodyguard [...] the black giant with the lasso of the Pampas hanging from his saddle [...]" Clough also mentions Garibaldi's servant in a letter to F. T. Palgrave in July 1849: "I told you that Garibaldi lost his Negro on the 3<sup>rd</sup> [July] 'Il Moro', as they called him, was the son of a rich negro merchant at Monte Video – who though married and father of a family yet for the love of the Italian captain came over to fight by his side, which they say he never quitted. I have seen each separately, but not together" (*C*, I, pp. 267–8).

59 *Ibid.*, p. 38 where Chad makes a similar point: "Claude may well have seen a man killed but he grows uncertain simply because he cannot bear the thought".

60 The American teacher and journalist, Margaret Fuller, who has been seen as a model for Mary (see A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet's Life*, cit, pp. 176–7), sent a brief note to Clough (28? June) in gratitude for a similarly inconsequential act of generosity during his visit to the Monte Cavallo hospital which she was helping to run: "Dear Mr Clough, It was very kind of you to give the cologne; there will fall from these bottles many drops of comfort for these hot, tired, but most patient patients" (*C*, I, p. 262).

suggests the kind of crass pressurising<sup>61</sup> she has been exerting on the couple all along and which evidently frightens Claude away just as an empathy and intellectual solidarity of sorts is being established between him and Mary, as is evident in Georgina's criticism of her encouragement of him and of his own description of her to Eustace in letter X:

It is a pleasure, indeed, to converse with this girl. Oh rare gift,  
Rare felicity, this! she can talk in a rational way, can  
Speak upon subjects that really are matters of mind and thinking,  
Yet in perfection retain her simplicity; never, one moment,  
Never, however you urge it, however you tempt her, consents to  
Step from ideas and fancies and loving sensations to those vain  
Conscious understandings that vex the minds of man-kind. (*P*, p. 111)

Claude is quick to assert that his admiration for Mary is exclusively intellectual. Although, his reply to his friend's teasing assumption that he is in love finds him initially toying with the phrase: "I am in love [...] you think [...] I am in love, you say [...] I am in love, you declare [...]" (*P*, p. 110), he humorously throws the assertion back in his face: "I am in love, you say; I do not think so exactly" (*P*, p. 111). In his embarrassed avoidance of the word Claude euphemistically refers to human attraction which he divides into two opposing states: "One which simply disturbs, unsettles, and makes you uneasy, / And another that poises, retains, and fixes, and holds you" (*P*, p. 111). Claude's attraction is evidently a question of the latter, passionless qualities which do not indicate a desire for fixity and stability as such, since he also wishes to grow "[...] where I was growing / There more truly to grow" (*P*, p. 111). It is no accident that the terms of action and in-action which qualify his binary opposition between sexual attraction are connected with the underlying conflict in the poem between settler and traveller. Thus, Claude's travelling (like Philip's wanderings in *The Bothie*) can be seen as a metaphor for sexual instability and transience, whilst his inaction and passivity the would-be expressions of his constancy and fidelity. The irony of Claude's own journeying is two-fold. In the first place, it has led him far away from where he was growing – as he finds himself in an agitated, war-torn city, face to face with the discovery that civilisation is held together by fragile bonds and that the daily

61 Cf. I. Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

crowds which at one moment flow “like a quiet stream through street and market place” may, at another, suddenly “Boil into deadly wrath and wild homicidal delusion” (*P*, p. 110). In the second, the circumstances of this new context force him into a state of in-action regarding both political and personal spheres.

Claude’s attempt to philosophise his way out of his emotional dilemma gives way to the sudden ironic outburst in his next letter:

Ah, let me look, let me watch, let me wait, unhurried, unprompted!  
Bid me not venture on aught that could alter or end what is present!  
Say not, Time flies, and Occasion, that never returns, is departing!  
Drive me not out, ye ill angels with fiery swords, from my Eden,  
Waiting, and watching, and looking! Let love be its own inspiration!

(*P*, p. 111)

The rhetorical features of Claude’s self-theatrical monologue, depend on a markedly stylised versification comprised of predominantly regular stress patterns, poetic archaisms (“Bid me not venture on aught [...] Say not [...] Drive me not out [...] ye ill angels [...] fiery swords [...]”) and syntactic parallelism (“let me look/let me watch/let me wait [...] Bid me not/Say not/Drive me not out”). On a dialogical level, Claude’s change of addressees from Eustace to the underworld entity of “ill angels with fiery swords” underscores the angst behind his despairing attempt to resist the inexorable flux of time and its demands of commitment to action<sup>62</sup>. In spite of the fact that nothing has occurred to suggest a rupture between him and Mary, Claude retreats into a regressive solipsism in which he engages in a masochistic fantasy over her rejection of him: “Wherefore and how I am certain, I hardly can tell; but it *is* so. / She doesn’t like me Eustace; I think she never will like me”. (*P*, p. 111). Consequently, Claude’s last letter in Canto II is a self-deprecating rant in which the conventional role of the male courter is overturned: “Oh, ‘tisn’t manly, of course, ‘tisn’t manly, this method of wooing; / ‘tisn’t

62 Without stretching the point too far, Claude’s response here may be compared to Matthew Arnold’s comments on *The Bothie*. In the light of this consideration, the italicised verses could be taken as a parody of the metaphorical and classical bias in Arnold’s approach to his poetry. Claude also shares certain dandyish traits with Arnold, such as his nonchalance, anti-authoritarianism and, (like Clough), intellectualism.

the way very likely to win. For the woman, they tell you, / Even prefers the audacious, the wilful, the vehement hero; / She has no heart for the timid, the sensitive soul; and for knowledge, – / Knowledge, ye Gods! – when did they appreciate knowledge?” (*P*, p. 112). Not only does Claude deliberately put to one side his declared admiration for Mary’s distinguishing qualities, but he concludes his letter by distastefully attempting to rid himself of her through his friend: “Mary Trevellyn, Eustace, is certainly worth your acquaintance. / You couldn’t come, I suppose, as far as Florence, to see her?” (*P*, p. 112).

The departure of the Trevellyn’s at the end of Canto II induces the lyrical voice to ponder Claude’s destiny: *Is it to Florence we follow, or are we to tarry yet longer, / E’en amid clamour of arms, here in the city of old, / Seeking from clamour of arms in the Past and the Arts to be hidden, / Vainly ‘mid Arts and the Past seeking one life to forget* (*P*, p. 113). The apparent neutrality of these conjectures is undermined by the disapproval implied in the three adverbs “yet”, “E’en” and “vainly”, which cast his decision to remain in Rome studying marbles in a critical light. Claude’s imaginative dalliance with ancient Rome offers a palliative evasion from the objectionable complications of the real world. The lyrical poem that opens Canto III is a rhetorical elaboration of Claude’s solipsistic vision:

*Yet to the wondrous St Peter’s, and yet to the solemn Rotonda,  
Mingling with heroes and gods, yet to the Vatican Walls,  
Yet may we go, and recline, while a whole mighty world seems above us  
Gathered and fixed to all time in one roofing supreme;  
Yet may we, thinking on these things, exclude what is meaner around us;  
Yet, at the worst of the worst, books and a chamber remain;  
Yet may we think, and forget, and possess our souls in resistance –*

(*P*, p. 114)

These lines celebrate the capacity of art to transcend earthly limitations whilst simultaneously underlining the regressive nature of Claude’s evocation (emphasised by the seven occurrences of the adverb *yet* in as many lines) of a chillingly static world (“fixed to all time in one roofing supreme”) of mythology: *Where, upon Apennine slope, with the chestnut, the oak trees immingle, / Where amid odorous copse bridle-paths wander and wind, / Where under mulberry-branches, the diligent rivulet sparkles [...]* *P*, p. 114). Although pertinent to this pastoral

evocation and to Claude's desire for seclusion later in the canto, the emotional interjection of the final two lines: *Ah, that I were, far away from the crowd and the streets of the city, / Under the vine-trellis laid, O my beloved, with thee!* (*P*, p. 114) seems so implausibly hackneyed for the intellectually sensitive and cautious Claude that it reinforces the sense of a schizophrenic division between his social and poetic self that emerges through his shifts of linguistic register. Stylistic variation becomes an integral part of Claude's quest for truth, however much, in his aspiration for coherence and clarity, he "perceives only the fragmentary"<sup>63</sup> and is unable to shore up the fragments he perceives against his ruins. Canto III opens with Mary's ruthless assessment of Claude:

Yes, my dear Miss Roper, I certainly called him repulsive;  
 So I think him, but cannot be sure I have used the expression  
 Quite as your pupil should; yet he does most truly repel me.  
 [...] observe, it is but when he talks of ideas,  
 That he is quite unaffected, and free, and expansive and easy;  
 I could pronounce him simply a cold intellectual being. –  
 When does he make advances? – He thinks that women should woo him;  
 Yet, if a girl should do so, would be but alarmed and disgusted.  
 She that should love him must look for small love in return [...] (*P*, pp. 114–5)

Mary's discerning perception of Claude's perverted aestheticism is significantly countered by his own painful awareness of her disapproval, which is underlined by an almost telepathic verbal transmigration: "[...] my manner offends; my ways are wholly *repugnant*; / Every word that I utter estranges, hurts and *repels* her" (*P*, p. 112, my italics). As regards Claude, it is not until his metaphysical discourse on 'juxtaposition' in letter VI that the reasons behind his baffling attitude of non-commitment are elucidated:

Juxtaposition, in fine; and what is juxtaposition?  
 Look you, we travel along in the railway-carriage, or steamer,  
 And, *pour passer le temps*, till that tedious journey be ended,  
 Lay aside paper or book, to talk with the girl that is next one;  
 And, *pour passer le temps*, with the terminus all but in prospect,  
 Talk of eternal ties and marriages made in heaven. (*P*, p. 117)

63 Cf. S. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

Significantly, Claude takes the inherent feature of the poem as his cue for this culminating moment of his brooding meditations. As the building blocks of *Amours de Voyage*, juxtaposition is the only means of making sense in a world of scepticism and fragmentariness<sup>64</sup>, but it provides no vision of wholeness. The situation in the railway carriage is a case in point. His description of the couple, reminiscent of *Natura Naturans*, (though the representation of suppressed eroticism in that poem here becomes playful flirtation for the sole purpose of passing the time) is, before anything, the contrary of his own. For although his encounter with Mary is also a question of chance, their liaison is conditioned by the fact that it is conducted under “those vulgar eyes” (*P*, p. 122) of the Trevellyn clan. However, his example serves to interconnect his two interpretations of ‘juxtaposition’. In the first case, it regards the question of coincidence (here the chance meeting of the man and woman on the train); in the second, it is used by Claude as a euphemism for marriage (the most sanctioned form of ‘proximity’). In both cases the coincidental features of juxtaposition are illusory and deceitful. Such a meeting as that between the man and the woman on the train is purely a question of chance<sup>65</sup>. By extension, a man’s choice of a wife depends upon similar accidental factors since choices are infinite. As Claude previously points out, there are “[...] thousands as pretty and hundreds as pleasant, / Girls by the dozen as good, and girls in abundance with polish / Higher and manners more perfect than Susan or Mary Trevellyn. / Well, I know, after all, it is only juxtaposition” (*P*, p. 101). Since marriage is seen as the limitation to one of countless other possible women, it is only the foreknowledge of his death that gives man the courage to go through this constricting experience at all. As W. David Shaw notes, the lines “But for his funeral train which the bridegroom sees in the distance, / Would he so joyfully, think you, fall in with the marriage-procession?” (*P*, p. 117) are deliberately “framed by juxtaposed images of ends and beginnings”<sup>66</sup>. Thus, the “exit secure” Claude envisions from such obligations leads to nothing less than the wished-for promised land “of a limitless ocean divine, o’er / Whose great tranquil

64 Cf. A.M. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

65 As S. Markovits, *op. cit.*, pp. 468–9 notes, Claude’s point here echoes Goethe’s dismissal of elective affinities.

66 W. D. Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

depths unconscious the wind-tost surface / Breaks into ripples of trouble that come and change and endure not [...]” (*P*, p. 117). The sea of metaphysical turbulence is here transformed into the Romantic image of an eternal ocean quieting the troubled waves of change. Flux is continually undermined by the great underlying power of eternal stasis. On this side of eternity, man must continue to “accomplish” his “petty particular doings” (*P*, p. 118) which are a poor substitute for the kind of elevated action demanded of him and which is continually pressed upon him throughout the poem. Claude’s belief that the imaginative access to an Actual Abstract (a paradox in itself) is the sole province of man, whilst women “don’t think at all about it”, could be easily taken as an example of his callous chauvinism, rather than a merely naive impression, were his observation not preceded by his lamenting the fact (“Ah, but the women, alas!” – *P*, p. 118).

At the heart of the irresolvable dichotomy Claude recognizes between female yearning for romance and male quest for truth is a hypocritical insistence on gratification and self-delusion. His comments undoubtedly reflect something of the author’s own misogyny: “Since we cannot escape, must we even submit to deceive you? / Since, so cruel is truth, sincerity shocks and revolts you, / Will you have us your slaves to lie to you, flatter and –leave you?” (*P*, p. 118). Romance, moreover, becomes an insignificant pursuit in the light of man’s search for ultimate knowledge: “‘This is nature’ I said: ‘we are born as it were from her waters, / over her billows that buffet and beat us, her offspring uncared for, / Casting one single regard of a painful victorious knowledge’” (*P*, p. 115). Claude’s self-quotation signals a melodramatic moment of epiphany as he feels the primeval chaos of this earthly sea (as opposed to the oceanic infinity of the after-life<sup>67</sup>) encompassing the transitory elements of his own dysphoria (“This was the sense in my soul, as I swayed with the poop of the steamer” – *P*, p. 115). The vicious circle in which the paradoxical attainment of a “painful victorious knowledge” cedes to a condition of thoughtlessness (“And as unthinking I sat in the hall of the famed Ariadne”, – *P*, p. 115) is reconciled in the “simpler thought” engraved in the mythical image of a Triton in marble. No amount of knowledge man has gained can negate his essential ignorance: “Let

67 Cf. A.M. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

us not talk of growth; we are still in our Aqueous Ages” (*P*, p. 115). Water and the world of mythology represent the primeval referents of an anti-progressive stance that belies the Renaissance spirit of the Victorian age. It is no accident that this rejection of the world is followed by Claude’s renunciation of radical politics in letter III in which his words reflect the frustration of countless disheartened individuals through the ages in the face of enormous events:

Farewell, Politics, utterly! What can I do? I cannot  
Fight, you know; and to talk I am wholly ashamed. And although I  
Gnash my teeth when I look in your French or your English papers,  
What is the good of that? Will swearing, I wonder, mend matters?  
Cursing and scolding repel the assailants? No, it is idle;  
No, whatever befalls, I will hide, will ignore or forget it. (*P*, pp. 115–6)

Claude’s refutation of active political engagement, which entails the denial of the struggle for social reform, is ultimately ironic, however, in view of the fact that his sympathy for the republican cause has always been expressed in terms of non-participation. As a result, his initial sense of impotency before large-scale events is now finds justification in a series of withering (though comically truthful) excuses:

Why not fight? – In the first place, I haven’t so much as a musket.  
In the next, if I had, I shouldn’t know how I should use it.  
In the third, just at present I’m studying ancient marbles.  
In the fourth, I consider I owe my life to my country.  
In the fifth, – I forget, but four good reasons are ample. (*P*, p. 116)

Claude’s shift from self-irony to brash sarcasm renders his cowardly hypocrisy more disturbing than humorous: “Meantime, pray, let ‘em fight, and be killed. I delight in devotion. / So that I ’list not, hurrah for the glorious army of martyrs!” (*P*, p. 116)<sup>68</sup>. Sacrifice

68 Raffaele Belluzzi, *La ritirata di Garibaldi da Roma*, Rimini, Bruno Ghigi Editore, 2007 (Roma, Società Editrice Dante Alighieri 1899), pp. 6–7: “Il lunedì 2 luglio, a mezzogiorno, erano convenuti sulla piazza del Vaticano quasi tutti coloro che avevano preso parte alla difesa di Roma, e Garibaldi, dall’alto del suo cavallo, parlò con quella voce che ricercava le più intime fibre dell’animo facendolo fremere; e non fu delle dieci o dodici mila persone presenti chi non acclamasse entusiasticamente a lui ed all’Italia.” “On Monday 2 July, at noon, almost all of those who had taken part in the defence of Rome had assembled in the Vatican square and





Something of kindred, a common, though latent, vitality greet me;  
And, to escape from our strivings, mistaking, misgrowths, and perversions,  
Fain could demand to return to that perfect primitive silence,  
Fain be enfolded and fixed, as of old, in their rigid embraces. (*P*, p. 119)

Claude's adoption of an impersonal, elevated tone, in which regular hexameters, archaic diction and insistent alliteration confer a veneer of poetic decorum to his pantheistic vision, is undercut by his obsessive self-centredness (the first person pronoun is repeated no less than six times in the first four lines above). The stylistic incongruity of his self-theatrical oration is again symptomatic of the linguistic schizophrenia which characterises his search for truth. Here, the quest is regressively directed towards the self-enclosure of pre-natal existence (underlined in the dense sound patterning: "fain, but a faithful [...] stones of the street, as from rocks or trees of the forest [...] kindred, a common [...] latent vitality [...] mistaking, misgrowths [...] perfect primitive [...] "Fain be enfolded and fixed"). His nodding approval of the "consorting couples" who seem "very fond, very probably faithful" is yet another instance of the self-contradictory oscillations of his thoughts. Not only does his impression clash with his previous derision of romantic love but it also ironically overlooks his own potential romance with Mary. His "faithful assurance" of a "common, though latent vitality" is somewhat reminiscent of Wordsworth's description of the spiritual presence in *Tintern Abbey* which "rolls through all things"<sup>69</sup> (this in spite of the fact that his previous evocations of nature may be regarded as distinctly anti-Wordsworthian) and his dream of a sexless, passionless world of serene beauty ("Even so beautiful Earth; and could we eliminate only / This vile hungering impulse, this demon within us of craving [...]") – *P*, p. 119) likewise evokes an almost Wordsworthian romantic ethic.

Claude's praise of the monastery in his following letter ("*Mild monastic faces in quiet collegiate cloisters*") / So let me offer a single and celibatarian phrase, a / Tribute to those whom perhaps you do not believe I can honour" – *P*, p. 119) appears a logical outcome of his religious posturing. In spite of his yielding to its "calm and composure and gentle abstraction" (*P*, p. 119), his attraction for monastic life has more

69 De Salincourt and Derbishire (eds), *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 262.

to do with his reiterated need for self-withdrawal and detachment than any aspiration towards a transcendental truth<sup>70</sup>. His self-quoted phrase (“*Mild monastic faces in quiet collegiate cloisters*”), is merely another of the many fragments of the poem (and what is more a fragment of one of his own poems). Claude’s repetition of the line is significant, for it not only frames his discourse but also suggests his lingering pleasure over its hackneyed alliterations rather than any meaning it is intended to convey. Far from the tumultuous world of “drumming and shouting”, where social intercourse is reduced to “placid regards and mildly courteous greetings” (*P*, p. 119), the monastery seems the ideal locus for a soul in search of stability and repose. In view of this fact, Claude’s furious outburst at Eustace’s evident reminder of his obligations is somewhat ironic: “Terrible word, Obligation! You should not, Eustace, you should not, / No, you should not have used it. But, O great Heavens! I repel it. / Oh, I cancel, reject, disavow, and repudiate wholly / Every debt in this kind, disclaim every claim, and dishonour [...]” (*P*, pp. 119–20). Claude’s rejection of obligation implicitly extends to the cloistral existence he has just eulogized, since it also entails obligations he would be loath to assume. Mary, on the other hand, as he reveals in a climactic moment of self-confession, has made no such claims on his person: “No, my friend, if you wish to be told, it was this above all things, / This that charmed me, ah, yes, even this, that she held me to nothing [...] *She* spoke not of obligations, / Knew not of debt [...]” (*P*, p. 120). Claude’s attempt to create a relationship with Mary that is free from false sentimentality<sup>71</sup> is doubly delusive since he not only misreads her patient humouring of him as a sign of fearless acceptance, but, in doing so, deliberately forgets his previous admission of his repugnant effect on her.

At this revealing moment Claude, like an actor stepping out of role, impetuously renounces all speculation: “Hang this thinking, at last! What good is it? Oh, and what evil! Oh, what mischief and pain! Like a clock in a sick man’s chamber, Ticking and ticking, and still through each covert of slumber pursuing” (*P*, p. 120). Realising the venomous effects of his self-centred ruminations, he turns in fearful despair, for

70 Cfr. S. Bailey, *op. cit.* p. 163.

71 This view of sexual relationships anticipates by almost eighty years those of D.H. Lawrence.

the first time in the poem, to his maker: “What shall I do to thee, O thou Preserver of Men? Have compassion; / Be favourable and hear! Take from me this regal knowledge; / Let me, contented and mute, with the beasts of the field, my brothers, / Tranquilly, happily lie, – eat grass, like Nebuchadnezzar!” (*P*, p. 120). Claude’s rejection of intellectual inquiry marks the climax of his epistemological crisis, with the phrase “still through each covert of slumber pursuing”, suggesting, with its sharply hissing sibilants, the insidious snake-like movement of his self-consuming reflections. His description of Nebuchadnezzar refers to the story in Daniel (4: 32–33) in which the arrogantly proud king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire is forced by God to live a savage existence for seven years before he is eventually restored to sanity and repentance. Claude’s aspiration to the same existence either implies his ignorance of the biblical text, or, conversely, a sardonic wish to be divinely punished for his own self-arrogance and self-importance.

