Studi di Anglistica 2
collana diretta da
Leo Marchetti e Francesco Marroni

Renzo D'Agnillo

The Poetry of Matthew Arnold

ARACNE

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To the memory of my friend John Cotterell

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The Poetry of Matthew Arnold

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Preface

Matthew Arnold is undeniably one of the most disregarded voices of Victorian poetry. This in spite of his being traditionally classified as the third major poetic figure of his age after Tennyson and Browning. There are even those (and they are by no means few) who will insist that his fame rests on a single poem (i.e. the highly anthologised *Dover Beach*). Critical studies solely dedicated to his poetry are few and far between compared with the volume of criticism ranging from general profiles to analytical studies which focus attention primarily on the ideas expounded by Arnold the essayist. Such patent neglect almost tempts one to infer a tacit acceptance, no doubt encouraged by the neat temporal demarcation of Arnold's artistic and intellectual life – the first twenty years for poetry, the second twenty for prose – in regarding the former as the essentially immature stage of an intellectual development which came to full bloom in the essays of social, religious, and literary criticism. Yet, whilst both his poetry and prose express similar moral concerns for spiritual and philosophical enlightenment in an age marked by rapid change and dwindling beliefs, they deal with these matters in essentially contrasting ways. The hallmark of poetry is tension, and as a verbal artefact, the poem also exists beyond the purely conscious intension of its author. However much the prose writer may inveigle his readers into a sympathetic engagement with his ideas, the poet can only hypothesise an essentially irresolvable world–view. The imaginative power of Arnold's verse resides precisely in the ultimate irreconcilability of opposing forces which tear at the heart of his existential and philosophical dilemmas. As modern readers, we can sympathise with the earnest voice of the struggling poet and his discontent with preconceived morality and neat formulas. This earnestness, already evident in his first volume, came as a surprise to those with whom he was intimately acquainted. It was also a factor which led him to be accused of insincerity.

Yet, one feels more sincerity and poignancy in Arnold's poetry, with its unflinching representation of the underlying contradictions between the real man and his poetic, or 'buried' self, than in that of most of his peers.

Arnold was the first poet of the Victorian age to sense that the malaise in British poetry was an indication of its cultural insularity. Like T. S. Eliot after him, he was an intellectual with an acute awareness of the linguistic and prosodical strategies of his craft and made a significant contribution in paving the way towards the radical forms (both prosodical and thematic) that were to emerge in the early twentieth century. In particular, he was the first to experiment with free–verse (although his handling of the form is limited to few poems). He also sought to restore a sense of nobility and dignity to poetry by seeking to transcend what he regarded as the essentially limiting influence of unquestioned romantic assumptions as well as verse that echoed temporal concerns (i.e. poetry of social commitment). Eliot's own programmatic disparagement of Arnold is symptomatic of an anxiety of influence which exposes a reluctance on the latter's part to acknowledge the extent to which the two writers shared common features and objectives.

The present study traces the progression of Arnold's poetic vision through three fundamental stages: the first in which the poet consciously sets out to distinguish his own world–view from that of his predecessors (particularly Wordsworth); the second, in which the overwhelming power of philosophical influences leads to a vision that is apparently inconsolable in its pessimism, and a final stage which reveals poignant attempts to transcend a fatalistic view of the world through images of hope and redemption. It is a progression that seems to consciously point to an end – the end of poetic composition. For once Arnold turns to language as a form of salvation, rather than an embodiment of tension, the need to express himself in prose almost naturally supplants his need to express himself in poetry.

This study is the result of five years' academic and research activity at the Victorian and Edwardian University Studies Cen-

tre at the "G. d'Annunzio" University in Pescara directed by Professor Francesco Marroni. As a member of the CUSVE, my awareness of the relevance of Victorian literature on present day life and culture has increased with the years. One of the main tenets of the centre is its stress on lesser known works and writers. It therefore offered me a golden opportunity to explore the neglected and often misunderstood world of Matthew Arnold's poetry. In Italy, especially, his poetical works remain not only unknown, but mysteriously un–translated.

I wish to thank Professor Andrea Mariani, who, as head of the Linguistic and Literary Sciences Department at the "G. d'Annunzio University", encouraged and supported me in my project.

Words are insufficient to express the moral and intellectual debt and gratitude I owe to Professor Francesco Marroni who has been a constant source of inspiration over the years. He most attentively supervised the work, reading (and re–reading) chapters and offering precious suggestions and comments which have been gratefully accepted. I am sure that all of those who know him will agree when I say that his boundless enthusiasm for English literature is not only contagious but a continual stimulus.

My thanks and gratitude goes to Paola Evangelista who patiently worked on the typescript and made the cumbersome process of type–setting and proof–reading so effortless.

I also wish to thank Enrichetta Soccio and Saverio Tomaiuolo for offering materials which proved useful for my study.

Besides receiving fascinating insights into Victorian literature from them over the years, I have also enjoyed stimulating informal exchanges on Arnold's poetry with Professors Alan Shelston, John Chapple and Norman Page.

Finally, a special note of thanks goes to the staff of the Social Sciences Library at the University of Bristol for all their kindness and help.

Pescara–Bristol, April 2005.

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Resistance and Acceptance

Fate gave, what chance shall not control,
His sad lucidity of soul.

In his poetry, Matthew Arnold offers a powerful exploration of the spiritual and moral disorientation of the Victorian intellectual. At the same time he was quick to perceive that the root cause of these symptoms lay in the disruptions and disintegrations of a rapidly changing social order, and was acutely conscious of the extent to which such transformations were in disharmony with the spiritual and intellectual aspirations of humankind in general. As a result, his early works reveal a maturity and confidence that should beguile no reader into interpreting as a sign of reluctance or insecurity the fact that his first two volumes of poetry were published under the anonymous initial 'A'. His own assurance of his poetic achievement is boldly stated in a letter to his mother, dated June 5 1869:

> My poems represent the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century. I may have less sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs[1].

These are the words of a man who, though prepared to acknowledge the merits of his more successful peers, is far from displaying fear, let alone inferiority, towards them as rivals. Any connections between them, as such, are for the sole intent of vindicating the uniqueness of his own poetic voice.

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[1] *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. I, ed. Cecil Y. Lang, Charlottesville and London, The University Press of Virginia, 1996, vol. III, p. 347.

To a Gipsy Child by the Sea–Shore, which, to quote his most recent biographer, signals "the emergence of the poet who has a real claim on our attention"[2], can be considered the earliest expression of Arnold's unique poetic vision. Composed prior[3] to the other titles that make up his first collection, *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*, (1849) it may also be justly regarded as his first major poem. Already it exposes his growing realisation of the limitations of those romantic influences with which his earliest productions, particularly the conventional Rugby and Oxford prize–winners *Alaric at Rome* and *Cromwell* were permeated. It is also the first of many poems to draw inspiration from real–life, being based on the poet's casual encounter with a female child during a holiday on the Isle of Man with his brother Tom:

> [...] Arnold and Tom were at the pier, watching the arrival of the Liverpool steamer. Just in front of them in the crowd was a poor woman, who could have been a gipsy, looking down, like them, at the steamer. The child in her arms was looking backwards over her shoulder. 'Its pitiful wan face' recalled Tom, 'and sad dark eyes rested on Matthew for some time without change of expression'[4].