Claude’s epistemological failure is also rendered on a symbolic level by his perceptual limitations, particularly in regard to his limited view and peripheral position of the key events of the French Siege. Surveying the city from Mount Montorio, his imagination pursues the beautiful places in Rome he has never been able to visit:

Tibur is beautiful, too, and the orchard slopes and the Anio  
Falling, falling yet, to the ancient lyrical cadence;  
Tibur and Anio’s tide; and cool from Lucretilis ever,  
With the Digentian stream, and the Bandusian fountain,  
Folded in Sabine recesses, the valley and villa of Horace

[...]

So not seeing I sung; so now – Nor seeing, nor hearing,  
Neither by waterfall lulled, nor folded in sylvan embraces,  
Neither by cell of the Sibyl, nor stepping the Monte Gennaro,  
Seated on Anio’s bank, nor sipping Bandusian waters [...] (*P*, pp. 120–22)<sup>72</sup>

In its attempt to engage with a real landscape, rather than a mental one, the passage contrasts with his nightmarish description of the rocky

72 In this respect, the italicised verse that concludes the canto is clearly Claude’s own poetical salute to the city: “*Therefore farewell, ye hills, and ye, ye vineyarded ruins. / Therefore farewell, ye walls, palaces, pillars, and domes! / Therefore farewell, far seen, ye peaks of the mythic Albano, / Seen from Montorio’s height, Tibur and Æsula’s hills!*” (*P*, p. 123).

heights in letter XII (Canto I). Although the spatial vantage point of distance suggests the ontological clarity Claude strives to obtain throughout the poem, his description is illusory, the deceptive vision of a poetic fiction. Furthermore, his lyrical evocation is not without a self-conscious irony for he is only too aware that he is “[C]heating the prisoner Hope with illusions of vision and fancy” (*P*, p. 121). After the republican defeat, restoration will be reinstated by the French troops; but for the benefit of “Pope and Tourist”. Political-historical certainty is paralleled by Claude’s later realisation of the personal significance of this moment: “Yes, on Montorio’s height for a last farewell of the city, – / So it appears; though then I was quite uncertain about it” (*P*, p. 122). The clarification of his own physical circumstances becomes the starting point for Claude’s leap into action in the final part of *Amours de Voyage* which centres on his cross-country pursuit of Mary Trevellyn.

The frantic pace of Canto IV is anticipated in the galloping hexameters of the opening lyrical poem:

*Eastward, or Northward, or West? I wander and ask as I wander,  
Weary, yet eager and sure, where shall I come to my love?  
Whitherward hasten to seek her? Ye daughters of Italy, tell me,  
Graceful and tender and dark, is she consorting with you?* (*P*, p. 123)

Parataxis and the regularity of the dactylic metre underline the sense of urgent despair that has now taken hold of Claude who can only hope to find Mary “where I but guess her” (*P*, p. 123). Through his poem he can surreptitiously declare the sentiments he has until now denied: “Bring me in mountain or plain into the sight of my love” (*P*, p. 123). This abrupt turn of events is triggered by an unfortunate incident first mentioned by Mary to her old school-mistress, Miss Roper, who, having been forced to remain in Rome with her sick brother, is in touch with Claude:

Dear Miss Roper, – It seems, George Vernon, before we left Rome, said  
Something to Mr Claude about what they call his intentions.  
Susan, two nights ago, for the first time, heard this from Georgina.  
It is *so* disagreeable and *so* annoying to think of!  
If it could only be known, though we may never meet him again, that  
It was all George’s doing, and we were entirely unconscious,  
It would extremely relieve – Your ever affectionate Mary. (*P*, p. 121)

The contrast between Mary's embarrassed response at Vernon's callousness (expressed in exclusively impersonal terms) and Claude's emphatic first-person reaction ("[...] I was astounded, / Horrified quite [...] – *P*, p. 122), highlights a linguistic difference that anticipates their ultimate separation. What is more, Claude almost as impulsively recants and acknowledges his true feelings for Mary, whilst the latter tediously shilly-shallies over imaginary complications that may ensue from the unfortunate episode: "If you think it sincerer to tell him I know of it, do so. / Though I should most extremely dislike it, I know I could manage. / It is the simplest thing, but surely wholly uncalled for [...] you surely can manage / Not to let it appear that I know of that odious matter. / It would be pleasanter far for myself to treat it exactly / As if it had not occurred; and I do not think he would like it" (*P*, p. 122). In both cases self-motivation belies any mutual concerns, with Mary's eagerness to regain her self-esteem echoing Claude's wounded pride.

Whilst Philip Hewson's tormented wanderings through the Highlands bring him to a happy union with Elspie, Claude's frantic chasing of Mary across southern Europe, leads to a scattering of erroneous destinations, near-miss encounters, a mislaid letter and final separation. Travel brings no enlightenment, only travesty (for Claude's awakening occurs before his journeying begins) as, in another self-contradictory revision of his views on romantic love, he laments his exclusion from the conventions of its felicitous outcomes: "There is a tide, at least in the love affairs of mortals, / Which, when taken at flood, leads to the happiest fortune, – / Leads to the marriage-morn and the orange flowers and the alter, / And the long lawful line of crowned joys to crowned joys succeeding" (*P*, p. 124). Reverting to the recurrent trope of water imagery, Claude realises too late that he has failed to take "at flood" his own opportunity with Mary: "Ah, it has ebbed with me! Ye gods, and when it was flowing, / Pitiful fool that I was, to stand and fiddle-faddle in that way" (*P*, p. 124) and now feels the brunt of his previous dismissal of coincidence by being put through a series of non-coincidental episodes which render the impossibility of an encounter with Mary fatalistically inevitable. The linguistic incongruities in his vacillation between archaism and slang are symptomatic of the awkward self-consciousness that impedes him from expressing his suffering in the terms of a classical tragic hero. His real sense of drama is channelled

into his desperate search where places, which would have had magical associations for any Victorian reader, are the mere stopping points of an exasperatingly shambolic itinerary: “Gone from Florence [...] Gone to Milan [...] to Bologna, Parma, Piacenza, Lodi, and Milan [...] Gone to Como [...] And from Como went by boat, – perhaps to Splügen, – / Or, to the Stelvio, say, and the Tyrol; also it might be / By Porlezza across to Lugano, and so to the Simplon / Possibly, or the St. Gothard, – or possibly, too, to Baveno, / Orta, Turin, and elsewhere. Indeed, I am greatly bewildered” (*P*, p. 124). For Claude, travel is synonymous of the restlessness which impedes growth and “simply disturbs, unsettles, and makes you uneasy”, (*P*, p. 111) – it is simply the means to an end which ultimately eludes him. For Mary already begins to evaporate in his imagination from real woman to written sign. Since, as has been pointed out, his search for her “generates even more writing, as he traces her route through signatures left in hotel registers”<sup>73</sup>. The most significant instance is his discovery of a message in her hand:

I have returned and found their names in the book at Como.  
 Certain it is I was right, and yet I am also in error.  
 Added in feminine hand, I read, *By the boat to Bellaggio*.- -  
 So to Bellaggio again, with the words of her writing to aid me. (*P*, p. 125)

Although he recognises and correctly decodes Mary’s message, an alteration in her travelling plans puts him off track. All that remains of her are “the words of her writing” which, contrary to his expectations, bring no aid. The more Claude’s failure to find her becomes likely, the more Mary’s presence becomes evanescently unreal: “Somewhere amid their folds she passes whom fain I would follow; / Somewhere amid those heights she haply calls me to seek her. / Ah, could I hear her call! could I catch the glimpse of her raiment!” (*P*, p. 125). From the real love he never expressed, Claude reverts to the poetic fantasy of a romance he will never have the opportunity to experience. The tragic irony is further heightened by Mary’s own anxieties: “I wonder; – was Mr Claude your companion? [...] Well, he is not come; and now, I suppose, he will not come [...] But I thought, if he came all the way to Milan, he really / Ought not to be disappointed; and so I wrote three lines to / Say I had

73 S. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

heard he was coming, desirous of joining our party [...]” (*P*, pp. 125–6). Similarly, the extent of her vexation at her mislaid letter is clearly tantamount to its compromising contents. Thus, in spite of their good intentions, their mutual attempts to re-establish contact are thwarted by a grotesque comedy of errors, the only possibility of reunion being the textual juxtaposition of their letters.

The final stages of Claude’s labyrinthine pursuit of Mary are represented in the contrasting geographical settings of the lyrical poems that conclude Canto IV and open Canto V. In the first, the speaker looks across a dreamy misty northern landscape on the Swiss border back towards Italy:

*There is a home on the shore of the Alpine sea, that upswelling  
High up the mountain-sides in the hollow between;  
Wilderness, mountain, and snow from the land of the olive conceal it;  
Under Pilatus’s hill low by its river it lies;  
Italy, utter the word, and the olive and vine will allure not, –  
Wilderness, forest, and snow will not the passage impede  
Italy, unto thy cities receding, the clue to recover. (P, p. 126)*

The descriptive elements are allusively evocative and convey a sense of vagueness and indeterminacy that contrast with the speaker’s firm resolve to travel south. The second passage, on the other hand, resumes the interrogative tone that is typical of the preceding lyrical verses, with the daunted speaker once again confronted by the question of open choices:

*There is a city, upbuilt on the quays of the turbulent Arno,  
Under Fiesole’s heights, – thither are we to return?  
There is a city that fringes the curve of the inflowing waters,  
Under the perilous hill fringes the beautiful bay, –  
Parthenope do they call thee? – the siren, Neapolis, seated  
Under the Vesevius’s hill, – are we receding to thee? –  
Sicily, Greece, will invite, and the Orient; – or are we to turn to  
England, which may after all be for its children the best? (P, p. 126)*

The speaker is initially goaded onwards in his course by the clarity afforded by the distant perspective of the mountain scene. But his determination dwindles to uncertainty as he approaches the southern coast and is confronted by an array of possible destinations. The syntactic



parallelism of the opening line of each verse (*There is a place/There is a city*) also demarks the shift from subjectified to objectified locus underlining the increasing detachment of Claude's philosophical reflections at the end of the poem. Also, significantly, the sense of a direct link between the lyrical speaker and Claude appears to collapse in the reference to the protagonists of the poem as "its children" for whom the return home to England remains the only prospect.

Canto V dramatises the ironic interplay between the anxiety of Mary's replies to Miss Roper's teasingly impressionistic accounts of Claude and the latter's growing disenchantment and final renunciation as he once again ponders over the nature of commitment as a composite of action and belief:

*Action will furnish belief, – but will that belief be the true one?  
This is the point, you know. However, it doesn't much matter.  
What one wants, I suppose, is to predetermine the action,  
So as to make it entail, not a chance-belief, but the true one.  
Out of the question, you say; if a thing isn't wrong, we may do it.  
Ah! But this wrong, you see – but I do not know that it matters.* (*P*, p. 127)

Eustace's self-righteous maxims are countered by the uncertainty of Claude's "interminable speculateness"<sup>74</sup>. His imaginative dialogue with Eustace leaves the question open to the fact that if no a-priori truth exists, then the notions of right and wrong become blurred. The apparently nonchalant tone of Claude's end-stopped lines in the parallel phrases "However it doesn't much matter / but I do not know that it matters" indicates a lethargic reluctance to elaborate on a dilemma that has left him mentally exhausted. Indeed, Claude's thinking reaches such a point of saturation that merely to think of Mary becomes a tedious task of recurrent textual reconstruction: "But it is idle, moping, and thinking, and trying to fix her / Image more and more in, to write the old perfect inscription / Over and over again upon every page of remembrance" (*P*, p. 127). The impossibility of holding on to the memory of her textually is graphically rendered by the forced separation through enjambment of "her" and "image". To remember Mary is tantamount to forgetting her (in a sense to *un-write* her). Thus, his declaration: "Let me, then, bear to forget her. I will not cling to her falsely [...]" (*P*, p. 128) is an

74 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

acknowledgment of the fact that Mary (as opposed to the textual self he is trying to fix) is “changing, herself”, just as much as he himself now embraces his own change: “I will walk on my way, accept the chances that meet me, / Freely encounter the world, imbibe these alien airs [...]” (*P*, p. 128). Claude’s acceptance of change brings a new moral strength which resides not in the solipsism of “a religious assurance / Formed in my own poor self” but in the objective truths of reality: “Fact shall be fact for me; and the Truth the Truth as ever, / Flexible, changeable, vague, and multiform and doubtful” (*P*, p. 129). Claude will seek the truth that can only be found through mutability as opposed to the falsity of fixed beliefs, such as those exhorted in Eustace’s moral diktats. Claude’s new-found fixity, in “the hard, naked rock” (which is, however, blessed by the fertility of “the rich earth”) will be his new point of departure. This new ‘conversion’, interestingly, does not entail erasing Mary from his mind (a fact made obvious by his self-contradictory phrase “I already forget her” – *P*, p. 128). For the one assurance that remains lies in the unity of their intellectual and spiritual purposes: “I shall be doing [...] what she will be doing” (*P*, p. 128) – even though this assertion is modified by a slight diminishing of assurance in the change of modals from *shall* (certainty) to *will* (premonition) and the hesitation within the parenthetical phrase “I think, somehow”.

The sequence of dramatic asides in the interval between letters IV and V not only represent Claude’s most private thoughts (those he evidently feels most uneasy about revealing to Eustace), but also reveal his essential agnosticism:

Yes, it relieves me to write, though I do not send, and the chance that  
Takes may destroy my fragments. But as men pray, without asking  
Whether One really exist to hear or do anything for them, –  
Simply impelled by the need of the moment to turn to a Being  
In a conception of whom there is freedom from all limitation, –  
So in your image I turn to an *ens rationis* of friendship.  
Even so write in your name I know not to whom nor in what wise.

(*P*, pp. 128–9)

The ‘Being’ to whom Claude ‘prays’ is not so much a higher power as an intellectual equal. Furthermore, he seeks no solace from a superior essence whatsoever; this is already provided in the act of writing (“Yes, it relieves me to write”). But after his failure to textually engrave a fixed

image of Mary, Claude now feels compelled to turn to a figure that has no imaginary limits. As a result, he engages in a form of spiritual self-probing which leads to his realisation of the cruel juxtaposition between his former and present self: “There was a time, methought it was but lately departed, / When, if a thing was denied me, I felt I was bound to attempt it [...] But it is over all that! I have slunk from the perilous field in / Whose wild struggle of forces the prized of life are contested. / It is over all that! I am a coward, and know it” (*P*, p. 129). Claude’s battle imagery is a reminder of the real military struggle in the poem. But whilst the Romans are finally defeated by the French, Claude comes through his own self-war partly victorious, gaining, for all his limitations and failure with Mary, a knowledge that will inspire him with a new sense of hope. Once he has the courage to state (i.e., write) the truth of himself (“I am a coward”), Claude is ready to be freed from his complexes and self-loathing. Thus, his final ‘understanding’ of the relevance of the republican struggle to his own vicissitudes comprises a sincere, but also serene, acknowledgment of his limitations:

Rome is fallen; and fallen, or falling, heroical Venice.  
 I, meanwhile, for the loss of a single small chit of a girl, sit  
 Moping and mourning here, – for her, and myself much smaller.  
 Wither depart the souls of the brave that die in the battle,  
 Die in the lost, lost fight, for the cause that perishes with them?  
 [...]  
 All declamation, alas! Though I talk, I care not for Rome, nor  
 Italy; feebly and faintly, and but with the lips can lament the  
 Wreck of the Lombard youth and the victory of the oppressor.  
 Whither depart the brave – God knows; I certainly do not. (*P*, p. 130)

In spite of his talking “but with the lips”, Claude’s language is, for once, genuinely moving in its simple melancholy: “Are they upborne from the field [...] / Unto a far-off home, where the weary rest from their labour, / And the deep wounds are healed, and the bitter and burning moisture / Wiped from the generous eyes?” (*P*, p. 130). Claude attains a descriptive realism that comprises the whole range of his contradictory sentiments as he places his own suffering within a larger historical perspective in which not only Mary becomes objectified as “a single small chit of a girl” but, in contrast to his earlier defence of the individual ego, he also learns to see himself in terms of his own smallness. This brings

about an understanding of the extent to which he has been utilising language falsely and deceptively (“All declamation, alas!”) in order to conceal his true feelings. In this sense, the humorous twist in the final line is not so much an irreverent jibe, as Claude’s ironic exposure of the ambiguous potential of language, even in his candid self-confession of ignorance. On the metrical level, the line is invested with a harmonious synchrony, the equal syllabic quantity (six syllables each) of the two clause elements “Whither depart the brave” and “I certainly do not” being balanced out by the intervening bi-syllable clause “God knows”. This structural symmetry is countered by the grammatical sequence in which an implicit interrogative is followed by an affirmation and a subsequent negative reply. Whilst an initial reading suggests a figurative sense of the phrase “God knows” (a sense encouraged by Claude’s characteristic scepticism) – as a negative exclamation, the negative reply elicits a literal interpretation of the phrase as an affirmation. Thus, only by interpreting, rather than taking Claude at his word, may the reader arrive at his real meaning. “God knows” is not an assertion that ‘belongs’ to Claude. It is one he ‘borrows’ in order to render the contrast between the traditional acceptance of faith and his own scepticism about the objective existence of a God that lies beyond the domain of his understanding all the more poignant. Indeed, the degree to which his agnosticism is dictated by a nostalgia for traditional faith is also evidenced in his description of a street organ playing an English psalm-tune: “Comfort me it did, till indeed I was very near crying” (*P*, p. 129). However much the power of his unbelief hinges on a positivistic acceptance of facts, his susceptibility to the music, besides illustrating its power as a language of the feelings, provokes a sudden and unexpected breakdown of his emotional reserve that is an essential part of the process of his ‘conversion’ to multiform and changeable reality.

Within the flux of his changing self, Claude even begins to question the reality of his past feelings for Mary:

After all, do I know that I really cared so about her?  
 Do whatever I will, I cannot call up her image;  
 For when I close my eyes, I see, very likely, St Peter’s,  
 Or the Pantheon façade, or Michael Angelo’s figures,  
 Or, at a wish, what I please, the Alban hills and the Forum, –  
 But that face, those eyes, – ah no, never anything like them;

Only, try as I will, a sort of featureless outline,  
And a pale blank orb, which no recollection will add to.  
After all perhaps there was something factitious about it:  
I have had pain, it is true; I have wept; and so have the actors. (*P*, p. 131)

Ironically, the geographical-historical background of Rome becomes the foreground of Claude's story as its landscape features are superimposed over Mary's faded image. Indeed, background and foreground are inverted to the extent that the veracity of the narrative of the poem is questioned by its own fictional protagonist: "perhaps there was something factitious about it". Factitious – a word that continually revolves in Claude's mind – becomes his final judgment of the poem as he not only casts himself alongside its other actors but also assumes the role of critical commentator:

All might be changed, you know. Or perhaps there was nothing to be changed.  
It is a curious history, this; and yet I foresaw it;  
I could have told it before. The fates, it is clear, are against us  
[...]  
Great is Fate, and is best. I believe in Providence partly.  
What is ordained is right, and all that happens is ordered.  
Ah, no, that isn't it. But yet I retain my conclusion.  
I will go where I am led, and will not dictate to the chances. (*P*, pp. 131–2)

Contrary to his previous dismissal of providence, Claude now expresses a tentative conviction in predestination (especially as he himself was able to predict the outcome of his destiny). From his role as the main protagonist of the poem, he will now, in turn, become an actor of providence ("I will go where I am led, and will not dictate to the chances"). The verb choices are significant: Claude's refusal to 'dictate' is also his renunciation to write and his decision to "go" a declaration to act. The substitution of action for writing is the ultimate transition of Claude's concluding letters which imbues him with an Aristotelian optimism deriving, not through faith or love, but knowledge: "Faith, I think, does pass, and Love; but knowledge abideth. / Let us seek knowledge; – the rest must come and go as it happens. / Knowledge is hard to seek, and harder yet to adhere to. / Knowledge is painful often; and yet when we know, we are happy. / Seek it and leave

mere Faith and Love to come with the chances” (*P*, p. 132)<sup>75</sup>. The mock-biblical tone averts the reader to the fact that Claude deliberately reverses the three precepts. As Paul states in I Corinthians 13:2: “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so I could remove mountains, and have not charity (i.e., love), I am nothing.” It is significant that in his search for truth, the nineteenth-century agnostic Claude relies exclusively on knowledge, traditionally conceived as a point of departure towards enlightenment and faith<sup>76</sup>. Knowledge is seen as the only viable premise, for Claude because harder to attain than “mere faith and love” which he leaves in the hands of Fate to be revealed. Like knowledge, hope is also expressed in the terms of a new, albeit mundane, starting point: “As for Hope – to-morrow I hope to be starting for Naples” (*P*, p. 132). On the one hand, the irony of Claude’s hopeful journey to the adversary city which hosted the exiled Pope and lent support to the French cannot go unnoticed. On the other, it confirms his transcendence over all antagonism and animosity in his total embracing of what providence ordains. Thus “starting” is not only synonymous of the journey itself, but also of the opportunity of a new beginning for Claude.

This new beginning also applies to the journey of the poem into the outside world evoked in the final lyrical verse that concludes *Amours de Voyage*:

*So go forth to the world, to the good report and the evil?  
Go, little book! Thy tale, is it not evil and good?  
Go, and if strangers revile, pass quietly by without answer.  
Go, and if curious friends ask of thy rearing and age,*

75 Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas Prince of Abissinia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009 (1759), p. 31: “Knowledge is certainly one of the means of pleasure, as is confessed by the natural desire which every mind feels of increasing its ideas”. Claude’s perpetual mental restlessness has much in common with the pursuit for a ‘choice of life’ on the part of Johnson’s characters. Clough’s poem and Johnson’s philosophical tale are also grounded on a similar negative dialectic by which all means of enquiry are conditioned.

76 As J. Goode, *op. cit.*, p. 290, rightly notes “The celebration of knowledge receives exactly the same ironic inflation as the other moral codes which are rejected.”

*Say, 'I am flitting about many years from brain unto brain of  
Feeble and restless youths born to inglorious days;  
But', so finish the word, 'I was writ in a Roman chamber,  
When from Janiculum heights thundered the canon of France.'* (P, p. 133)

This journey sanctions the process from composition to publication. From “*Come little bark!*” to “*Go little book*”, the written process is complete and the author is ready to part with his text. From the initial “*idle fancies*” and “*memories wilfully falser*” the tale has explored the heights and depths of good and evil and attempted, through the mimetic process of the epistolary form, to explore the moral and spiritual crisis of “*restless youths born to inglorious days*”. On an extradiegetic level, the hostile reception of the poem (which Clough ironically received from “*curious friends*”) is anticipated by the poet’s silent response: “*if strangers revile, pass by without answer*”. For he knows that from the moment the poem is out of his hands it can only ultimately *speak* for itself<sup>77</sup>.

77 Ironically, the final word given to the poem is precisely what it cannot reveal about itself; the circumstances of its composition. In the poem’s end is its beginning, both in terms of its spatial and temporal representation and on a lexical level, in the synthesis between its final word (France) and its French title.





## Chapter 7

### *Dipsychus*

*A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.*  
(James 1:8)

#### 7.1 Clough's manuscripts

Never completed to its author's satisfaction, *Dipsychus* remains one of the most extraordinary literary productions of the nineteenth century. Whilst it represents the highpoint of Clough's metrical experimentation, its combination of lyric and satire<sup>1</sup> signals a definite break with conventional Victorian notions of poetic genre. As with *Amours de Voyage*, the central theme is the divided mind and the detrimental consequences of over-introspection. However, in this case, Clough resumes the moral and spiritual dilemmas of his Oxford poems through a dramatisation of the epistemological and ontological uncertainties of his main protagonist-poet that comprises an ironic evaluation of the nature and validity of poetry itself.

*Dipsychus* was conceived in Venice<sup>2</sup> during Clough's third trip to Italy in the summer of 1850 and was to occupy him for the remaining eleven years of his life.<sup>3</sup> This was a period of upheaval in which financial

- 1 W. Houghton, *op. cit.*, p. 170 observes that "[M]ost Victorians were quite unprepared for this ambivalence [...] or this alliance of levity and seriousness".
- 2 Like Rome, Venice had also revolted from Austria and been declared a Republic, but was reconquered by the Austrians in 1849.
- 3 See J. P. Phelan "The Textual Evolution of Clough's *Dipsychus* and the Spirit" in *The Review of English Studies*, 46, 182 (May, 1995), pp. 230–39 which is the first attempt at dating the successive drafts of Clough's poem. Besides highlighting the editorial differences, between modern commentators such as Malhauser and

difficulties and professional uncertainty became the backdrop to his initially difficult engagement with Blanche Smith. The compositional stages of *Dipsychus*, therefore stretch from his lonely period in London as Principle of University College to his marriage to Blanche in 1853. In the interim, taking advantage of the generous hospitality of Emerson, Clough spent several fruitless months in the search for a teaching employment in the United States. It was during this American sojourn that he received a letter from his fiancée in which she informed him of her accidental discovery of some of his papers, among which a manuscript of *Dipsychus*. Anxious of her evident disturbance by the poem, he sent a frantic reply: “Dear Blanche, please don’t read *Dipsychus* yet – I wish particularly not. You shall see it sometime – but now, not, please – dear, I beg not, please [...]” (C II, p. 350)<sup>4</sup>. Clough still regarded his poem as a work in progress and understood only too well how its intentions could be misconstrued by Blanche. Which it was. For in her editorial role in the posthumous publication of her husband’s poetical works in 1862<sup>5</sup> she thought it fitter to split the verses comprising *Dipsychus* into separate poems. It was eventually presented as a single work in a private edition, though heavily bowdlerised, in 1865. Subsequent editors have endeavoured in various ways, to restore the expurgated passages in the attempt to produce a unified text<sup>6</sup>. Given the poet’s own textual doubts, none of these may be confidently asserted as being a definitive version<sup>7</sup>. Clough’s most recent biographer has provided a detailed account of the editorial

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McCue, Phelan reveals that several sections of the poem were not composed until at least 1854.

- 4 Blanche inadvertently discovered various letters and papers of Clough’s during his visit to the United States in 1853 which prompted the following remark: “It is strange those peeps and reminders of your old times and thoughts and your other sides always upset me [...] I don’t mean to blame, but I don’t like it” (C II, p. 402). Clough’s reply was sheepish but adamant: “I don’t blame you about looking at all – but *please* don’t do it any more [...]” (C, II, 405, Clough’s italics).
- 5 The first edition of Clough’s poetical works was published privately in 1865. The same version of *Dipsychus* was published in an edition for the general public in 1869.
- 6 Besides the Oxford Malhauser edition which is followed here, other editions include H.F. Lowry (Oxford, 1951), J. P. Phelan (Longman 1995) and Anthony Kenny (Carcenet, 2014).
- 7 A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet’s Life*, cit., p. 217: “There is no such thing as *the* text of the poem”.

dilemmas involved part of which is worth quoting in order to give the reader a sense of their complexity<sup>8</sup>:

[...] it is uncertain how many scenes the drama is to contain. No two editions agree on the order in which the scenes are to be presented. The first published version of the poem (1869) and the modern standard edition (1974) agree in offering 14 scenes, but the earlier text, unlike the latter divides the poem into two parts (one of five scenes and one of nine)<sup>9</sup>.

Without entering into the details of the convoluted process of Clough's revisions (which comprise at least four phases)<sup>10</sup>, it may be pointed out that several sheets of the five notebooks containing the drafts of the poem are not only damaged or torn but give little indication of the chronological sequence he intended his work to follow. Reconstruction can be likened to assembling a jig-saw puzzle with missing pieces and replicas. A cursory comparison between the 1869 edition (which reprints Blanche's version with minor spelling corrections) and Malhauser's 1974 edition (generally regarded as the standard text) eloquently underlines the confusing state of Clough's manuscripts:

1869	1974
<b>Part I</b>	
I The Piazza at Venice	I The Piazza at Venice
II The Public Garden	II The Public Garden
III At the Hotel	III The Quays
IV On the Piazza	IV The Hotel
V The Lido	V In a Gondola
	VI (Untitled)
	VII (Untitled)
	VIII The InteriorArcade of the Doge's palace

8 Antony Kenny, ed., *Arthur Hugh Clough: Mari Magno, Dipsychus and Other Poems*, Manchester, Carcanet, 2014. pp. xi-xii, offers his own version in which, the first four sections excepting, he substantially deviates from Malhauser and follows the 1869 edition in dividing the poem into two separate acts. See also note 11.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

10 See Malhauser's detailed account in *P*, pp. 681–4. Also A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. A Poet's Life*, *cit.*, pp. 216–7.

## Part II

I	The Interior Arcade of the Doge's Palace	IX	The Academy
II	In a Gondola	X	(Untitled)
III	The Academy at Venice	XI	The Piazza at Night
IV	St Mark's	XII	(Untitled)
V	The Piazza at Night	XIII	(Untitled)
VI	On the Bridge	XIV	(Untitled) <sup>11</sup>
VII	At Torcello		
VIII	In the Piazza		
IX	In the Public Garden		

As is evident, these two editions differ both in their organisation and titling of scenes (the 1869 text indicating a two-part structure which is not contemplated by Malhauser) but also in content (the former being a drastically censored version of Clough's text of which the latter is an attempt to restore). Bearing in mind the unavoidable fact that no definitive text of *Dipsychus* exists, one is necessarily obliged, if the poem is to be given the critical attention it merits, to circumvent the question of Clough's compositional confusions and choose the version that appears most effective (though such a choice will be inevitably dictated by intuition and personal preference). The following discussion follows Malhauser's 1974 standard edition because, although he leaves several scenes unimaginatively untitled, his reinstatement of most of the originally censored passages enhances the dialogical confrontation between *Dipsychus* and the Spirit and provides the narrative and thematic structure of the poem with a coherence that other editions lack.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 226 where Kenny offers his own structure of the poem according to the following scenic divisions: Part one: 1. The Piazza 2. The Public Garden 3. The Quays 4. The Hotel 5. The Insult 6. The Lido Part two: 1. The Academy 2. In San Marco 3. The Piazza at Night 4. On a Bridge 5. In the Piazza. R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, pp. 390–1, proposes a three-fold division (Scenes I-III, Scenes IV-VII, and Scenes VIII-XIII) which, in the critic's opinion "draws attention to the changing centre of gravity in the poem" (p. 391).

## 7.2 *Dipsychus*

Contrary to expectation (and despite his originally naming his main character Faustulus in an early draft of the poem<sup>12</sup>), Clough's duological confrontation between a crisis-ridden young intellectual poet and an unnamed worldly-wise spirit has little, if any, connection with Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or Goethe's *Faust*<sup>13</sup>. For one thing, Dipsychus's initial encounter with the Spirit in the poem does not arise as a result of his desire for arcane knowledge and supernatural power but as a symptom of his encroaching religious doubts<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, the poem traces the cognitive and emotional processes that lead up to his bargain with

12 See, *P*, p. 681.

13 This view is not entirely in line with most critics who tend to draw parallels between the poem which, however, are marginal. See for example, W. Houghton, *op. cit.*, p. 162: "Clough's hero has something of the dual personality of Goethe's Faust. The latter explains to Wagner: 'Two souls, alas, cohabit in my breast [...]'. Since Dipsychus was first called Faustulus [...] the conception of his character may have had its source in this speech". Krishan Lal Kalla, *The Mid-Victorian Literature and Loss of Faith*, New Delhi, K. M. Mittal, 1989, p. 56, points out important differences between the two poems: "Faust reflects a shining faith the irony being that Faust is rejected by the custodian of faith to reclaim a sinner; it is not a tragedy, but, one might say, an irony [...] Moreover Faust originates in the circumambience of belief, while Dipsychus from, so to say, a scientific postulate that there is no God." See also R. K. Biswas *op. cit.*, pp. 378–9 and E. Warwick Slinn *Victorian Poetry as Cultural Critique: The Politics of Performative Language*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2003, pp. 104–5. An exception to the critical chorus is K. Chorley, *op. cit.* p. 251: "[...] it would be hard to maintain that the Spirit is a tempter in the sense of Goethe's Mephistopholes, nor has Dipsychus himself much in common with the imperious Faust. "In this connection, it is also worth mentioning that Clough remarked in a letter to his wife, after recommending her to read Wilhelm Meister; 'Faust I have never read properly myself'" (quoted in K. Chorley, *op. cit.*, p. 251).

14 Analogies have been noted between Clough's poem and Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*. See, for example, E. W. Slinn, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–7. However, Dipsychus has none of Empedocles's stoicism and his dejection is self-induced rather than, as with Empedocles, imposed by a combination of philosophical delusion and rejection of a hostile world. Furthermore, Arnold's mythical setting is anathema to Clough's belief that the contemporary world was the only pertinent context for poetical representation.

the Spirit and is not concerned with the consequences that arise from this action which (unlike in Marlowe's and Goethe's works) occurs in the final scene<sup>15</sup>. Nor does *Dipsychus* adhere to the traditional pattern of the moral drama. For, far from defining his characters through a clear-cut distinction between 'good' and 'evil'<sup>16</sup>, Clough, in an attempt to clear his way through his own intellectually-oriented search for religious *truth*<sup>17</sup>, highlights the psychological interpenetration of their dialogical exchanges<sup>18</sup>. This explains why the Spirit<sup>19</sup> frequently manifests his cynical exposure of man's epistemological contradictions through precise references to Holy Scripture, whilst *Dipsychus*, in his continual fluctuation between religious certainty and doubt,<sup>20</sup> is made acutely conscious of the extent to which his natural instincts have been suppressed

- 15 This was to be the topic of Clough's unfinished *Dipsychus Continued* of which only a handful of pages were written. Here, after a period of thirty years during which time he has become Lord Chief Justice, *Dipsychus* is visited by an old woman who tells him that he is the father of her child. *Dipsychus* coldly dismisses her. In the following scene his public resignation is revealed through other minor characters, and the final incomplete scene (of only 27 lines) which breaks off in mid-sentence, sees a guilt-ridden *Dipsychus* desperately seeking some news of the old woman he had cast away.
- 16 E. W. Slinn, *op. cit.*, p. 107: "Dipsychus and the Spirit function less as alternatives [...] than as doubles, as differentiating forms that exist interdependently, allowing each to define himself both through and against the other".
- 17 Gregory Tate, *The Poet's Mind: The Psychology of Victorian Poetry 1830–1870*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 60: "Clough did not always see chronic ambivalence as damaging or pathological. At times he embraced it, because it enabled him to keep watch over his mind and to guard against dogmatism and positiveness."
- 18 See Charles LaPorte, *op. cit.*, p. 112, who sees this as a "struggle between sacred ambition and profane mockery"
- 19 It is significant that Clough reverted to this vague appellation after initially calling him Mephisto in an early draft. In an even earlier version he is called Mephistopheles. The fact that Clough later omitted this name is confirmation of his deliberate ambiguity over the Spirit's identity for reasons that transcend a purely Christian dichotomy between good and evil and comprise, as will be discussed, fundamental notions of eastern-oriented philosophies. The essential dramatisation is therefore between division (*Dipsychus*) and acceptance of duplicity (Spirit).
- 20 The name comes from the Greek *dipsychos* (i.e. 'double-minded'). Clough had originally intended his character to be called Faustus, though, as I have pointed out, this suggests inopportune analogies with Marlowe and Goethe's poems.

by the stealthy influence of his social and religious conditioning. In this respect, Dipsychus is in diametrical opposition to Claude. He has none of the latter's cynicism, crass intolerance or self-blindness. Indeed, his hyper-sensitivity is the result of an excessive conscience (what the nephew calls a "tender conscience") rather than a love of self. Indeed, the nephew's revelation of the intention behind the poem in the prologue clearly indicates that *Dipsychus* is not intended as a rewriting of the Faustian myth. Hence, the question over whether the Spirit is a force for good or evil is bogus. For one thing, his provocations serve to highlight the extent to which Dipsychus's self-conscious endeavour to control his experiences creates the illusory vicious circle of an ethic that keeps him in the hold of a monological and idealised world-view. Any reluctance (or inability) on his part to carry out the Spirit's demands for action, therefore, seems not so much an assertion of moral strength as the symptom of an indecisiveness which always leaves the question of his virtue open to interrogation<sup>21</sup>.

Central to Clough's *modus operandi* is the poetical nature of the conflict between his two protagonists as they persistently attempt to rhetorically outmanoeuvre each other<sup>22</sup>. This framework is reinforced by passages representing autonomous poetic compositions (the most important of these being *Easter Day*). This sub-theme is anticipated in the poetic dispute between the first person narrator (the fictional composer of *Dipsychus*) and his uncle in the prose Prologue and Epilogue. The Prologue deals firstly with the most conspicuous feature of *Dipsychus*; its metrical experimentation:

‘I hope it is in good plain verse’, said my Uncle; ‘none of your hurry-scurry anapaests, as you call them, in lines which sober people are reading for plain heroics. Nothing is more disagreeable than to say a line or two, or, it may be, three or four

- 21 The degree to which his condition may be applicable to Clough himself is a question critics have not failed to address. D Williams, *op. cit.* p. 95, for instance, suggests that *Dipsychus* can be seen as “the work of someone who realises that the instinctive, natural man in him has been planned away to nothingness by the forces of education and upbringing.”
- 22 *Dipsychus* shares common features with the poetry of the Spasmodics, to whom Clough was often linked by his contemporaries. These include: the main protagonist as poet; lengthy and introspective soliloquies and the language of extreme emotion.

times, and at last not be sure that there are not three or four ways of reading, each as good and as much intended as the other. Simplex duntaxact et unum. But you young people think Horace and your uncles fools.’

‘Certainly, my dear sir,’ said I; ‘that is, I mean, Horace and my uncle are perfectly right. Still, there is an instructed ear and an un-instructed. A rude taste for identical recurrences would exact sing-song from “Paradise Lost”, and grumble because “Il Penseroso” doesn’t run like a nursery-rhyme’. (*P*, p. 218)

Whilst the nephew’s insinuation of his uncle’s inability to appreciate the rhythmic nuances of metrical scansion<sup>23</sup> is a reminder of Clough’s own caution of his poetic irregularities to his reader in *The Bothie*, the uncle’s no-nonsense insistence on “good plain verse” prepares the terrain for the dramatisation of poetic forms that runs throughout *Dipsychus*. The irony, of course, is that far from providing Horation simplicity and unity, the nephew’s poem proves to be structurally loose, psychologically fraught and verbally heterogeneous. Indeed, the complex poetic texture of *Dipsychus* is an unavoidable symptom of the main protagonist’s tormented psyche and the fact that the duologue is framed as a recital by the nephew to his uncle reinforces the schizophrenic dimension of this enactment<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, whilst the persona of Dipsychus may be cast within this fictional frame as the nephew’s alter-ego, the reference to *Easter Day* in the opening lines of the poem establishes an immediate association with its real author, Arthur Hugh Clough:

The scene is different and the place; the air  
Tastes of the nearer North: the people too  
Not perfect southern lightness. Wherefore then  
Should those old verses come into my mind  
I made last year in Naples? O poor fool,  
Still nesting on thyself!

- 23 Although the nephew’s observations undoubtedly apply to most of the lines uttered by Dipsychus, the Spirit’s verses, on the other hand, depend largely upon the kind of mechanical reading mocked by the nephew precisely as a result of their ‘sing-song’ form.
- 24 The effect of an actual performance of the poem in this sense would be both comic and chilling.



‘Through the great sinful streets of Naples as I past,  
 With fiercer heat than flamed above my head  
 My heart was hot within; the fire burnt, and at last  
 My brain was lightened when my tongue had said,  
 Christ is not risen!’ (*P*, pp. 218–9)

The insertion in the opening lines of what has become one of Clough’s most widely-read poems suggests a necessity to re-confront its polemical message<sup>25</sup>. Thus, Dipsychus, as the fictional author, discovers that the spiritual predicament which produced the verses cannot be overcome merely because he finds himself in a different geographical location. For whilst Naples, as the inescapable locus of *Easter Day*, may be a cruel reminder to him of the indifference of his spatial surroundings to his persistent crisis, Venice is merely incidental: another city Clough happened to be in when he began composing *Dipsychus*<sup>26</sup>. The intra-textual insertion of *Easter Day* in the opening scene, therefore, serves to introduce the main protagonist’s spiritual dilemma as well establish the three-fold diegetic interconnection underlying the paratextual and textual levels of the poem:

PARATEXTUAL LEVEL → TEXTUAL LEVEL  
 [Nephew (Clough?) ↔ Dipsychus] [Nephew ↔ Dipsychus ↔ Clough ↔ Nephew]

The implicit link between the first-person narrator (nephew) and Clough on the paratextual level (prologue and epilogue) becomes one of a chain of interrelationships from the moment Dipsychus speaks as the author of *Easter Day*<sup>27</sup>. At the same time, Clough ‘fictionalises’ the compositional element of his poem by making a slight but significant alteration

- 25 It should be made clear, however, that *Easter Day* was still an unpublished poem and would therefore have been unknown to the general public at the time.
- 26 In contrast with the lively socio-political representation of Rome in *Amours de Voyage*, the Venice of *Dipsychus* is a shadowy world of impressionistic, fleeting presences, with which Dipsychus rarely interacts.
- 27 In spite of their degree of authorial omniscience, it is significant that Clough’s long poems establish an increasingly conspicuous identification between poet and poetic persona. From the partially objective portrayal of Phillip Hewson in *The Bothie*, to the teasingly ambivalent autobiographical connections with Claude in *Amours*, *Dipsychus* intimates a direct correlation between Clough and his poetic persona in terms of poetic activity and the search for truth.