From the beginning, the poem sets out to endorse a view of childhood that goes deliberately against the grain of romantic and Victorian idealism and nostalgia. Whereas the romantic's vision, particularly in Wordsworth, is coloured by the adult's awareness of lost innocence and glory, here the gap between the two generations is conflated to wipe out any possibility for such contrasts. Arnold's gipsy child appears as a grim precursor of Thomas Hardy's frighteningly conceived Father Time in *Jude*

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[2] Nicholas Murray, *A Life of Matthew Arnold*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1996, p. 49.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 49: "Although it was written on the Isle of Man where Arnold had been on holiday with his brother Tom, the latter, (whose unreliability on such matters has proved notorious) only refers to this vaguely as being 'in 1843 or 1844', whilst Arnold (a surely more reliable source) recorded in his diary to being there in 1845."

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

the Obscure, pointing to a deracinated condition which is symptomatic of a spiritual exile[5] representative of humankind in general. The poem progresses through a series of considerations that hinge on the enigmatic nature of the child, who seems to have literally hypnotised the poet into creativity with the profundity of her gaze. Indeed, the poem never detracts from the fatalistic nature of this epiphanic encounter whose significance the poetic voice feels he has, for some mysterious reason, been singled out to interpret.

The opening in *medias res* presents the child in terms of an enigma to be deciphered. The seeming lack of semantic direction in the series of rhetorical questions generates a multi–layer of interpretations in which the speaker becomes increasingly engaged in his own ideological struggles and resistances. The anaphoric construction of the initial questions is strongly reminiscent of the central interrogations of certain poems by Blake, Shelley and Keats[6]. Yet, if any parody is intended, it is surely with the aim of subverting romantic thrill and wonder into an essentially pre–modernist anguish:

> Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes?
> Who hid such import in an infant's gloom?
> Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
> Who massed, round that slight brow, these clouds of doom?[7]

The incipit already displays in full bloom recurrent features of Arnold's poetics: the gravely meditative, interrogative voice, the careful lexical choice, verbal echo and repetition, together with the haunting sense that pain and suffering are endemic to humankind. With its combination of humility and gravity, the

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[5] Cf. E. D. H. Johnson, *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry: Sources of the Poetic Imagination in Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1952, p. 148.

[6] *The Tyger*, *Ode to a Skylark*, and *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, respectively.

[7] Matthew Arnold, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth Allot (2nd edition Miriam Allot), London, Longman, 1979 (1965), p 23. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition with page and line numbers provided in the text and preceded by the initial *P*.

noun–verb "pleading" is a particularly fitting anticipation of the tone and theme of the poem as well as of the poet's oeuvre in general. The anaphoric construction (who + verb + object) of the first three lines of stanza I reiterates a series of suppositions that an unknown agent has forced the child into a premature state of hardship, thereby setting up a thematic expectation of child exploitation. Such a social preoccupation, however, is immediately negated by the abstract subject "What" in the final line[8]. The deliberately ambiguous diction significantly contributes to this shift in emphasis; "Taught", ironically connected with "pleading", is denied its didactic connotation; "hid" implies deviousness and evil, and "lent", a temporary, as opposed to a generous offer. The transition from the third person ("this pleading [...] in an infant's gloom") to the direct invocations "child, thy forehead [...]" also betrays an initial reluctance on the part of the poetic voice to focus on his subject as something too alien to be contemplated (a point confirmed in stanza VI). The hypnotic gaze of the child that had captivated Arnold is given a thematic valence in the gerundial phrase "this pleading". That "pleading" and "(un)practised" are alliteratively linked reinforces the contrast between what the child has been taught (presumably to beg, but the significance is made more general) and her actual inexperience of it. Similarly, the structural and assonantal equivalences of the two–syllable words "import" and "infant" in the second line set up an analogous contrast since "import" evokes the adjective 'important' and is suggestive of a seriousness of intent inappropriate for a small child. Likewise, her gloom is qualified by the weighty adjective "meditative", which is one of the longest words in the whole poem. Following this initial description, the speaker turns from abstract questionings to direct address, thus altering not only the tone but also the nature of his reflections on the child. What appears as a poem of social awareness denouncing Victorian

[8] Interestingly Arnold's 1855 version of this line is: "What clouds thy forehead and foredates thy doom", which undermines the idea of exploitation or mistreatment.

child–exploitation in vindication of the 'purity' and 'innocence' of childhood, in reality becomes an exploration of spiritual–philosophical speculations that transcend such spatial and temporal confines.