H'm! And the tone then after all  
Something of the ironical?  
Sarcastic, say; or were it better  
To style it the religious bitter? (*P*, p. 219)

In this new context the Spirit becomes the real poet's critical *alter-ego*, the voice of his own doubts and misgivings. For not only do the cynical observations of his metapoetic discussion run against Clough's own spiritual dilemmas, but the implicit self-criticism in his close-to-the-bone remarks extract no illuminating comments from Dipsychus himself: "Interpret it I cannot. I but wrote it" (*P*, p. 219). As a poet, Dipsychus/Clough is loath to consider his verses from an objective standpoint which would expose the indeterminacy of his words. All he can do is acknowledge the fact of having written it, thus subordinating any meaning the poem may have to the cathartic effect of its recitation. Meanwhile, Dipsychus's frustration at the crowd's general indifference of the religious occasion begs the question of what he expects from people in festive mood. The irony of this is highlighted in the Spirit's commonsensical reply:

'Twas well enough once in a way;  
Such things don't fall out every day.  
Having once happened, as we know,  
In Palestine so long ago,  
How should it now at Venice here?  
When people, true enough, appear  
To appreciate more and understand  
Their ices, and their Austrian band,  
And dark-eyed girls – (*P*, p. 220)

The galloping iambic tetrameters insensitively underline his refutation of the symbolic valence of the Resurrection for a present preoccupied with earthly celebrations. Far from urging the necessity for a reaffirmation of religious faith, the Spirit views Dipsychus's poetic lament as nothing more than an exhibitionistic indulgence in self-pity:

Music! Up, up; it isn't fit  
With beggars here on steps to sit.  
Up to the café! Take a chair  
And join the wiser idlers there.

Aye! What a crowd! And what a noise!  
 With all these screaming half-breached boys.  
*Partout* dogs, boys, and women wander –  
 And see, a fellow singing yonder;  
 Singing, ye gods, and dancing too –  
 Tooraloo, tooraloo, tooraloo, loo;  
 Fiddle di, diddle di, diddle di da  
*Figaro sù, Figaro giù* –  
*Figaro quà*<sup>31</sup>, *Figaro là!*  
 How he likes doing it! Ah, ha ha! (*P*, pp. 220–1)

In an attempt to shake him out of his melancholy state, the Spirit jocularly encourages Dipsychus to participate in the present moment of the Easter festivities. The metrical deviation from tetrameters to iambic pentameters in his nonsensical sound words: “Tooraloo, tooraloo, tooraloo, loo; / Fiddle di, diddle di, diddle di da [...]”<sup>32</sup>, is a comical rejoinder to the mournful message of Dipsychus’s dramatic blank verses. Thus, his final line “How he likes doing it!” is pointedly provocative in its insinuation that, deep down, Dipsychus also wishes he could take part in the general merriment (and, by implication, abandon the dramatic pretensions of his versification). This is only the first of many appeals the Spirit makes to Dipsychus to embrace the here and now, the philosophical resonance of which becomes clearer as the poem progresses.

By this stage, it may appear axiomatic that Clough intends a correlation between the contrasting metrical forms assigned to his two characters and their opposing metaphysical and ideological positions: that Dipsychus will express himself in the blank verse associated with the ‘elitist’ poetry of high morality, lyrical sentiment and intellectual purpose, whilst the comically malicious Spirit will speak predominantly in the popular mode of rhyming tetrameters. In reality, the two characters are allowed a certain degree of interchange that contradicts this impression. Thus, at the beginning of Scene II, for example, it is Dipsychus who speaks in iambic tetrameters as he expresses his delight at the loveliness of the public garden:

31 Clough erroneously places accents above the Italian prepositions *su* and *qua*.

32 In contrast with the steady cadences of Dipsychus’s pentameters, the first line here is anapaestic and the second dactylic.

Assuredly, a lively scene!  
And, ah, how pleasant, something green!  
With circling heavens one perfect rose  
Each smoother patch of water glows,  
Hence to where, o'er the full tide's face,  
We see the Palace and the Place,  
And the white dome. Beauteous but hot. (*P*, p. 221)

The artificiality of this hackneyed description is metrically highlighted in the first line where a regular scansion requires a diaeresis in the adverb “[a]ssuredly” (pronounced affectedly with four-syllables). Therefore, like his verse, Dipsychus’s enjoyment seems at one remove from reality. Moreover, his sudden (and inexplicable) approval of the lively crowd is countered by the Spirit who, perhaps in vindication of his exclusive right to use tetrameters, sarcastically reminds Dipsychus of the religious nature of the occasion:

This rather stupid place to-day,  
It's true, is most extremely gay;  
And rightly – the *Assunzione*  
Was always a *gran funzione*. (*P*, p. 222)

The Spirit compounds his contradictory displeasure of this particular *lively scene* (as opposed to his amused involvement with the merry crowd in Scene I) with a malicious conjoining of rhymes (*Assunzione/gran funzione*) to expose the mundane nature of man’s celebration of Easter Sunday whilst slyly alluding to the specifically religious connotation of the Italian word *funzione*. This provokes a direct response from Dipsychus who, for the first time, questions the nature of the Spirit’s identity:

What is this persecuting voice that haunts me?  
What? Whence? Of whom? How am I to detect?  
Myself or not myself? My own bad thoughts,  
Or some external agency at work,  
To lead me who knows whither? (*P*, p. 222)

Although it is true that Dipsychus appears to be generally unaware of the Spirit’s presence (at least in the earlier parts of the poem), the latter’s function as an inner voice inexorably communicating its provocative

intent is established from the outset. Dipsychus's responsiveness to the Spirit as his poetic 'other' is indicated here in his awareness of how the same isochronous movement can articulate very different words. Reverting to the safe metrical 'sobriety' of iambic pentameter blank verse provides him with the rhetorical means of resisting what he perceives as the subversive sway of his own poetic counter-voice. At the same time, his speculation over the Spirit's nature ("Myself, or not myself? My own bad thoughts, / or some external agency at work") is symptomatic of his moral confusion (as well as intuition of a philosophical insight he can never acknowledge) rendered in a final seven-syllable line ("To lead me who knows whither") which is completed as an iambic tetrameter by the Spirit's ironically interrogative interjection:

Eh?

We're certainly in luck today:  
What lots of boats before us plying –  
Gay parties, singing, shouting, crying,  
Saluting others past them flying!  
What numbers at the landing lying!  
What lots of pretty girls, too, hieing  
Hither and thither – coming, going,  
And with what satisfaction showing,  
To our male eyes unveiled and bare  
Their dark exuberance of hair,  
Black eyes, rich tints, and sundry graces  
Of classic pure Italian faces! (*P*, p. 222)

The accumulation of mono-rhyming gerunds conveys a vertiginous sense of frivolity into which the Spirit attempts to entice Dipsychus who, in his spasmodic and yearning search, is clearly susceptible to the beauty of the Venetian women to the point that the violence of his outburst seems tantamount to his admission of lusty desire: "Off, off! Oh heaven, depart, depart, depart! / Oh me! the toad sly-sitting at Eve's ear / Whispered no dream more poisonous than this" (*P*, p. 222). Regardless, the Spirit continues to tease him with a description of the physical charms of the "perfect show of girls" (*P*, p. 222) and, to drive his point home, sings the chorus from a satirical air by Béranger, as a warning against unconsummated passion:

How do those pretty verse go?

*Ah comme je regrette  
Mon bras si dodu,  
Ma jambe bien faite  
Et le temps perdu!  
Et le temps perdu!*<sup>33</sup>

By ascribing these lines (which lament the passing of a licentious life), to Dipsychus, the Spirit's implication is that, in contrast, he will have no licentious past to brood over:

Ah me, me!  
Clear stars above, thou roseate westward sky,  
Take up my being into yours; assume  
My sense to own you only; steep my brain  
In your essential purity. Or, great Alps,  
That wrapping round your heads in solemn clouds  
Seem sternly to sweep past our vanities,  
Lead me with you – take me away; preserve me!  
– Ah, if it must be, look then, foolish eyes –  
Listen fond ears; but, oh, poor mind, stand fast! (*P*, p. 223)

The longing to draw back into a prelapsarian world of natural innocence is of course, also a recurrent motif in *Blank Misgivings*. Within the dramatic context of *Dipsychus*, such stilted language as forged in the lines above is set against the ironic frame it warrants. For just as the Spirit suggests that he has been noted favourably by a girl, Dipsychus momentarily succumbs to the idea of taking her:

There was a glance, I saw you spy it –  
So! Shall we follow suit and try it?  
Pooh! What a goose you are! Quick, quick!  
This hesitation makes me sick.  
You simpleton! What's your alarm?  
She'd merely thank you for your arm.

33 The Spirit misquotes the first line which is supposed to read “Combien je regrette”.

*Dipsychus*

Sweet thing! Ah well! But yet I am not sure.  
Ah no. I think she did not mean it. No. (*P*, p. 224)

Dipsychus's refusal to act on his desires is tantamount to his lack of self-confidence and fear: "Ah, pretty thing – well, well. Yet should I go? / Alas I cannot say. What should I do?" (*P*, p. 224). The Spirit's cynical reply: "What should you do? Well that is funny! / I think you are supplied with money (*P*, p. 224), only leaves Dipsychus in tongue-tied confusion: "No, no – it may not be. I could, I would – / And yet I would not – cannot. To what end?" (*P*, p. 224). The empty repetition of modal verbs (a recurrent Cloughian device) articulates an indecision that is only resolved by the appearance of another youth:

And I half yielded! O unthinking!  
O weak weak fool! O God how quietly  
Out of our better into our worse selves  
Out of a true world which our reason knew  
Into a false world which our fancy makes  
We pass and never know – O weak weak fool. (*P*, p. 225)

Dipsychus attempts to overcome the humiliation of this episode by construing his momentary lapse as a subjugation of imagination over reason. Yet, his initial vision of pantheistic purity is equally driven by the fancy he here condemns for creating "a false world"<sup>34</sup>. The Spirit impatiently derides him for his lack of self-honesty:

Well, if you don't wish, why, you don't.  
Leave it! But that's just what you won't.  
Come now! How many times per diem  
Are you not hankering to try 'em? (*P*, p. 225)

Dipsychus's two-faced denial of his sexual desires (ridiculed in the Spirit's Latin and colloquial rhyme words) leads to a series of anaphoric appeals to beatific forms of innocence as, for the first time in the poem,

34 This attitude recalls Clough's adolescent belief of poetry as a sinful vanity for the state of excitement it induces.



he openly recognises the fact that the Spirit's discourse plays havoc with the notions of right and wrong:

O moon and stars forgive! And thou, clear heaven,  
Look pureness back into me. O great God,  
Why, why in wisdom and in grace's name,  
And in the name of saints and saintly thoughts,  
Of mothers, and of sisters, and chaste wives,  
And angel woman-faces we have seen,  
And angel woman spirits we have guessed,  
And innocent sweet children, and pure love,  
Why did I ever one brief moment's space  
To this insidious lewdness lend chaste ears,  
Or parley with this filthy Belial?  
O were it that vile questioner that loves  
To thrust his fingers into right and wrong  
And before proof knows nothing – or the fear  
Of being behind the world – which is, the wicked. (*P*, p. 226)

Dipsychus's tirade is underlined by the circular movement of its lexical repetitions and echoes to create an almost frantic sense of entrapment as his desperate interrogation is tortuously stretched over nine lines. His evocation of images associated with purity and innocence is also psychologically telling since his Christian conscience can only conceive adult sexuality and childhood 'innocence' in the dual terms of good and evil. Significantly, the Spirit's sense that sin and shame should not even enter the matter is an attempt to downplay the duality between vice and virtue: "Tisn't Elysium any more / Than what comes after or before" (*P*, p. 226). His words serve as a warning to Dipsychus that by poetically sublimating his idealistic obsessions in this way, he is preventing himself from a physical participation that is just as necessary to his spiritual development: "You think I'm anxious to allure you – / My object is much more to *cure* you" (*P*, p. 226 – emphasis mine). Thus, for the Spirit, any single action may become a means of affirming virtue and goodness ("Try all things' – bad and good, no matter; / You can't till then hold fast the latter" – *P*, p. 226), but Dipsychus's indecision only frustrates any attempt on his part to *cure* him. Furthermore, far from intentionally tempting him into sexual vice, he positively reproaches Dipsychus for his obsession with sexuality: "Briefly – you cannot rest, I'm certain, / Until your hand has drawn the curtain. / Once known the

little *lies* behind it, / You'll go your way and never mind it" (*P*, 226 – emphasis mine). His deliberate pun on *lies* (as a verb and noun) alludes to his sense of the illusiveness and deceit of sexual passion.

That this is also true for Dipsychus renders all the more hypocritical his sense of the Spirit's counsels as nothing more than "[S]trange talk, strange words [...]" (*P*, p. 227) whilst he pursues a chauvinistic train of thoughts which sees men as capable of rising "[F]rom purer sources" once they are "refilled" (*P*, p. 227), unlike women: ("But I know; / Not as the male is, is the female, Eve / Was moulded not as Adam [...] Could I believe, as of a man I might, / So a good girl from weary workday hours [...] Might safely purchase these wild intervals, / And from that banquet rise refreshed [...] But no, it is not so" *P*, p. 227). In his curtly dismissive reply: "Stuff! / The women like it; that's *enough*" (*P*, p. 227 – emphasis mine), the Spirit, reminding Dipsychus that sexuality is a mutual participation, orders him to cease his excruciating reflections (of which he has had *enough*). Deaf to his derisive pun, Dipsychus launches an invective that is reminiscent of Philip's lurid description of the prostitutes in *The Bothie*, in which he envisages the dehumanisation of the "coy girl" transformed into "the flagrant woman of the street / Ogling for hirers [...] Hungering without appetite; athirst / From impotence; no humblest feelings left [...] No kindly longing, no sly coyness" (*P*, p. 228). His moral outburst culminates in a melodramatic vision of corruption and death with pseudo-gothic overtones:

Look, she would fain allure; but she is cold,  
The ripe lips paled, the frolick pulses stilled,  
The quick eye dead, the once fair flushing cheek  
Flaccid under its paint; the once heavy bosom –  
Ask not! – for oh, the sweet bloom of desire  
In hot fruition's pawey fingers turns  
To dullness and the deadly spreading spot  
Of rottenness inevitably soon  
That while we hold, we hate – Sweet peace! No more! (*P*, p. 228)

His cringingly clichéd poetic diction (rendered all the more stilted by the parallel adjective + noun + participle constructions) is ostensibly designed to fabricate a sensation of horror with images of decay reiterating the inevitable transition from beauty to corruption and death. However, by subconsciously placing eroticism and death in a symbiotic

relationship through the lexical juxtapositions of his phrasing, his representation of sexuality is ambivalently poised between innocence and sin:

Could I believe that any child of Eve  
Were formed and fashioned, raised and reared for nought  
But to be swilled with animal delight  
And yield five minutes' pleasure to the male. (*P*, p. 229)

The absence of question marks in the above passage underscores an ambiguity that is indicative of the duple orientation of self-reproach and longing which underpin Dipsychus's psycho-sexual tensions. In this respect, the internal rhyme *believe/Eve* appropriately links his prurient desire to conceive (i.e., believe in) sexuality as a purely physical appetite to be enjoyed without complication with a Victorian ideal of female chastity:

O Joseph and Don Quixote! This  
A chivalry of chasteness is,  
That turns to nothing all, that story  
Has made out of your ancient glory!  
Still I must urge, that though 'tis sad  
'Tis sure, once gone, for good or bad  
The prize whose loss we are deploring  
Is physically past restoring:  
*C'en est fait*. Nor can God's own self,  
As Coleridge on the dusty shelf  
Says in his wicked *Omniana*,  
Renew to Ina frail or Ana  
Her once rent hymenis membrana. (*P*, p. 229)

Deriding Dipsychus's chivalric lament of violated woman as spurious, the Spirit cites the ineffective figures of Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary, and Cervantes' hero (whose love for Dulcinea is a figment of his own imagination). But his reference to Coleridge's discussion of the medieval Benedictine Monk, Peter Damien's<sup>35</sup> tract *De Divina Omnipotentia* is particularly cutting. In his philosophical work, in which he

35 Peter Damiani (Lat. Petrus Damiani; It. Pietro Damiani: 1007 c.a.– 1072). His short tract is in the form of a letter addressed to Abbot Didier of Monte Cassino and is dated 1065.

sets out to defend divine omnipotence, Damien asserts, among other things, God's power to restore a woman's virginity. The Spirit's ridicule of this possibility is implicitly set against the biblical miracle of the Resurrection which is at the origin of Dipsychus's spiritual crisis. As he proceeds to further exasperate the contrast between Dipsychus's moral indignation and horror of defloration his tetrameter meters give way, for the first time in the poem, to ten-syllable and eleven-syllable lines:

Well: people talk, their sentimentality.  
Meantime, as by some sad fatality  
Morality is still morality;  
Nor has corruption, spite of facility  
And doctrines of perfectibility  
Yet put on incorruptibility. (*P*, p. 230)

The Spirit's self-evident truths are rendered in multi-syllable abstract nouns which accumulate as mono-rhymes to comically crush the sentimentality of Dipsychus's over earnest pleas. Conversely, Dipsychus circumvents all attempts at direct sexual reference through contorted syntax and strained metaphors which indicate his aversion of first-hand experience:

Or could I think that it had been for nought  
That from my boyhood until now, in spite  
Of most misguiding theories, at the moment  
Somewhat has ever stepped in to arrest  
My ingress at the fatal closing door,  
That many and many a time my foolish foot  
O'ertreading the dim sill, spite of itself  
And spite of me, instinctively fell back

*Spirit*

Like Balaam's ass, in spite of thwacking,  
Against the wall his master backing,  
Because of something hazy stalking  
Just in the way they should be walking –  
Soon after too, he took to talking. (*P*, pp. 230–1)

It is interesting to note that the Spirit does not question biblical authority but draws analogies from its parables and sacred teachings in order to expose the weaknesses and inconstancies of humanity. His comparison

of Dipsychus to the story of Balaam's ass points to the ridiculousness of the obstinate Puritanism with which he recoils from acting on his desires. The conflation of innocence and experience in his observation that shyness is "but another word for shame" (*P*, p. 231) may recall the first sonnet of *Blank Misgivings* in which sin is seen as innate in man from birth. In reality, however, Dipsychus's quibbling amounts to the kind of empty talk that is synonymous of his spiritual impotency. His own realisation of this fact leads to his remedy of matrimony as the safest means of satisfying his sexual needs: "O welcome then, the sweet domestic bonds, / The matrimonial sanctities; the hopes / And cares of wedded life [...]" (*P*, p. 232). By becoming "permanence and habit" marriage can transform "[G]rossness to crystal" (*P*, p. 232) (and by implication also make everything crystal clear to Dipsychus's confused mind). Once again, Dipsychus takes recourse to a sanitised form of human experience which the Spirit ironically applauds because he knows that although he seeks constancy, he is haunted by lustful desires:

Well, well – if you must stick perforce  
 Unto the ancient holy course,  
 And map your life out on the plan  
 Of the connubial puritan,  
 For God's sake carry out your creed,  
 Go home and marry and be d – d.  
 I'll help you.

*Dipsychus*

You!

*Spirit*

O, never scout me;  
 I know you'll ne'er propose without me

*Dipsychus*

I have talked o'ermuch. The Spirit passes from me.  
 O folly, folly, what have I done? Ah me! (*P*, p. 232)

Dipsychus's imperative reply to the Spirit (the first in the poem) has a dramatically specular effect in that what he recognises as 'you' is in reality the product of his own talking. The pronouns rebound as rhyme words creating a sense of intersection and overlap between the two

protagonists (“I’ll help *you* [...] *You!* O, never scout *me* [...] without *me* [...] passes from *me* [...] Ah *me!*”) The “persecuting voice” which haunts Dipsychus is his own voice in the guise of another. This makes the implications of the Spirit’s final speech in this scene all the more disconcerting:

The chamber *où vous faites votre affaire*  
 Stand nicely fitted up for prayer;  
 While dim you trace along one end  
 The Sacred Supper’s length extend.  
 The calm Madonna o’er your head  
 Smiles, *col bambino*, on the bed  
 Where – but your chaste ears I must spare –  
 Where, as we said, *vous faites votre affaire*  
 They’ll suit you these Venetian pets. (*P*, p. 233)

As he makes light of Dipsychus’s propensity to view the worldly and non-worldly as the oppositional paradigms of a moral dichotomy dictated by his own guilty conscience<sup>36</sup>, the Spirit provocatively prefigures his hypothetical sexual encounter in the terms of a business arrangement (highlighted in the contrasting rhyme words *affaire/prayer*) sanctioned by a calmly smiling Madonna with child. His ironic implication, of course, is that such an ambience would, in reality, meet with Dipsychus’s approval<sup>37</sup>.

Having found himself twice on the verge of submitting to his sexual desires, Dipsychus unleashes his disgust at the Spirit’s provocations by repeating almost verbatim his previous speech of self-reproach at the beginning of Scene III (“And I half yielded – O unthinking I!”). This instance of verbal paralysis highlights a moral deadlock, the self-defeating consequences of which are underhandedly outlined by the Spirit:

36 On a linguistic level, this division is represented by the French euphemism and the religious title in Italian.

37 “It may be pertinent to recall here an observation Clough makes in his *Roma* notebook: “What used to disgust me so was the sight of a man looking up in this way, into vacuum & seeking & claiming spiritual en-rapportité with Angels & Arcangels and all the company of heaven at the same time that his nether parts were hot en-rapportite only but in actual combination with ilimenta (elements) terrestria vel pudenda prima. This is the hypocrisy hated of men” (p. 39).

Well, well – I may have been a little strong,  
Of course I wouldn't have you do what's wrong.  
But we who've lived out in the world, you know,  
Don't see these little things precisely so.  
You feel yourself – to shrink and yet be fain,  
And still to move and still draw back again,  
Is a proceeding wholly without end. (*P*, pp. 233–4)

Admittedly, the Spirit's reassurance that he has Dipsychus's best interests in mind does not detract from the fact that the latter sees his intentions as insidious. In this respect, his solution represents no alternative course. It is merely the same proposal re-contextualised, a superficial difference reflected in the awkwardly irregular scansion of his iambic pentameters:

If the plebeian street don't suit my friend,  
Why he must try the drawing room, one fancies,  
And he shall run to concerts and to dances!  
And, with my aid, go into good society.  
Life little loves this peevish piety;  
E'en they with whom it thinks to be securest –  
Your most religious, delicatest, purest –  
Discern and show as pious people can  
Their feeling that you are not quite a man.  
Still the thing has its place; and with sagacity,  
Much might be done by one of your capacity.  
A virtuous attachment formed judiciously  
Would come, one sees, uncommonly propitiously [...] (*P*, p. 234)

On the other hand, his language is deliberately grotesque, shifting from ungrammatical colloquial speech (“If the plebeian street don't suit my friend”) to the verbosity of a genteel discourse culminating in a series of feminine mono-rhymes the galloping syllables of which convey a clamorous yet vacuous approval of conventional propriety. The effect is provocatively incongruous and designed to shame Dipsychus. For in such a world, the earnest anxiety that characterises his striving for true virtue (regarded disapprovingly by even the religious minded) certainly has no place. As a result, Dipsychus pours out his disdain for the pretence and shallowness of bourgeois society which, although somewhat

reminiscent of Claude's contempt of the Trevellyns at the beginning of *Amours de Voyage*, is void of the latter's cynical adaptability:

To herd it with people that one owns no care for;  
Friend it with strangers that one sees but once;  
To drain the heart with endless complaisance;  
To warp the unfashioned diction on the lip,  
And twist one's mouth to counterfeit; enforce  
Reluctant looks to falsehood; base-alloy  
The ingenuous golden frankness of the past;  
To calculate and plot; be rough and smooth,  
Forward and silent; deferential, cool,  
Not by one's humour, which is the safe truth [...] (P, p. 234)

His sour résumé of the conventional codes of behaviour underlines those factors which he sees as impinging on individual integrity in particular, obligation (*herd, friend, drain, warp, twist, enforce*) and deception; (*base-alloy, calculate, plot*). The Spirit, on the other hand, responds with a rational acceptance of convention that carries its own element of truth: "That is, act / On a dispassionate judgement of the fact" (P, p. 235). Moreover, Dipsychus's erroneous qualification of hypocrisy in generational terms ("Whether these things / Be right, I do not know: I only / Know 'tis / To lose one's youth too early [...] P, p. 235) allows the Spirit to deviously concur with his ideal of youthful innocence as a quality to exploit to his own advantage: "By all means keep your sweet ingenuous graces, / And use them at the proper times and places" (P, p. 235). His teasing comment "[W]hat we all love is good touched up with evil" (P, p. 235) may seem to echo the anti-materialistic stance of Blake's doctrine of Contraries<sup>38</sup>, but this conception of evil as a welcome diversion from the blandness of goodness is necessarily the very opposite of Blake's conception of goodness as an active opposition to evil. For Dipsychus, this confusion of vice and virtue is equivalent to a disease:

38 William Blake, ed. W. H. Stevenson, *Blake: The Complete Poems*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Essex, Longman, 1989, (1971), p. 105. The poem contains the oft-quoted lines: "[W]ithout contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate are necessary to human existence."



Let it be enough  
 That in our needful mixture with the world,  
 On each new morning, with the rising sun  
 Our rising heart, fresh from the seas of sleep,  
 Scarce o'er the level lifts his purer orb  
 Ere lost and sullied with polluting smoke –  
 A noonday coppery disk. Lo, scarce come forth,  
 Some vagrant miscreant meets, and with a look  
 Transmutes me his, and for a whole sick day  
 Lepers me. (*P*, pp. 235–6)

The torment of mental conflict is powerfully conveyed by the shifting syntactic relations and ambiguous co-references of Dipsychus's dysphoric vision of a soiled sun struggling to rise above the fumes and pollution of an industrial landscape. For example, the two clauses "with the rising sun / Our rising heart" may be read as one syntagmatic unit with the first part a metaphorical representation of the second. As two separate units, however, there emerges an ambiguity over which of the lexemes is the head element in the verbal phrase "lifts his purer orb" since the preposition "with" precedes "the rising sun" rather than the subordinate phrase "[O]ur rising heart". Also, the third person singular "meets" in the separate sentence "[S]ome vagrant miscreant meets", is initially used intransitively until it seems to be ungrammatically linked with the first person pronoun *me* in "with a look / Transmutes me his, and for a whole sick day / Lepers me." On a discourse level, Dipsychus's dramatic interjection is a deliberate distraction from their discussion of the drawing room, such that the laconic phrase of his concluding line actually warrants the Spirit's reassurance that this is "[...] the one thing [...] [F]rom which good company can't but secure you". Consequently, as in the conclusion to Scene III, the Spirit is given the upper hand argumentatively and poetically:

Do you pretend to tell me you can see  
 Without one touch of melting sympathy  
 Those lovely, stately flowers, that fill with bloom  
 The brilliant season's gay parterre-like room,  
 Moving serene yet swiftly through the dances;  
 Those graceful forms and perfect countenances,  
 Whose every fold and line in all their dresses,  
 Something refined and exquisite expresses?

To see them smile and hear and talk so sweetly  
In me destroys all grosser thoughts completely.  
I really seem without exaggeration  
To experience the True Regeneration;  
One's own dress too, one's manner, what one's doing  
And saying, all assist to one's renewing –  
I love to see in these their fitting places  
The bows, and forms, and all you call grimaces. (*P*, p. 236)

On one level, the Spirit's incredulity at Dipsychus's scepticism of feminine charms takes on a more urgent tone as his initially measured iambic pentameters give way to an excited rush of eleven-syllable lines dominated by feminine rhymes. On another, the humorous effect of this transition reflects his own underlying derision which is certainly not out of sympathy with Dipsychus's negative summation of polite society (the fact that the disparaging noun "grimaces", which he assigns to Dipsychus, is not directly used by him, is telling). However, the Spirit's sense of the falsity of social conformity resides, not in the hypocrisy of the leisured classes, but in the pretences of social betterment: "'Tis sad to what democracy is leading / Give me your Eighteenth Century for high breeding" (*P*, p. 236). This preference for the manners of the previous age reflects an aristocratic outlook that is echoed in the uncle's nostalgia for eighteenth-century values in the Epilogue.

Dipsychus's nonchalant proposal at the beginning of Scene V: "*Per ora. To the Grand Canal / Afterwards e'en as fancy shall*" (*P*, p. 237) picks up directly from the previous scene as a reply to the Spirit's probing question ("[...] you still / Have got to tell me what it is you will" – *P*, p. 237). Even more significantly, his pleading for a hiatus in their confrontational dialogue is an appeal to surrender to the distractions of the present moment which, until now, has been the Spirit's prerogative. Rhyming iambic tetrameters once again underline Dipsychus's positive shift of mood:

Afloat; we move. Delicious! Ah,  
What else is like the gondola?  
This level floor of liquid glass  
Begins beneath it swift to pass.  
By some impulsion of its own.  
How light it moves, how softly! Ah,  
Were all things like the gondola. (*P*, p. 237)

Besides his uncharacteristic desire to ride in a gondola through the most tourist-ridden area of Venice, the tightly controlled metre and rhyme scheme convey a sense of entrapment that is at odds with the idea of sudden liberation and self-abandonment. His longing that his life may, like the gondola: “Unvexed with quarrels, aims, and cares / And moral duties and affairs, / Unswaying, noiseless, swift and strong, / For ever thus – thus glide along” (*P*, p. 237) also detracts from his unconditioned enjoyment of his present moment of bliss. Moreover, the crass selfishness of his attempt to differentiate virtue from commitment is exposed by his embarrassingly hackneyed verses and equally irritating refrain about the gondola. Significantly, this solipsistic reverie is overturned by the altruistic concern of his final couplet “So live, nor need to call to mind / Our slaving brother set behind” (*P*, p. 238). Dipsychus’s casual mention of the labourer ignites an argument about social equality and individual responsibility in which he finds himself defending the plight of the latter:

Our gaieties, our luxuries,  
Our pleasures and our glee,  
Mere insolence and wantonries,  
Alas! They feel to me.

How shall I laugh and sing and dance?  
My very heart recoils,  
While here to give my mirth a chance  
A hungry brother toils. (*P*, p. 238)

The Spirit counters Dipsychus’s romantic vision of equality and justice with a Mandevillian-like economic rationale<sup>39</sup> which is unconcerned with the misery it brings on those whose social function is seen as providing the wealthy and privileged with the luxuries they themselves cannot afford:

39 Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733) Dutch philosopher and political economist whose most famous work, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) anticipates such economic principles as the division of labour (which would be first adopted during the industrial revolution) and Adam Smith’s concept of the “invisible hand”. Mandeville was harshly criticised by his contemporaries for his cynical view that corruption is a necessary ingredient to economic prosperity.

Oh come, come, come! By him that set us here,  
 Who's to enjoy at all, pray let us hear?  
 You won't; he can't! Oh no more fuss!  
 What's it to him, or he to us?  
 Sing, sing away, be glad and gay,  
 And don't forget that we shall pay,  
 How light we move, how softly! Ah,  
 Tra lal la la, the gondola! (*P*, p. 238)

Dipsychus's line of reasoning is undercut by the iambic pentameter of the Spirit's first line in his commonsensical appeal to Dipsychus's Wordsworthian-styled ballad-form<sup>40</sup>, which is ostentatiously exploited to drive home his message of social protest. Moreover, Dipsychus's use of the ballad-form deliberately falls short of Wordsworth's subtle handling of the genre. It is derivative and contrived to convey an earnestness he does not really feel. Once the Spirit reminds him that the gondola ride he is enjoying does not come free of charge, he immediately changes tune: "Yes, it is beautiful ever, let foolish men rail at it never. / Yes, it is beautiful truly, my brothers, I grant it you duly [...]" (*P*, p. 239). Clough engages in a joke at his own expense here with the Spirit's appalled reaction at Dipsychus's sudden use of hexameters: ("Hexameters, by all that's odious, / Beshod with rhyme to run melodious" – *P*, p. 239). His critical observations are significant since the first of Dipsychus's two hexameter stanzas is predominantly trochaic, the equal stress divisions of which are reinforced by the sing-song effect of the internal rhymes, whilst the second is a more faithful illustration of the characteristics of Clough's own employment of hexameters in *The Bothie* and *Amours de Voyage* recalling their subtler variety of syllabic and stress distribution:

All as I go on my way I behold them consorting and coupling;  
 Faithful it seemeth, and fond; very fond, very possibly faithful;  
 All as I go on my way with a pleasure sincere and unmingled.  
 Life it is beautiful truly, my brothers, I grant it you duly;  
 But for perfection attaining is one method only, abstaining;  
 Let us abstain, for we should so, if only we thought that we could so.  
(*P*, p. 239)

40 The lines also express sentiments similar to *Lines in Early Spring*.

Ironically, the apparent ‘improvement’ of his second attempt at the metre is undermined by his resuming the same internal mono-rhyming of the previous stanza, a fact that does not escape the ever-vigilant Spirit: (“Bravo, bravissimo! This time though / You were rather run short for rhyme though” – *P*, p. 240). Also, the initial imperative phrase “Let us abstain” in the final line, is followed by two conditional clauses, the first urging the importance of this attitude and the second lamenting its impossibility: “for we *should* so if only we thought that we *could* so” (emphasis mine). The opening line of his following speech “O let me live my love” is a direct quotation from *The Questioning Spirit*. But with the added clause “unto myself alone” (*P*, p. 240) the insular apathy of solipsistic withdrawal denounced in that poem is extended to a Cartesian credo of self-conscious existence as the only ultimate existential assumption. In this dead-end duality between consciousness and unconsciousness external phenomenon becomes merely inferential:

Nay, better far to mark off thus much air  
And call it heaven, place bliss and glory there;  
Fix perfect homes in the unsubstantial sky,  
And say, what is not, will be by-and-by;  
What here exists not, must exist elsewhere. (*P*, p. 240)

Just as inaction encourages a phenomenal interpretation which poses limitations on the individual’s view of external reality, action may likewise distort sense impressions and judgements to the point of denial (“Feast while we may, and live and ere life be spent; / Close up clear eyes, and call the unstable sure, / The unlovely lovely, and the filthy pure [...]” – *P*, p. 240). Dipsychus’s conclusion insists on an ontologically oriented acceptance of things in terms of realistic observation: “But play no tricks upon thy soul, O man; / Let fact be fact, and life the thing it can” (*P*, p. 240). This matter-of-fact proposition provokes the Spirit into providing his own humorously hedonistic credo:

To these remarks so sage and clerkly,  
Worthy of Malebranche or Berkeley,  
I trust it won’t be deemed a sin  
If I too answer ‘with a grin.’

These juicy meats, this flashing wine,  
    May be an unreal mere appearance;  
Only – for my inside, in fine,  
    They have a singular coherence.

This lovely creature's glowing charms  
    Are gross illusions, I don't doubt that;  
But when I pressed her in my arms  
    I somehow didn't think about that.

This world is bad enough, may-be;  
    We do not comprehend it;  
But in one fact can agree  
    God won't and we can't mend it. (*P*, p. 241)

The Spirit asserts the incontestable reality of sensual pleasure irrespective of the body-mind duality against the religiously-oriented philosophies of Malebranche and Berkeley<sup>41</sup>, for whom sensations represent a limitation to the self, whilst humorously invoking a linguistic opposition consisting of elegant formal phrasing on the one hand (“To these remarks so sage and clerkly<sup>42</sup> [...] I trust it won't be deemed a sin [...] They have a singular coherence”) and commonplace speech on the other (“I somehow didn't think about that [...] This world is bad enough, may be [...] God won't, and we can't mend it”). The awkwardness of the trochaic metre with its random stress distribution and irregular line lengths reinforces the comical contrast between the weighty implications of his philosophical references and mundane celebration of bodily experience. At the same time, there is his sense of a hopeless eternal deadlock between Divine refusal (*God won't*) and human inadequacy (*we can't*).

For the Spirit, therefore, common sense is the only viable attribute man has in order to survive in a godless world of sorrow. Yet, his very acknowledgement of God's existence (however much expressed

41 Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1713) and George Berkeley (1685–1753) shared the idea that all sensory appearance is a direct creation of God. Berkeley, however also advanced a theory of immaterialism which denied the existence of material substance, contending that objects are only in the minds of perceivers.

42 Clough obviously intends *clerkly* in its archaic sense of ‘scholarly’ though the irony of its connection with the activities of an office clerk would also occur to the contemporary reader's mind.

through negativity and absence), allows him to orient his arguments in terms of a shared ontological code by which he attempts to lure Dipsychus into accepting his world-view. It is a curious characteristic of *Dipsychus* that such moments of communication should be intermittently interspersed with monological discourses which effectively read as autonomous poems (the first example of course being *Easter Day*). Scene V is no exception as Dipsychus, reverting to iambic pentameters, interrogates the nature and place of God in the world and reiterates the need for individual enlightenment:

Where are the great, whom thou would'st wish to praise thee?  
Where are the pure, whom thou would'st choose to love thee?  
Where are the brave, to stand supreme above thee,  
Whose high commands would rouse, whose chiding raise thee?  
Seek, seeker, in thyself; submit to find  
In the stones, bread; and life in the blank mind.

(Written in London, standing in the park,  
An evening in July, just before dark. *P*, p. 241)

In spite of Dipsychus's soul-searching and striving for self-submission, the facetious rhyming couplet of the diary-jotting creates a distancing effect between lyrical voice and poetic subject that suggests an ironic apology for this display of poetic melodrama underscored by the facile rhetoric of its anaphoric constructions and mono-rhymes. Once more, Dipsychus's earnestness (not to mention the virtues of his poetic inventiveness) is put into question, whilst the Spirit, sensing an advantage, proposes a poem of his own in iambic anapaests in a satirical celebration of the advantages and privileges of material wealth:

As I sat at the café, I said to myself,  
They may talk as they please about what they call pelf,  
They may sneer as they like about eating and drinking,  
But help it I cannot, I cannot help thinking  
How pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
How pleasant it is to have money.

I sit at my table *en grand seigneur*,  
 And when I have done, throw a crust to the poor;  
 Not only the pleasure, one's self, of good living,  
 But also the pleasure of now and then giving.  
     So pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
     So pleasant it is to have money. (*P*, p. 242)<sup>43</sup>

The self-preoccupation and contemptuousness of others that runs throughout these sardonic verses are a coarse contrast to the Christian socialism evoked by Dipsychus on the gondola. The final line of each stanza becomes one of several refrains<sup>44</sup> the irksome repetitions of which, collectively evoke the undercurrent of linguistic paralysis which haunts the poem. The Spirit's own two-line epilogue: "Written in Venice, but for all parts true, / 'Twas not a crust I gave him, but a sou" (*P*, p. 243), besides the self-congratulatory tone of his charitable gesture, pokes fun at Dipsychus's reference to the relation between poetic fiction and factual circumstances, by implying that his appeal to truth is more pertinent than Dipsychus's, whose verses were not even written in Venice, but recalled as an afterthought, like *Easter Day*. By the following stanza, the Spirit's impatience grows into disapprobation of Dipsychus's decadent aestheticism:

Come, leave your Gothic, worn-out story,  
 San Giorgio and the Redemptore;  
 I from no building, gay or solemn,  
 Can spare the shapely Grecian column.  
 'Tis not, these centuries four, for nought  
 Our European world of thought  
 Hath made familiar to its home  
 The classic mind of Greece and Rome [...] (*P*, p. 244)

Against the Spirit's pragmatic preference for neoclassical forms, Dipsychus posits a romantically-derived elusive world of half-lights and shadowy outlines: "And all in moonlight seem to swim! / The south side rises o'er the bark, A wall impenetrably dark; The north the while profusely bright" (*P*, p. 245). However, behind this linguistic reverie of

43 This is one of the various verses published separately by Blanche Clough.

44 These include: "Christ is not risen"; "Were all things like the gondola"; "There is no God"; "Submit, submit!"



shapelessness “forever rebuked by a sense of the incomplete”<sup>45</sup>, Dipsychus detects mathematical “planes of sure division” and “angles sharp of palace walls” which throw his romantic metaphysic into confusion: “The water – is it shade or light?” (*P*, p. 245). Impatient with the vagueness of his indeterminate vision, the Spirit berates him with a mischievous reference to *Tintern Abbey*:

The Devil! We’ve had enough of you,  
 Quote us a little Wordsworth, do!  
 Those lines that are so just, they say:  
 ‘A something far more deeply’ eh?  
 Interfused’ – what is it they tell us?  
 Which and the sunset are bedfellows. (*P*, p. 246)

In his otherwise appreciative essay on Wordsworth, Clough at one point underlines what appears to him to be his chief weakness: “I cannot help thinking there is in Wordsworth’s poems something of a spirit of withdrawal and seclusion from, and even evasion of the actual world [...] he shut himself out from the elements which it was his business to encounter and master”<sup>46</sup>. Clough’s criticism can equally be seen as a warning against the solipsistic tendencies of his own verse (e.g. *Blank Misgivings*). Here, the Spirit’s mock rendering of Wordsworth’s enigmatic lines “[...] a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused [...]”<sup>47</sup> (where a comically interrogative interjection appears in place of the poet’s religiously connotative term ‘interfused’) concludes with an impertinent sexual interpretation which not only deflates the pretentiousness of Dipsychus’s pose of stern irresoluteness, but, in turn, echoes Clough’s own dissatisfaction with the lack of factualness in Wordsworth’s poetic vision. In this respect, it may be apposite that Dipsychus is not brought round as a result of the Spirit’s taunting but by

45 R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

46 B. B. Trawick (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 119. See also p. 121: “[...] instead of looking directly at an object, and considering it as a thing in itself, and allowing it to operate upon him as a fact in itself, – he takes the sentiment produced by it in his own mind as the thing; as the important and really real fact. The Real things cease to be real; the world no longer exists; all that exists is the feeling, somehow generated in the poet[’]s sensibility [...]”

47 E. De Selincourt (ed), Vol. 11, *op. cit.*, p. 262. “[...] a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused [...]”

his own gradual recognition of the breakdown in his reveries: “Ah, gondolier, slow, slow, more slow! / We go; but wherefore thus should go? / Ah, let not muscle all too strong / Beguile thee to our wrong! [...] On to the landing; here. And ah, / Life is not as the gondola!” (*P.* p. 246). Action, as represented in the muscular movement of the gondolier, is insufficient in sustaining the illusion of an eternally carefree and tranquil existence. It comes at a price which Dipsychus has literally paid.

In Scene VI the Spirit seeks to redefine the premises upon which to ground Dipsychus’s participation in the present moment: “What now? The Lido shall it be? / That none may say we didn’t see / The ground which Byron used to ride on, / And do I don’t know what beside on” (*P.* p. 247). Through his wittily phrased euphemism the Spirit seeks to divert Dipsychus away from his Wordsworthian wistfulness towards Byronic adventurousness, aware, as he is, of the extent to which his poetic attitude potentially stands in-between these two mutually incompatible traditions. Indeed, the meditative musing and bitterly declamatory rhetoric in Dipsychus’s description of his dream, poignantly evidences the dilemma of this double legacy:

I dreamt a dream; till morning light  
 A bell rang in my head all night,  
 Tinkling and tinkling first, and then  
 Tolling; and tinkling; tolling again.  
 So brisk and gay, and then so slow!  
 O joy, and terror! mirth and woe!  
 Ting, ting, there is no God; ting, ting –  
 Dong, there is no God; dong,  
 There is no God; dong, dong! (*P.* p. 247)

On a prosodic level, the isochronal rhythm of the iambic tetrameter pattern is broken by frequent trochaic inversions and spondaic and pyrrhic substitutions (“Tinkling and tinkling [...] Tolling and tinkling [...] mirth and woe [...]” etc.) to produce a counter movement of irregularity and awkwardness that reinforces the pervading sense of dismay. Even the reverberating onomatopoeias *ting*, *ding* and *dong* become disturbing rather than musically evocative<sup>48</sup>, the short clipped vowel of the former

48 J. Schad, *op. cit.*, p. 19 who, in a discussion of Clough’s modernist conception of “a spiritual music that is strange, fitful and painfully heard”, comments that what

conveying light-heartedness and jubilation, whilst the long vowel and hollow nasal of the latter underline a sense of grave finality<sup>49</sup>. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of *God/dong* foregrounds the anagrammatic function of *dong* which contains *God* spelt backwards. In its attempt to probe the spiritual and psychological impact of God's absence through an interpretation of oneiric elements, Dipsychus's account of his dream becomes not only another poem-within-the poem but, effectively, a follow-up to *Easter Day*:

Ting, ting, there is no God; ting, ting;  
Come, dance and play, and merrily sing –  
Ting, ting a ding; ting, ting, a ting!  
O pretty girl who trippest along,  
Come to my bed – it isn't wrong.  
Uncork the bottle, sing the song!  
Ting, ting a ding: dong, dong. (*P*, p. 247)

Whilst the refrain of *Easter Day* is a subversion of the New Testament message of joy in salvation, that of his new poem is a partial quotation of Psalm 53:1 of the Old Testament (“The fool hath said in his heart, *there is no God.*”) – italics mine). This intertextual link explains the shift in Dipsychus's mood from jubilation and relief to despondency and regret. Thus, in the lines quoted above, he can initially indulge his thoughts in the prospect of promiscuous sexual intercourse now that he feels there is no God to judge him. Yet this already begs the question of whether his previous exhibitions of sexual virtue are symptomatic of an underlying fear of divine punishment or a hankering after moral credit. Whatever the case, his evocation of sensual abandon immediately transmutes into a sarcastic indictment of the figure of the Victorian middle-class gentleman:

Staid Englishmen, who toil and slave  
From your first breeching to your grave,  
And seldom spend and always save,  
And do your duty all your life

---

Dipsychus already hears is precisely “the painful discord of the post-Christian era, the painful music of the God-less spheres.”

49 A similar onomatopoeic refrain appears in Béranger's “Le Carillonneur” and “Baptême de Voltaire”.

By your young family and wife;  
 Come, be't not said you ne'er had known  
 What earth can furnish you alone.  
 The Italian, Frenchman, German even,  
 Have given up all thoughts of heaven;  
 And you still linger – oh, you fool! –  
 Because of what you learnt at school.  
 You should have gone at least to college,  
 And got a little ampler knowledge [...] (P, 248)

The satire of conventional Victorian codes in *Duty – That's To Say Complying* becomes an attack on their earnest adoption by well-meaning Englishmen whose grave self-discipline, far from qualifying their superiority, is indicative of the social and moral slavery into which they have been coerced. Dipsychus ironically reverses the sense of Bacon's well-known aphorism ("...a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism but depth in philosophy bringeth men's mind's about to religion")<sup>50</sup> by affirming that ampler knowledge leads the individual soul away from God and ultimately to futility. The dismal triplet: "Do, if you like, as now you do; / If work's a cheat, so's pleasure too / And nothing's new and nothing's true [...]" (P, p. 248) is a parody of Ecclesiastes 1:9: "[...] and that which is *done* is that which shall be *done*: and there is no new thing under the *sun*" (italics mine). Whilst the biblical verses denounce the vanity of all human endeavour, Dipsychus discovers a universal meaninglessness that comprises God (the ultimate truth). What is more, man's brief life leaves him with no real certainty: "O Rosalie, my lovely maid, / I think thou thinkest love is true; / And on thy faithful bosom laid / I almost could believe it too" (P, p. 250). Not only is the truth that comes with love and fidelity a temporary illusion ("What? What? Thou also go'st [...]" – P, p. 250), but the very idea of salvation becomes implausible as Dipsychus's poem confronts the central theme of another biblical source. The condemnation of universal sin and corruption in Psalm 53:3 ("Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one [...]" ) is paralleled by Dipsychus's own tirade after his initial battle cry to the "men of valour and of worth" (P, p. 248) is silenced by his

50 Francis Bacon, *The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral*, (ed. Samuel Harvey Reynolds), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1890, p. 111.

shock at life's deceptions: "[T]he good are weak, the wicked strong; / And O my God, how long, how long? / Dong, there is no God; dong!" (*P*, p. 249). His dramatic supplications are neutralised by the subsequent denial of God's existence and his cries for vindication ("When, by hell-demons, shan't they pay?" – *P*, p. 249) come with the realisation that the absence of God in a world in which "nothing's new and nothing's true" (*P*, p. 250) renders the Christian virtues of tolerance and forgiveness absolutely meaningless. Unable to differentiate between the lots of the oppressor and the oppressed ("O God, O God! And which is the worst, / To be the curser or the cursed [...]") (*P*, p. 249), his attempt at a sanctified conclusion retains an ominous ambiguity:

Only when day began to stream  
 Through the white curtains on my bed,  
 And like an angel at my head  
 Light stood and touched me – I awoke,  
 And looked, and said, 'It is a dream'. (*P*, p. 250)

The return full circle to the initial sense of the dream as promise of a godless world (underlined by the present tense of the final phrase), is accompanied by an ironic simile in which daylight embodies an angelic function ("Light stood and touched me"). The paradox of this final image of reassurance through Earthly light with its rejection of supernatural influence is, of course, not lost on the Spirit who attempts to win Dipsychus over to his side of the argument with a satirical portrait designed to corroborate his scepticism:

I'm not a judge, I own; in short,  
 Religion may not be my forte.  
 The church of England I belong to,  
 But think Dissenters not far wrong too;  
 They're vulgar dogs; but for his *creed*  
 I hold that no man will be d—d. (*P*, pp. 250)

The moral laxity of this callous, bigoted, man-about-town, reduces religious faith to a question of appearance and social conformity: "My Establishment I much respect, / Her ordinances don't neglect; / Attend at Church on Sunday once, / And in the Prayer-book am no dunce" (*P*, p. 251). However, the lines also include a maliciously cryptic

reference to Edward Bouverie Pusey: “[...] nay, my wife / Would be churched too once in her life. / She’s taken, I regret to state, / Rather a Puseyite turn of late” (*P*, p. 251) which may be seen as a disclosure of his underlying prejudice as well as a dismissal of the Oxford Movement which had been at the centre of Clough’s early formation. Confident in his rhetorical victory, the Spirit provides the final blow with a series of stark declarations of atheistic indifference:

There is no God,’ the wicked saith,  
‘And truly it’s a blessing,  
For what he might have done with us  
It’s better only guessing.’

‘There is no God,’ a youngster thinks,  
‘Or really, if there may be,  
He surely didn’t mean a man  
Always to be a baby.’

‘There is no God, or if there is,’  
The tradesman thinks, ‘’twere funny  
If he should take it ill on me  
To make a little money.’

‘Whether there be,’ the rich man says,  
‘It matters very little,  
For I and mine, thank somebody,  
Are not in want of victual.’

Some others, also, to themselves  
Who scarce so much as doubt it,  
Think there is none, when they are well,  
And do not think about it.

[...]

And almost every one when age,  
Disease, or sorrows strike him,  
Inclines to think there is a God,  
Or something very like him. (*P*, pp. 251–2)

The sense of spiritual paralysis represented by the lethargic figures in *The Questioning Spirit* returns to haunt Clough’s verse in these self-complacent individuals who unblinkingly offer their own bigoted justifications for God’s non-existence. Moreover, as if in response to

Dipsychus's reference to Psalm 53, the Spirit continues in his pose of disillusioned idealist to extend this spiritually bleak world-view to the rest of mankind who only turn to God as a last resort. However, Dipsychus ignores his appeal for complicity and the sorrowful effect of his dream dissipates no sooner than he reaches the seashore where the sole prospect of a swim in the sea banishes all religious thoughts from his mind. The transition evokes a circularity underpinned by the Spirit's two references to "the tourist's Byron" as an example of the 'falseness' of modern travel"<sup>51</sup> ("The ground which Byron used to ride on" → "Byron used to ride" – *P*, p. 252). If Dipsychus's plunge into the waters is to be taken as symptomatic of a desire to transcend the stereotypical representation of Byronic boldness in the touristic world of the Victorian traveller ("Oh, a grand surge! We'll bathe; quick, quick, undress!" (*P*, p. 253) his wild delight is humorously undermined by the Spirit's uncharacteristically half-hearted response: "Well; but it's not so pleasant for the feet / We should have brought some towels and a sheet." (*P*, p. 253) Whilst Dipsychus's self-abandonment leads to a breakdown in the regularity of his metre, the gingerly cautious Spirit plays safe by reverting to iambic pentameters. From his rational perspective, it is ludicrous of Dipsychus to expect both physical and spiritual gratification from his experience of romantic excess: "Animal spirits are not common sense [...] But you – with this one bathe, no doubt, / Have solved all questions out and out. / 'Tis Easter Day, and on the Lido / Lo, Christ the Lord is risen indeed, O!" (*P*, p. 254)". If the eternal conundrums of Dipsychus's anguished poeticising can be simply overcome by such moments of primitive abandon then poetry loses its epistemological function, a factor the Spirit maliciously exposes in the lexical breakdown from *LidO* – *LO* to *O* in his final interjection.

Dipsychus's ominous epiphany in the waters of a city traditionally associated with sin and vice marks a turning point in the poem as the focus shifts from temptations of the flesh to the question of his social and intellectual obligations. In the following scene an unexplained confrontation has ensued between Dipsychus and a Croatian military officer (the first and only such instance in the poem of direct interaction

51 Cf. Christopher M. Kierstead, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

with the external world), which, although not dramatised, generates a discussion exposing conflicting notions of justice, honour and war<sup>52</sup>.

*Spirit*

Insulted! By the living Lord!  
He laid his hand upon his sword.  
*Fort*, did he say? a German brute,  
With neither heart nor brains to shoot.

*Dipsychus*

What does he mean? He's wrong, I had done nothing.  
'Twas a mistake – more his, I am sure, than mine.  
He is quite wrong – I feel it. Come, let us go. (*P*, pp. 254–5)

The Spirit's imperative appeals for revenge against the officer who has insulted him, in which the expletive "By the living Lord" ironically echoes his quotation of the refrain of *Easter Day* at the end of the previous scene, only meet with Dipsychus's swift dismissal of the incident. His casual declaration of innocence, however, masks his underlying fear of eventual physical combat ("He's violent: what can I do against him? / I neither wish to be killed or to kill [...] – *P*, p. 254 "[...] why should I care? He does not hurt me. / If he is wrong, it is the worse for him. / I certainly did nothing" – *P*, p. 255). The Spirit condemns this as a spineless response and the manifestation of an excessive gentility that is wasted on roguish people who have no inkling of peace and reconciliation: "But, O my friend, well-bred, well-born – / You to behave so in these quarrels / Makes me half doubtful of your morals" (*P*, p. 255). Initially, Dipsychus invokes Christian morality to justify his viewpoint, as he envisages a reconciliation in Paradise between himself and the Croatian "[B]efore some awful judgement-seat of truth" (*P*, p. 255). Yet, this self-centredly motivated vision of justice is immediately replaced by an impersonal historical differentiation between "grosser evils" and "skin-bites" (*P*, p. 256). Consequently, Dipsychus recognises that his minor clash with the Croatian is an event "too, too small / For any record on the leaves of time" (*P*, p. 256) and, as a result, must be met with forbearance. For the Spirit, this is nothing more than a cowardly justification that plays into the hands of the wicked: "Oh Lord! And walking with

52 At 226 lines the scene is one of the longest in the poem.



your sister, / If some foul brute step up and kissed her, / You'd leave that also, I dare say, / On account for the judgement day" (*P*, p. 256). In following Dipsychus's view of justice to its logical conclusion, he wittily exposes its moral oversight not so much with regard to one's self-dignity but above all the honour of those dear to us whom we should be naturally inclined to defend. Thus, evil occurs when good people do nothing: "Because we can't do all we would, / Does it follow, to do nothing's good" (*P*, p. 257). As with Dipsychus's previous temptations, his passivity is not a question of virtue and it is only when the Spirit points out the implications of his inaction on a larger scale ("Nay, let the hapless soul escape. / Mere murder, robbery, and rape, / In whate'er station, stage, or sex, / Your sacred spirit scarce can vex" – *P*, p. 259) that he is forced to ponder the dilemma in a manner which recalls Claude's ironic self-interrogation over the necessity of fighting for noble causes in *Amours de Voyage*:

I am not quite in union with myself  
 On this strange matter. I must needs confess  
 Instinct turns instinct in and out; and thought  
 Wheels round on thought. To bleed for other's wrongs  
 In vindication of a Cause, to draw  
 The sword of the Lord and Gideon – O, that seems  
 The flower and top of life! But fight because  
 Some poor misconstruing trifler haps to say  
 I lie, when I do not lie, or is rude  
 To some vain fashionable thing, some poor  
 Curl-paper of a doll that's set by chance  
 To dangle a dull hour on my vext arm,  
 Why should I? Call you this a Cause? I can't. (*P*, p. 259)

Although the first four lines of the above have been taken as an effective synopsis of Dipsychus's central dilemma<sup>53</sup>, in reality they convey a momentary disorientation that is subsequently corrected by his conviction that the incident is too trivial to merit serious consideration. Interestingly, these are also the only lines in the whole scene which provide a clue to the reason behind the officer's anger (i.e. the woman's 'offensive' presence). Dipsychus's facetious reference to the "[...] vain fashionable [...] poor / Curl-paper of a doll that's set by chance

53 G. Tate, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

/ To dangle a dull hour on my vext arm [...]” – *P*, p. 259) is a cowardly attempt to justify his submissive response. But it is also symptomatic of his misogynistic tendencies (as apparent in the early scenes of the poem). Moreover, his pacifist notions are hypocritically exposed through his inability to explain his distinction between just causes and events. For the Spirit, Dipsychus’s appeal for peace and forgiveness is empty rhetoric, analogous to the complacency of charitable acts manifested at a safe distance from “[T]he wrongs we really feel and see” in order to “[...] preach the doctrine of the Cross / To worshippers in house of joss” (*P*, p. 260). Once more, the inexorable dismantling of Dipsychus’s arguments through the exposure of his own spuriousness and the counter-criticism of the Spirit forces him to backtrack into a deeper examination of his real intentions as the renewal of his scepticism provokes the question of whether his pious sense of civility be simply the outcome of an unthinking acceptance of religious and social convention: “Some native poorness in my spirit’s blood, / Or that the holy doctrine of our faith / In too exclusive fervency possessed / My heart with feelings, with ideas my brain” (*P*, p. 261). The Spirit’s translation of the officer’s outburst appears an ironic attempt to jolt Dipsychus from his speculations: “Forgive me, if I name my doubt, / Whether you know ‘fort’ means ‘get out’ – *P*, p. 261). Since he repudiates the idea of self-defence, Dipsychus has no option but to obey the officer’s command now that its meaning is explained to him.

Dipsychus’s humiliating expulsion is dramatically accompanied by the breaking out of a thunderstorm. If Clough’s intention is to suggest a moment of catharsis for his main character, the focus is poetical rather than spiritual. Indeed, as is typical of his allusive representation of Venice, The Doge’s Palace, the most important historical building of the city, functions as a mere temporary shelter for the shortest scene in the poem which revolves around a critical analysis of *Easter Day*<sup>54</sup>:

Well, now it’s anything but clear  
 What is the tone that’s taken here;  
 What is your logic? What’s your theology?

54 Only two lines of *Easter Day* follow in the text (“My brain was lightened when my tongue had said / “Christ is not risen”.”) Clough obviously felt no need to spend time copying out his poem in a work that was still in draft form.

Is it or is it not neology?  
That's a great fault; you're this and that,  
And here and there, and nothing's flat.  
Yet writing's golden word what is it,  
But the three syllables, 'explicit'?  
Say, if you cannot help it, less,  
But what you do put, put express. (*P*, p. 262)

The Spirit's comments only make sense if applied to Clough's partial revision of his atheistic pronouncements in *Easter Day II* which he regards as a deliberate exercise in obscurantism: "You think half-showing, half-concealing, / Is God's own method of revealing" (*P*, p. 262). His demand for explicitness may be symptomatic of a logical approach that is antithetic to the nature of poetry (particularly the subjective lyricism of *Easter Day*) but the catharsis Dipsychus has derived as a result of its composition ("[...] to furnish vent / To diseased humours in the moral frame" – *P*, p. 263) is also ultimately reductive<sup>55</sup>. In the cold light of the Spirit's reasoned considerations, Clough exposes the fragility to which his poem is exposed:

[...] but none that read can doubt it,  
There is a strong Strauss-smell about it.  
Heavens! At your years your time to fritter  
Upon a critical hair splitter!  
Take larger views (and quit your Germans)  
From the Analogy and Sermons;  
I fancied – you must doubtless know –  
Butler had proved, an age ago,  
That in religious as profane things  
'Twas useless trying to explain things;  
Men's business-wits the only sane things,  
These and compliance are the main things. (*P*, p. 263)

55 See John Keble, *Keble's Lectures on Poetry 1832–1841* (Translated by Edward Kershaw Francis) 11 Vols. Vol. I Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1912, p. 21, who, in his essay "De poeticae vi medica", states that an essential feature of poetry is its "wonderful efficacy in soothing men's emotions and steadying the balance of their mind." Clough may be parodying such a position, given the epistemological orientation of his verse, but this does not mean he was unaware of experiencing its sub-conscious pleasure himself.

By subjecting *Easter Day* to the Spirit's scrutiny in this way, Clough suggests his own misgivings about the effectiveness of his poem as a statement of lost faith. Certainly, the *Easter Day* that emerges from the Spirit's critique is void of originality and pathos. What is more, he does not even feel the necessity to trump the gravity of Dipsychus's poetic idiom by countering it with an unruly poetic language<sup>56</sup>, merely to offer a corrective to what he sees as its misguided subjectivity. Therefore, by embracing the natural philosophy of Joseph Butler as an intellectual antidote, he can effectively renounce the wearisome interrogations of his (and Clough's) spiritual quest for a more serene acceptance of traditional wisdom: "Why should you fancy you know more of it / Than all the old folks that thought before of it?" (*P*, p. 264). The reference to Butler is no accident. Clough was familiar with his writings and admired the force of his reasoning<sup>57</sup>. But in his lecture "On the Development of English Literature", he also underlines his limitations: "[R]eligion appears to be driven to its inmost line of defences, to be fighting from its encincture of fortification in Butler's analogical argument"<sup>58</sup>. It is somewhat ironic that the Spirit should recommend a philosopher whose intention was not to prove the existence of God as such but to defend the received systems of morality and religion, an activity Clough recognised as indicative of the religious struggles of his character in the first place.

The Spirit's withering dismissal of *Easter Day* only goads Dipsychus into reciting another of his own compositions. The lines which open Scene IX are an attempt to address the question of the Resurrection in a very different poetic vein:

56 Cf., LaPorte, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

57 Joseph Butler (1692–1752) was a particular favourite of the tractarians. His influence on John Henry Newman is recorded by the latter in *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, *cit.*, p. 30, who describes his study of the Analogy as "an era" in his religious opinions: "Its inculcation of a visible Church, the oracle of truth and a pattern of sanctity, of the duties of external religion, and of the historical character of Revelation, are characteristics of this great work which strike the reader at once [...]"

58 B. B. Trawick, (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 138.

A modern daub it was perchance;  
I know not; but I dare be sure  
From Titian's hues no connoisseur  
Had turned one condescending glance

Where Byron, somewhat drest-up, draws  
His sword, impatient long, and speaks  
Unto a tribe of motley Greeks  
His pledge word unto their brave cause.

Not far, assumed to mystic bliss,  
Behold the ecstatic Virgin rise!  
Ah wherefore vainly to fond eyes  
That melt to burning tears for this? (*P*, p. 264)

The measured sobriety of the abba rhymed four-line iambic tetrameters of the In Memoriam stanza entails a self-discipline which does not allow Dipsychus the free reign provided by the metrical irregularities of *Easter Day*. Furthermore, his hackneyed poeticisms and archaisms are a reflection of his discomfort with the derivative model, the rigidity of which converts his anguished negation of Christ's Resurrection in *Easter Day* into an impersonal questioning of the fallacy of the Virgin's ascension ("Wherefore vainly [...] ?") and detached contemplation of the "burning tears" of joy in the witnesses of Titian's painting. Moreover, the stanzaic symmetry of the poem prompts Dipsychus to contrive a contrastive evocation between spiritual ecstasy (Titian's Madonna) and political ideology (the portrait of Byron). It is only in his final two stanzas that he manages to recover something of his real voice:

Yet if we must live, as would seem,  
These peremptory heats to claim, –  
Ah, not for profit, not for fame,  
And not for pleasure's giddy dream,

And not for piping empty reeds,  
And not for colouring idle dust, –  
If live we positively must,  
God's name be blessed for noble deeds. (*P*, p. 264)

The urgency in these lines is by no means weakened by the series of periphrases which here function as satirically abstract terms for rejected

worldly ambitions. Nevertheless, in spite of this, Dipsychus's conclusion wavers incongruously between a pious religiousness and a Byronically-inspired civic sense which only confirm the inescapable condition of his double-mindedness.

The implicit allusion to Tennyson<sup>59</sup> through an imitation of his most famous stanza form establishes an ironic contrast between his epic elegy of retrieved religious faith and Clough's fragmented poem of spiritual loss.<sup>60</sup> In this light, Dipsychus's blank verse recantation of his poetic activity may be read as Clough's ironic acknowledgment of his own inferiority with respect to the poet laureate<sup>61</sup>: "Verses! well, they are made, so let them go: / No more if I can help" (*P*, p. 264). His dread of a maturity in which his youthful poetic visions will diminish into "puff, and smoke, and shapeless words" leaving him "[T]o slave in base compliance to the world" (*P*, p. 265) echoes Clough's trepidation about his own future in the world of practical affairs. Significantly, this preoccupation also triggers Dipsychus's suspicions of the nature of the inner voice that has been goading his conscience:<sup>62</sup>

*I have scarce spoken yet to this strange follower  
Whom I picked up – ye great gods, tell me where!  
And when! for I remember such long years,  
And yet he seems new come. I commune with myself;  
He speaks, I hear him, and resume to myself;*

59 For Clough's friendship with the Tennysons see A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet's Life, cit.*, pp. 276–8.

60 It cannot go unnoticed that *In Memoriam* was published in the same year Clough began composition on *Dipsychus*.

61 Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1975, p. 136, observes how "[O]ther nineteenth century poets such as Clough and Rossetti also used the In Memoriam Stanza, but it is now so closely associated with the sturdy, serviceable elegiac atmosphere of *In Memoriam* itself that it has shared the fate of the Spenserian Stanza: it evokes the poem with which it is associated so powerfully that its uses now seem limited to occasions which either resemble or mock the original." It is significant that Dipsychus's decision to discontinue the form, (which he is evidently unable to adopt for the length of time necessary to achieve its characteristic cumulative effects) should coincide with his renunciation of poetry altogether.

62 A. Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough. Mari Magno, Dipsychus and Other Poems, cit.*, p. 66 inserts other verses at this point which weaken the transition from his poetic farewell to his ultimate confrontation with the Spirit.

Whate'er *I* think, *he* adds *his* comments to;  
Which not yet interrupts *me*. Scarce *I* know  
If ever once directly *I* addressed *him*.  
Let *me* essay it now, for *I* have strength. (*P*, p. 265, italics mine)

Dipsychus's initial apprehension of his divided thoughts<sup>63</sup> is intensified as the rebounding subject and object pronouns underline his alarming recognition of an inescapable interconnection: "Yet what he wants, and what he fain would have, / O, I know all too surely; not in vain, / Although unnoticed, has he dogged my ear / Come, we'll be definite, explicit, plain" (*P*, p. 265)". In order to assuage the Spirit's influence over him, Dipsychus bolsters his rhetoric in an attempt to gain psychological control:

I can resist, I know; and 'twill be well  
To have used for colloquy this manlier mood,  
Which is to last, ye chances, say, how long?  
How shall I call him? Mephistopheles?

*Spirit*

I come, I come.

*Dipsychus*

So quick, so eager; ha!  
Like an eaves-dropping menial on my thought,  
With something of an exultation too, methinks,  
Out-peeping in that springy, jaunty gait. (*P*, p. 265)

The Spirit's swift response may comply with Dipsychus's worst expectations, but the poem (commencing with the Spirit himself) proves to be teasingly ambivalent over his actual identity. What is essential to its development, however, is that by recognising him as the literary (as opposed to the biblical) demon of the Faust legend, Dipsychus triggers the same narrative process of negotiation and perdition that will dictate his own fate. In contrast with the other worldly ambitions for which

63 "Myself or not myself? / My own bad thoughts, / Or some external agency at work, / To lead me who knows whither?" (*P*, p. 222).

Marlowe's and Goethe's characters bargain with Mephistopheles, Dipsychus's aspirations are decidedly more prosaic:

Shall I do it? Oh! Oh!  
Shame on me! come! Should I, my follower,  
Should I conceive (not that at all I do,  
'Tis curiosity that prompts my speech)–  
But should I form, a thing to be supposed,  
A wish to bargain for your merchandise,  
Say what were your demands? What were your terms?  
What should I do? What should I cease to do?  
What incense on what alters must I burn?  
And what abandon? What unlearn, or learn? (*P*, p. 265)

The false starts and parenthetic interruptions underline a feigned non-chalance that serves to conceal his trepidation. For, although Dipsychus makes light of the Spirit's influence, his express desire to assume some form of active role in society, plays perfectly into his hands. Not only, but his pathological indecisiveness is even more intensified after his bargaining with him. Consequently, his monologues, which dominate the final four scenes, far from tracing a metaphysical or psychological progression (or even regression), revolve obsessively around the same unresolved dilemmas<sup>64</sup>. Indeed, Clough's perseverance with Dipsychus's twisted thoughts, in his attempt to dramatise what Milan Kundera has called the paradoxical nature of action<sup>65</sup>, produces a rhetoric of indecisiveness, which is symptomatic of his protagonist's diseased mind. For despite his yearning for self-affirmation he is both unable to choose a fitting form of activity ("Oh, it is great to do and know not what, / Nor let it e'er be known" – *P*, p. 270) as well as bemused by what the nature of that activity should be. In his complete lack of an inner intention, his analytically inquiring stance, which locks him within the realm of hypothesis, is indicative of his fear of participation in the flux. The

64 E. W. Slinn, *op. cit.*, p. 121: "[...] if the poem becomes tedious during the long soliloquies of part 2, that may be partly because *Dipsychus* strains for every method of avoiding the inevitable loss of singularity that accompanies speech acts."

65 Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, New York, Grove Press, 1990 (1988), p. 24. "Between the act and himself, a chasm opens. Man hopes to reveal his own image through his act, but that image bears no resemblance to him". Kundera's comments have a direct application to Dipsychus.



Spirit serves not only to highlight this dilemma through the parody and satire of his verses but also to indicate a possible remedy in the forms of social reconciliation and acceptance of the totality of existence.

From the depths of his psychological and existential uncertainty, Dipsychus ponders the Spirit's options in the following scene. The idea of an ecclesiastical career arouses his contempt ("twere honester, if 'twere genteel, / To say the dung-cart [...] – *P*, p. 268) and religion itself is seen as having become emptied of its biblical significance. Far from "Walking with God", the individual is left to "not think of Him at all, but trudge it, / And of the world He has assigned us make / What best we can" (*P*, p. 268). Love, which remains an aspiration within the utmost limits of possibility, is also sceptically viewed as something "so rare, / So doubtful, so exceptional, hard to guess [...]" (*P*, p. 269). Autobiographical analogies with the insecurity of Clough's own provisional situation as a self-exiled intellectual in the outside world give a poignancy to Dipsychus's self-counsel: "Better to wait: / The wise men wait; it is foolish to haste, / And ere the scenes are in their slides would play, / And while the instruments are tuning, dance" (*P*, p. 269). The capacity to suspend action is seen as an essential attribute of political greatness:

I see Napoleon on the heights, intent  
To arrest that one brief unit of loose time  
Which hands high Victory's thread; his Marshals fret,  
His soldiers clamour low: the very guns  
Seem going off of themselves; the canon strain  
Like hell-dogs in the leash. But he, he waits [...] (*P*, p. 269)

The domineering figure of Napoleon stands aloof from the clamour and confusion of battle in quiet attendance of the just moment that will signal his victory. Yet, paradoxically, his triumph derives from the frantic action on the field where even "[T]he very faithful have begun to doubt" (*P*, p. 269). The realisation that "[...] high deeds / Haunt not the fringing edges of the fight, / But the pell-mell of men [...]" (*P*, p. 270) prompts him to hypothesise the effectiveness of his own contribution: "[...] and if / E'en now by lingering here I let them slip, / Like an unpractised spyer through a glass, / Still pointing to the blank [...]" (*P*, p. 270).

At the same time, Dipsychus wonders whether yielding to “prentice-handling” be a necessarily superior requisite to standing outside “the waltz / Which fools whirl dizzy in” (*P*, p. 270). From his objectified stance all life seems meaningless vanity. Yet, one must be drawn into action since “[L]ife loves no lookers-on at his great game, / And with boy’s malice still delights to turn / The tide of sport upon the sitters by [...]” (*P*, p. 270). In his speculative inquiry into the heart of what, for him, constitutes real action, Dipsychus posits a binary opposition between natural instinct and rational calculation, the former unconscious in intent, but powerful like “a dashing stream among the rocks” (*P*, p. 270), the latter a reduction of human potential reflecting the specialised activity characteristic of a modern world in which man is merely part of an abstract social mechanism: “And to live now / I must sluice out myself in canals, / And lose all force in ducts”. (*P*, p. 271)

The fluvial metaphor underlines Dipsychus’s myth of an ontological transition from the forceful and romantic gesture of heroic action to the comparatively listless but purposeful activity of the modern individual who has no “loftier leave / Than fiddling with a piston or a valve” (*P*, p. 271). From the “base mechanical adroitness” of essential skills to the “base manipulation” underlying social progress the passage is complete. All Dipsychus can do is question the principles of the “great engine” of social organisation in which there is no room for the kind of individual endeavours he envisages: “If indeed it work, / And is not a mere treadmill! Which it may be; / Who can confirm it is not? [...] Oh I could shoot my thought up to the sky, / A column of pure shape, for all to observe! / But I must slave, a meagre coral-worm [...]” (*P*, pp. 271–2). Although Dipsychus acknowledges the importance of the most fundamental of Victorian obligations<sup>66</sup> (“[A]ction is what we must get” – *P*, p. 272), the fact that this does not accord with his sense of altruism or nobility brings about a loss of heart: “We shall not have it, and therefore I submit” (*P*, p. 272). To submit implies both surrender and acceptance. What exactly Dipsychus is to surrender to and accept

66 Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002 (1859), p. 225: “The feeling that life is destitute of any motive or necessity for action, must be of all others the most distressing and insupportable to a rational being”. Smiles’ book would encapsulate and reinforce the motivational dimension of the Victorian work ethic.

is explained by the Spirit who speaks *from within* (i.e. both as a voice off-stage as well as inside Dipsychus's mind):

Devotion, and ideas, and love,  
And beauty claim their place above;  
But saint and sage and poet's dreams  
Divide the light in coloured streams,  
Which this alone gives all combined,  
The *siccum lumen* of the mind  
Called common sense: and no high wit  
Gives better counsel than does it.  
Submit, submit!

To see things simply as they are  
Here, at our elbows, transcends far  
Trying to spy out at midday  
Some 'bright peculiar star', which may,  
Or not, be visible at night,  
But clearly is not in daylight [...] (*P*, p. 273)

With a sobriety that belies the humour of his iambic tetrameter rhyming couplets, the Spirit imparts an alternative course to Dipsychus's romantic individualism. Far from exhorting a crude irreligiousness, his recommendation *to see things simply as they are* reflects an inclusive acceptance of life (and therefore transcendence of duality) that is more in line with Eastern thought<sup>67</sup>. In this respect, it is only through the finite (that which lies *at our elbows*) that Dipsychus will ever attain a sense of the eternal (wherein dwell all things which *claim their place above*).

Nevertheless, his acute anxiety over his double nature is founded precisely on the rejection of the *other* that is also himself. This failure to accept his duplicity ("O double self! / And I untrue to both" – *P*, p. 273) is dramatised through a linguistic conflict which, in his final exasperating monologues, underlines the merely symbolic (as opposed to the real) dimension of his existence. Until he makes his final decision, Dipsychus is caught within the vicious circle of his own verbal contradictions. If there is any sin he commits it is that of his continual distraction from reality and resistance of the flux. Indeed, Dipsychus's scepticism

67 The opposing world-views of Western and Eastern thought are at least subconsciously invoked in the poem.

of the Resurrection is, in essence, symptomatic of his discomfort with the Christian duality to which he has been conditioned (and which is symbolically represented in the petrified image of the Crucifixion). This is why he can only perceive the Spirit as an evil influence rather than a means of transcending the boundaries of his preconceived world view. The daring and controversial aspect of Clough's poem resides in his deliberately unorthodox characterisation of the Spirit, whose 'provocations' seem directed towards acceptance of life rather than wrong doing as such<sup>68</sup>. Unlike Dipsychus, his 'double talk' is a reflection of the necessary interrelation of life's opposites which is precisely what Dipsychus refuses to acknowledge. As the Spirit himself says: "[T]he Devil oft the Holy Scripture uses, / But God can act the devil when he chooses" (*P*, p. 281). True enlightenment, Clough implies, is understanding that there are two sides of one coin. In this sense, Dipsychus's recognition of the Spirit as his *other* conceals a repressed awareness that subject and object are fundamentally interchangeable. His dilemma is only exacerbated by his inability to transcend his dual vision of life and fully acknowledge his intuition that "what we call sin" may be in reality "a painful opening out / Of paths for ampler virtue [...]" (*P*, p. 274).

The failure to capitalise on his fleeting moments of enlightenment is continually reiterated in Dipsychus's final monologues. Thus, at the beginning of Scene XI, his initial description of cosmic harmony in which his own soul is "[N]o longer nebulous, sparse, errant" but "[C]entred and fast" (*P*, p. 273) only generates a continual alternation of antithetic discourses which underline his prevailing sense of uncertainty:

This morning by the pillar when I sat  
 Under the great arcade, at the review,  
 And took, and held, and ordered on my brain  
 The faces and the voices and the whole mass  
 O' the motley facts of existence flowing by!  
 O perfect, if 'twere all! But it is not;  
 Hints haunt me ever of a More beyond:

68 Although the idea of submission may be seen as negatively connoted (in contrast with the idea of acceptance) it is appropriate to the competitive nature of the relationship between the Spirit and Dipsychus.

I am rebuked by a sense of the incomplete,  
Of a completion over-soon assumed,  
Of adding up too soon. (*P*, p. 274)

The breakdown of Dipsychus's euphoric vision of unity from doubt to negation (if → ('twere all! But it is) → not") is grounded precisely on his intuition of a completeness that continually eludes him. As with Claude in *Amours De Voyage*, the aerial perspective initially offers the possibility of affiliation which immediately dissipates into an impending sense of dissociation: "At a step I crown the Campanile's top / And view all mapped below [...] / If I lose this, how terrible" (*P*, p. 275). Besides the incongruence of a diction connoted more with the context of warfare than social harmony (*crown, mapped out, lose*), there is also an unwitting irony in Dipsychus's implicit comparison between his own dominant position and that of "Napoleon on the heights". The contrast between Napoleon and Dipsychus recalls that between Claude and Garibaldi in *Amours de Voyage*. As in the confrontation with the Croat, it is the commanding soldier who overshadows the ineffectual intellectual who struggles verbally to incite himself into action:

Let us look back on life. Was any change,  
Any now blest expansion, but at first  
A pang, remorse-like, shot to the inmost seats  
Of moral being? To do anything,  
Distinct on any one thing to decide,  
To leave the habitual and the old, and quit  
The easy-chair of use and wont, seems crime  
To the weak soul, forgetful how at first  
Sitting down seemed so too. (*P*, p. 274)

Dipsychus's resolve to counter the stasis of his non-commitment with the mobility of social transformation is underlined by the predominantly enjambed lines. Whilst he knows full well that the challenges posed by change are metaphysical rather than material, he also realises the real question at stake to be the fact that his intellectual and moral impasse has blinded him to the spiritual opportunities afforded by change and acceptance of flux in the first place. Dipsychus cannot 'go with the flow' because his over-sensitive conscience has been sabotaged by the influence of religion which has been so overwhelming in his case that he

feels paradoxically pushed beyond its premises: “O double self! / And I untrue to both” (*P*, p. 275). At the same time, he sees his inability to act in terms of a Christian duality as his own failing (rather than a short-coming of Christianity itself). Indeed, in his terror of worsening his situation, he convinces himself to remain loyal (and safe) to his familiar ways: “To the old paths, my soul! Oh, be it so! [...] Lo! I am in the Spirit of the Lord’s day / With John in Patmos” (*P*, p. 275). His sudden self-identification with the revelator of the Apocalypse corroborates the pose of aristocratic disdain which characterises his general attitude to the external world whilst the Spirit’s satirical response exposes the foolish ambivalence that constitutes Dipsychus’s “old paths”. At the same time his words may be applied to Clough’s own poetic struggles (particularly during the composition of *Dipsychus*):

To moon about religion; to inhume  
 Your ripened age in solitary walks,  
 For self-discussion; to debate in letters  
 Vext points with earnest friends; past other men  
 To cherish natural instincts, yet to fear them  
 And less than any to use them. Oh, no doubt,  
 In a corner sit and mope, and be consoled  
 With thinking one is clever, while the room  
 Rings through with animation and the dance  
 [...] write verse,  
 Burnt in disgust, then ill-restored, and left  
 Half-made, in pencil scrawl illegible. (*P*, pp. 276–7)

The Spirit’s recourse to iambic pentameter blank verse (which becomes conspicuous in the latter stages of the poem) is designed to present his counter-arguments increasingly less through his prosodic tomfoolery in order to press the underlying earnest intentions that belie his apparently satirical or subversive remarks. As in Peer’s confrontation with the button moulder in Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*, Dipsychus, finding himself cornered by the Spirit’s ultimatum, can only resort to inevitably futile delay tactics: “Much longer, much. I took it up indeed, / For speculation, rather, to gain thought / New data [...]” (*P*, p. 278). His persistence with rational speculation is not only symptomatic of the stranglehold of his double-mindedness, but also reflects his lack of trust in his intuitive faculties.

Nevertheless, Scene XII initially appears to present a reversal of Dipsychus's dilemma:

'Tis gone, the inordinate desire,  
The burning thirst for Action – utterly;  
Gone, like a ship that passes in the night  
On the high seas; gone, yet will come again.  
Gone, yet expresses something that exists.  
Is it a thing ordained, then? Is it a clue  
For my life's conduct? (*P*, pp. 279)

Far from being an overpowering urge, action has been solely a matter of curiosity until this point. Yet, as the phonic echoes in *inordinate* and *ordained* underline, Dipsychus is led to ponder the extent to which he is pre-destined for action, or conclude whether his real destiny be the dreaded “blank thought” of the ‘blank misgivings’ that lie behind the moral and spiritual quandary of all Clough's verse. In the light of his investment in intellectual speculation, his recognition of the inefficacy of philosophical meditation paradoxically concludes with his realisation that knowledge “is great but works / By rules of large exception [...]” (*P*, p. 280). Dipsychus is obliged to concede that learning and unlearning are intrinsic parts of the same process: “To use knowledge well we must learn of ignorance / To apply the rule forget the rule.” (*P*, p. 280). But his insight that knowledge should be gained experientially rather than through a priori reasoning is short-lived. No sooner does he appear to broaden his spiritual horizons than he lapses into his characteristic apathetic complacency: “But what need is there? I am happy now, / I feel no lack – what cause is there for haste?” (*P*, p. 280). This momentary peace of mind is abruptly interrupted by the Spirit's familiar tetrameters: “O yes! O yes! And thought, no doubt, / 'T had locked the very devil out. / He, he! He, he! – and didn't know / through what small places we can go” (*P*, p. 280). The underlying sarcasm is carried forward in iambic pentameters:

O yes! You thought you had escaped no doubt,  
This worldly fiend that follows you about,  
This compound of convention and impiety,  
This mongrel of uncleanness and propriety.  
What else were bad enough? But let me say,

I too have my *grandes manières* in my way;  
Could speak high sentiment as well as you,  
And out-blank-verse you without much ado. (*P*, p. 280)

The Spirit's self-definitions are merely tongue-in-cheek assumptions reflecting Dipsychus's ideas of him and in no way intended as a disclosure of his real identity. In his elusiveness, he flaunts a carefree ambivalence, in contrast with Dipsychus for whom the phenomenon of duality is a tragic predicament. Thus, having already demonstrated his ability to wittily 'out-blank-verse' him, the Spirit can assume the more sober side to his personality and assert his own right to "speak big words, and use the tone imperious" (*P*, p. 280). Furthermore, his pragmatic religiousness: "[F]or dreaming unfit, because not designed" (*P*, p. 280) is grounded on the recognition of opposites which Dipsychus, in his reticence to confront the real world, is too timorous to confront: "The devil oft the Holy Scripture uses, / But God can act the devil when he chooses" (*P*, p. 281). For Dipsychus, this chiasmatic blurring of God and the devil as interchangeable forces is an inconceivable confusion to be rejected at all costs. Yet, his idea of the heavenly life, comprised of "Good books, good friends, and holy moods" (*P*, p. 281), intensifies his prejudiced view of the world at large as essentially evil: "Welcome, wicked world, / The hardening heart, the calculating brain / Narrowing its doors to thought, the lying lips, / The calm-dissembling eyes; the greedy flesh, / The world, the Devil – Welcome, welcome, welcome!" (*P*, p. 281). The puerility of his melodramatic abstractions contrasts unfavourably with the hard reasoning of the Spirit's discourse. Constrained by the duality of his religious conditioning, he is only able to envision the world in mutually exclusive terms and for this reason fails to understand the sagacity behind the Spirit's nondualism: "To use the undistorted light of the sun / Is not a crime; to look straight out upon / The big plain things that stare one in the face / Does not contaminate; to see pollutes not / What one must feel if one won't see" (*P*, p. 283). To paraphrase, wickedness is as much in the eye of the beholder as it is an objective fact. Rather than adopting this a-critical acceptance of life, Dipsychus engrosses himself in an intellectual speculation that only exacerbates his double-mindedness:



What shall it take to? literature no doubt?  
 Novels, reviews? or poems! if you please!  
 [...]

Prate then of passions you have known in dreams,  
 Of huge experience gathered by the eye [...]

Or will you write about philosophy?  
 For a waste far-off maybe overlooking  
 The fruitful is close by, live in metaphysic,  
 With transcendental logic fill your stomach,  
 Schematise joy, effigiate meat and drink. (*P*, pp. 283–4)

It is no coincidence that the Spirit's most exasperated outburst at Dip-sychus's futile intellectualism should coincide with another implicit authorial self-criticism. Indeed, the whole passage may be read as a sardonic overview both of Clough's failures in the practical world, such as his brief period at University Hall and his teaching aspirations in the United States where "[...] friendly intercession brings a first pupil; / and not a second" – *P*, p. 284 as well as his self-isolation from general society ("He's odd opinions – hm! – and not in orders" – *P*, p. 284). Clough's deeply ingrained social conscience, which was variously manifested in his charity work and culminated in his services to Florence Nightingale, may also be recalled. Compared with his Christian-inspired duties, poetic composition was an almost embarrassing side activity (at Rugby he even considered it sinful). Like Arnold, Clough felt the necessity to channel his intellectual energies into worthwhile social causes, whilst his hero is loath to "truck and practice with the world" (*P*, p. 286). Indeed, his "Twirling and twiddling ineffectively, / And indeterminately swaying for ever" (*P*, p. 284) almost drives the Spirit to the point of renunciation, were it not for Dipsychus's shocked realisation that his time has run out: "Is the hour here, then? Is the minute come – / The irretrievable instant of stern time? [...] It must be then, e'en now" (*P*, p. 285). In light of the Spirit's function as a catalyst for Clough's own self-critique, the concluding couplet in which he appropriates for himself the role of Jesus ("Fear not, my lamb, whate'er men say, / I am the Shepherd and the Way" – *P*, p. 285) once again blurs the boundaries between parody and seriousness. Since the lines are uttered in isolation and unattached to any previous polemical or comical discourse, they have a dramatic resonance which suggests that his alternative course is not void of its own spirituality.

The collective personae that make up the visionary chorus in Scene XIII effectively replace Dipsychus's own voice as poet. Having relinquished poetic composition his performative role is now reduced to quotation. With its embellishment of anaphoric phrases, parallelisms and verbal repetitions this mawkish melodrama is certainly worse than anything Dipsychus himself has composed. What is more, it represents not so much a reaffirmation of Dipsychus's religious idealism, as an admission of defeat:<sup>69</sup>

“When the enemy is near thee,  
 Call on us!  
 In our hands we will upbear thee,  
 He shall neither scathe nor scare thee,  
 Call on us!  
 Call when all good friends have left thee,  
 All good sights and sounds bereft thee;  
 Call when hope and heart are sinking,  
 And the brain is sick with thinking,  
 Help, O help! (*P*, p. 286)

The empty rhetoric betrays a desperation which Dipsychus seeks to allay by slyly submitting to the Spirit's demands: “If I submit, it is to gain time / And arms and stature: 'tis but to lie safe / Until the hour strike to rise and slay” (*P*, p. 287). This rebellious attitude flies in the face of the all-embracing response advocated by the spirit. It is no accident, therefore, that Dipsychus draws on the image of a snake to underline the destructive nature of his intentions: 'Tis the old story of the adder's brood / Feeding and nestling till the fangs be grown” (*P*, p. 287). Indeed, as a justification of his malicious designs, his monologue proceeds with a Darwinian vision of natural survival in which man and nature are links within a chain of necessary relations marked by mutual destruction:

The tree exhausts the soil; creepers kill it,  
 Their insects them: the lever finds its fulcrum  
 On what it then o'erthrows; the homely spade  
 In labour's hand unscrupulously seeks  
 Its first momentum on the very clod  
 Which next will be upturned. It seems a law. (*P*, p. 287)

69 Cf. R. K. Biswas, *op. cit.*, pp. 404–4.

But this devious plan is destined to backfire. For as the Spirit ironically recognises, with his “finer special pleading” Dipsychus is already “working out, his own queer way, / The sum I set him [...]” (*P*, p. 288). His intellectual independence is illusive since he has himself become the same sum corresponding to the Spirit’s own “predestined figure” (*P*, p. 288).

Dipsychus’s eventual submission to the Spirit is not without its consequences on a poetic level. This is immediately evidenced in the opening lines of the final scene, which are a direct echo of the first lines of *Blank Misgivings*:<sup>70</sup> “Twenty-one past, twenty-five coming on; / One third of life departed, nothing done” (*P*, p. 288). This circular return to the dilemma of non-productivity, which indicates the painful recognition of an irreversible stasis, is shorn of the moral perspective of Clough’s earlier poem as Dipsychus, in an abrupt shift from pentameters to tetrameters, resumes his discourse with a cynicism worthy of the Spirit himself: “Mephisto, come; we will agree / Content; you’ll take a moiety” (*P*, p. 288). His shameless bartering persists even after the Spirit’s amused response: “Three quarters then. One eye you close, / And lay your finger to your nose. / Seven eights? Nine tenths? O gripping beast! / Leave me a decimal at least (*P*, p. 288). Having bargained his soul he can now give free reign to his authentic self. The result is a sudden stripping away of the insincerities of his ideological oriented discourse:

I can but render what is of my will,  
And behind it somewhat remaineth still  
Oh, your sole chance was in the childish mind  
Whose darkness dreamed that vows like this could bind;  
Thinking all lost, it made all lost, and brought  
In fact the ruin which had been but thought.  
Thank heaven (or you!) that’s past these many years,  
And we have knowledge wiser than our fears.  
So your poor bargain take, my man,  
And make the best of it you can. (*P*, p. 289)

His bold-faced disclosure of his intentions is supplemented with a brash self-confidence in his own willpower. But the metrical about turn in

70 “Here am I yet, another twelvemonth spent, / One-third departed of the mortal span, / Carrying on the child into the man, / Nothing into reality”.

the final facetious couplet confirms the loss of his psychological and poetic identity. For in submitting to the Spirit he can only revert to the Spirit's poetic language and form in spite of his final attempts to retrieve something of his old original poetic self. From this point onwards, Dipsychus only utters a handful of single lines or couplets whilst the Spirit, reverting to his mischievous cynicism, remains the dominant voice, controlling every aspect of their discourse. Even Dipsychus's candid question "Tell me thy name now it is over" (*P*, p. 290) receives a derisively ironic reply: "Oh! / Why, Mephistopheles, you know – / At least you've lately called me so; / Belial it was some days ago. But take your pick; I've got a score [...] What think you of *Cosmocrator*?" (*P*, p. 290). If Dipsychus intends the other-self of his imaginings in the dual terms of Christianity, the Spirit can be identified by any one of these names.

The question of the Spirit's identity is taken up again in the prose epilogue. As in the prologue, the ensuing discussion between the nephew and his uncle throws an ironic light on Clough's poem through the latter's criticism of what he deems to be its faults:

'I DON'T very well understand what it's all about,' said the uncle. I won't say I didn't drop into a doze while the young man was drivelling through his later soliloquies. But there was a great deal that was unmeaning, vague, and involved; and what was most plain was least decent and least moral' (*P*, p. 292).

In his anticipation of critical responses to the poem, Clough draws a humorous correlation between the ideology and temperament of the Spirit and the uncle (the middle-class reader at large?) with the latter's recognition of the fact that the Spirit's discourse "if only it hadn't been for the way he said it, and that it was he who said it, would have been sensible enough" (*P*, p. 292). What is significant is that the uncle picks up on the nephew's assumption that the Spirit is a devil, an assertion he immediately retracts:

'But, sir,' said I, perhaps he wasn't a devil after all. That's the beauty of the poem; nobody can say. You see, dear sir, the thing which it is attempted to represent is the conflict between the tender conscience and the world. Now, the over-tender conscience will, of course, exaggerate the wickedness of the World; and the Spirit in the poem may be merely the hypothesis or subjective imagination formed – 'Oh, for goodness' sake, my dear boy,' interrupted my uncle, 'don't go into the theory of it' (*P*, p. 292).

The uncle's interruption is superfluous. For the nephew already provides a key into interpreting the central dilemma in the poem. If the root-cause of *Dipsychus's* double-mindedness resides in the fact that his over-tender conscience has led him to an exaggerated sense of wickedness in the world (and, by implication, in himself) the Spirit becomes the scapegoat of his own noxious imagination.

The uncle subsequently shifts his attention from criticism of the poem itself to censure of what he sees as its prime inspiration: "It's all Arnold's doing; he spoilt the public schools" (*P*, p. 292). Although his accusation is quelled by the nephew, there is no doubt that *Dipsychus* represents an attempt to explore the effects of Arnold's teaching on the 'over-tender' consciences of Clough's generation: "They're full of the notion of the world being so wicked, and of their taking a higher line, as they call it. I only fear they'll never take any at all". Besides his unwitting reference to the paradox at the heart of *Dipsychus's* dilemma, the uncle pinpoints the chief faults of Arnold's over-excessive religious indoctrination: "[...] he used to attack offences, not as offences – the right view – against discipline, but as sin, heinous guilt". Such, indeed, were the criticisms levelled at Arnold during his lifetime and which Clough himself ardently defended. Yet, *Dipsychus* seems to indicate an attempt to reach a turning point in this respect. For in its re-exploration of Clough's moral and religious themes, it also, by implication, involves a re-consideration of the influence of the most important figure in his early life. Therefore, on the one hand, the nephew composedly justifies Arnold's attitude as a reflection of the times:

'The real cause of the evil you complain of, which, to a certain extent, I admit, was, I take it, the religious movement of the last century, beginning with Wesleyanism and culminating at last in Puseyism. This over-excitation of the religious sense, resulting in this irrational, almost animal irritability of conscience, was in many ways as foreign to Arnold as it is proper to –'

'Well, well, my dear nephew, if you like to make a theory of it, pray write it out for yourself nicely in full [...]' (*P*, p. 294).

By conflating Wesleyanism and Puseyism as parts of the same process, he also overrides the historical truth of the antagonistic nature of their interrelations and by implicating Arnold in the same process, he, at the very least, partially equates him with elements towards which he

was fundamentally hostile. All the more disconcerting is the fact that the uncle's interruption prevents him from completing his key point in his defence of Arnold. Clough may be keen to avoid the impression of ingratitude towards his childhood mentor, but the fact that he presents such a discussion of his figure as part of an appendix to his most important poem at all seems to reflect not so much a need to pay tribute to the man as to explore, and, by extension, offer an objective re-evaluation of his influence. Ultimately, the playful ambivalence of Clough's method suggests a continuing difficulty or embarrassment in having to affirm any definite conclusions whether they regard the influences of his intellectual and artistic formation or his own poetic activity.

## Conclusion

The Victorian estimation of Clough as a wavering and restless personality of unfulfilled promise, ultimately suffocated by his own excessive conscientiousness has long been exposed as ungenerous. Modern critics have set out to demythologise the enigma he represented to his peers<sup>1</sup> with such decisiveness that he is now universally acknowledged as a highly original voice whose unflinching engagement with the epistemic and ontological dilemmas of his own age anticipated the perplexities that would characterise the angst of the intellectual and artistic climate of the twentieth century and beyond. However, one must avoid falling into the trap of regarding him as modern tout court since his poetry is so often motivated by an urgent response to his own historical and cultural context. The intricate interplay between sincerity and irony that runs throughout his works, is nothing more than the manifestation of an acute and over-earnest sensibility absorbed in a scrupulous investigation into the ‘truth’ that lay beneath the superficial and apparent level of existence. Thus, far from engaging in a Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde like

- 1 See, for example, K. Chorley, *op. cit.* p. 7 who talks of “the enigma of his personality and whose first chapter entitled “The Problem” explores the question of Clough’s failure to live up to the expectations of his peers. Her conclusion that: “[...] he knew his ideas were out of alignment with the established ideas and beliefs of his time” (p. 5) established a common ground for every subsequent critic to restate with varying emphasis. More recently, R. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–10, who, after enumerating Clough’s apparent ‘failures’ which comprise “two of the most readable and intelligent long poems in the English language” and “a sterling contribution [...] to Florence Nightingale’s revolutionary report on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army” concludes: “If this is failure, it is failure of a somewhat Olympian kind”. Finally, Anthony Kenny, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet’s Life, cit.*, p. 286, focussing specifically on his poetic fortunes, lays explicit blame on Clough’s widow, Blanche who did “a disservice to Arthur’s memory by fostering the legend that his oeuvre was inadequate to his talents, so that as a poet he was somehow incomplete and maimed.”

intellectual and spiritual dualism<sup>2</sup>, the shifting attitudes and perspectives of his verse articulate, perhaps in a more powerful way than that of any other poet of his time, the moral and spiritual unease that subtended the false confidence of mid-Victorian optimism.

Clough's originality was symptomatic of an essential loneliness which originated from his singular childhood experiences. He was forced into a precocious maturity as a result of his early life on both sides of the Atlantic, his separation from his family and tutelage under Thomas Arnold. He would also be swayed early on by counter influences which led him to question not only the genuineness and coherence of his own beliefs but also his role as a poet in a Victorian society the nature of which, as his friend Matthew Arnold informed him, was decidedly *unpoetical*. However, it was precisely the so-called 'unpoetical' that would occupy so much of Clough's attention. For his essentially non-purist approach, nothing could be excluded from poetry a-priori.

Clough not only owed much to the eighteenth-century verse of John Dryden and George Crabbe, but was also an admirer of Wordsworth and Byron and in later life befriended Tennyson whose poetry he likewise revered. Yet he can hardly be compared with any of these figures. Indeed, when one considers the emotional excess and linguistic affectations of his early verse, his initial sense of poetic creativity as a form of sinful indulgence is telling. In his determination to overcome the artistic weaknesses he had inherited from romanticism (notably his over-insistence on subjective representation), he posited the idea of a poetic persona or personas through which his own preoccupations could be objectified. These poetic personas may represent a problem from the point of view of a critical disambiguation of his verse, but it must be remembered that they are intrinsic to a rhetorical strategy designed to point to the elusiveness of *meaning*. They are representations of the disparate voices of his own questioning self, but also paradigms of a fractured conscience that he saw as typical of his age. From the self-guilt that pervades his adolescent verses to the disenchantment of his political ideals and the crisis of his religious doubts, his poetry is the expression of a crisis that is at once personal and universal.

2 Cfr. Donald Thomas, *The Post-Romantics*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 137.



The questioning voice that so insistently haunts Clough's poetic persona also tormented the poet with regard to his craft. A case in point is his evident dread of eventually publishing *Dipsychus*. For whilst the crass egotism and cynicism which pervaded his amoral satire of self-conflict went decidedly against the grain of mainstream Victorian taste, his use of profanities and obscenities would only have aroused indignation. For the rest of his life, his most ambitious poem would remain a work-in-progress, the ultimate testimony of its author's dogged determination to overcome the sense of inadequacy and unworthiness provoked by the irresolvable moral and religious predicaments which had hounded him since his Rugby School days. With the dwindling of his poetic activity *Dipsychus* increasingly came to embody a cruel reminder of his creative capabilities. However much Emerson's complaint that his muse had been "silent and too long" (C, I, 585), may have spurred him to respond, he was already driving himself into a virtual cul-de-sac.

Having composed no new original poetry from 1853 until the year of his death, the verses he began to write for *Mari Magno* signal a drastic break away from the complexity and variety of his previous works. With its exclusive adoption of traditional forms (particularly the iambic pentameter couplet) and realistic depictions of daily life, *Mari Magno*, looks back to the traditions of Chaucer and Crabbe. The idea of conveniently interrelating, what were originally separate verse narratives on the theme of marriage, into a single structure, based on the model of *The Canterbury Tales*, was an afterthought on Clough's part. Yet, it is an expedient that adds a patchiness and incoherence to what is already an incomplete poem which lacks the linguistic density and psychological subtlety of *The Bothie*, *Amours de Voyage* and *Dipsychus*<sup>3</sup>. It could even be argued that *Mari Magno* has the detrimental effect of subverting the achievements of Clough's canon by an apparent endeavour on its author's part to realign himself with Victorian conventional taste (an evident influence being Coventry Patmore's "The Angel in the House"). As a result, even Clough's re-visitation of some of the salient aspects of his poetry (self-conflict and doubt, the nature of love and sexuality, the multiple viewpoints of experience) appears belittling and banal. Yet, for all his disconcertingly lackadaisical regression into a poetry of doggerel

3 Significantly, the last proposal for its reassessment made in 1982 has never been seriously followed up.

charm<sup>4</sup>, *Mari Magno* does not descend into sentimentalism. Nor does it entirely succeed in suppressing the earnest and self-interrogating features of Clough's poetic persona. There can still be detected behind the easy flowing rhymes and sing-song rhythms a distinctly adult voice (so much appraised by Graham Greene) intent on addressing an adult audience. This is nowhere more poignantly evident than in Clough's audacious and candid treatment of sexual relations. The narrator's tale, which is a case in point, concerns an extramarital affair which stems from a wife's insistence that her husband remain abroad in convalescence whilst the latter yearns to return home to his family. The fourteen lines which narrate his sexual surrender to the woman whose attention he has attracted were, predictably, omitted by Blanche in the first edition of the poem:

Going to his room, one day, upon the stair  
Above him he perceived her lingering there;  
Upon the stair she lingered; at the top,  
As though till he should follow, seemed to stop,  
And when he followed, moved – and yet looked round  
And seeming as if waiting to be found  
At her half-open chamber door she stood;  
A sudden madness mounted in his blood  
And took him in a moment to the place;  
He stooped, and seeking swift the half-hidden face  
There, with the exultation of a boy,  
Read in her liquid eyes the passion of her joy;  
And went with her at the fatal door  
Whence he reissued innocent no more. (*P*, pp. 419–20)

The autobiographical speculation that this sequence has stimulated cannot detract from its powerful evocation of the hesitancy, danger, excitement and relentless urge of illicit sexual temptation. Dramatic pauses, lexical repetition, anaphora, a carefully wrought syntax to suggest the emotional states of the characters: these are recognisably Cloughian traits. For once also, a character takes a decisive action. But it is the wrong one. For, in the moral frame of the poem, the guilt-ridden man is forced into a self-imposed exile in a lonely garret, refusing the forgiveness of his wife. Only the near-death of his daughter, who falls

4 R. Christiansen, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

ill as a result of his absence, finally convinces him to return to his family again. The love and sympathy behind his wife's words of consolation: "And after all, you know we are but dust, / What are we, in ourselves that we should trust" (*P*, p. 424) reverse the premises of Clough's cynical conviction of the inherited nature of sin which stretches back to *Blank Misgivings* and lies at the root of his own self-mistrust and scepticism.

The circumstances surrounding the latter stages of Clough's artistic and intellectual activity bear a striking parallel to those of his friend and rival, Matthew Arnold. Both were compelled to seek a profession in the outside world after achieving second class degrees at Oxford and both found emotional and psychological stability in marriage. More importantly, both men keenly felt the importance of some form of social commitment. But whereas the end of Arnold's poetic career coincided with the beginning of his intense activity as a writer of critical essays which would exert a profound influence on British culture, Clough was able to find no replacement for poetry other than a back seat role as secretary and dogsbody to the philanthropic cause of the tirelessly exigent Florence Nightingale. This unexpected occupation may have atoned for his wasted years of dithering and uncertainty but, in all likelihood, it dealt a final blow to his creativity (some even believing the stress involved to have been the cause of his untimely death at the age of 41). Nevertheless, Clough would have viewed his situation differently, considering it far better to be directly involved in a divine mission as a shadowy figure working on the sidelines, than striving hopelessly for truth and certainty in a vain quest for literary recognition. *Action*, the word that reverberates like a haunting challenge throughout *Dipsychus* was his only alternative to the prospect of writing such poetry to an already disenchanting reading public as the answer to his own existential dilemmas came in the form of the Christian charity he had learned from Thomas Arnold and which he himself had commended to others throughout his life.



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