Stanza I also offers excellent examples of the functionality of Arnold's rhyme words. The connection between "eyes" and "guise", in the first and third line is all the more ironic when associated with the idea that the child's gaze actually communicates unspeakable thoughts to the poet. For "guise" (i.e. disguise) only frustrates the possibility of an open, honest revelation of thoughts and feelings suggested in the poetic convention of "eyes" as mirror of the soul: the rhyme words "gloom" and "doom", in lines two and four, mutually reinforce each other in spite of the fact that they bear slightly different connotations. The first suggests the subjective nature of the child's dejection, which may be transitory, whilst the second adds the impersonal sense that it is a part of its own (and, by extension, every man's) destiny. The initial struggle to comprehend the child's expression becomes more and more frustrated as the questions continue to arise, since each one alludes to the idea of deceit: not only regarding the origin of the child's gloom (whether inflicted on by an adult or self–imposed) but also its actual nature. Thus, the verb "clouds" in the final line of stanza I is appropriate, since it conveys the idea of obfuscation as well as sadness. The alliteration of "forehead" and "fore–dates" in the same line also contains the final pun that the child has been irrevocably marked as a doomed creature from the outset.

Stanza II presents a sudden drastic shift of scene. From the intensely brooding internal perspective of the speaker's interrogative reflections there follows a description of the external surroundings in which images of change and instability run counter to the profound impression of stoic calm embodied by the gipsy child:

> Lo! sails that gleam a moment and are gone;
> The swinging waters, and the clustered pier.
> Not idly Earth and Ocean labour on,

Nor idly do these sea–birds hover near (*P.* p.24).

The energetic interjection: "Lo!" seems rhetorically designed to snap the speaker out of the trance–like state into which he has been ensnared by the child's gaze. Consequently, the description of the lively seascape suggests that the poem may follow a previously unforeseeable direction. This is initially confirmed by certain lexical choices: for example, the contrasting link, through alliteration, between "gleam", and "gloom" (as well as the further partial alliteration with "clouds") in stanza I. The sudden paradigmatic shift from DEATH in stanza I to LIFE in stanza II is reinforced by other lexemes associated with activity, movement and abundance. Just as the sails indicate freedom of movement, so are the waters represented in terms of a joyfully rhythmic "swinging", which is effectively evoked by a chiasmus on a phonological level: "(Sw) inging (w)ater(s)". Yet, an underlying mood of negativity also pervades the stanza, creating a tension that persists throughout the poem. For the sails that *gleam* in the sun are transient ("[...] a moment and are gone") and "the clustered pier", with its implication of a humanity huddled together, suggests a condition of entrapment. Moreover, the final two lines continue to refer to the lively setting through the negatively marked terms "idly" and "labour". The litotes: "Not idly", although connected with "labour", divest the description of energy: humankind and nature both struggle, but any idea of interdependence is illusory; the sea–birds (a significantly general term here) move near to the earth without making actual contact.

That the shift in scene is merely transitory is confirmed in stanza III, as the poet returns to his reflections on the gipsy child in a language strongly reminiscent of Wordsworth's ode on *Intimations of Immortality*. It is interesting to compare it with the section concerned, in which the speaker addresses a child in similarly lofty tones, because the apparent similarities conceal essential differences of perspective and attitude:

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie

> Thy Soul's immensity;
> Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
> Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind [...][9]
>
> But thou, whom superfluity of joy
> Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain,
> Nor weariness, the full–fed soul's annoy –
> Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain [...] (*P.* p. 24).

If, as has been suggested, Arnold's portrait of the gipsy child is essentially anti–Wordsworthian[10], this must be in terms of what the child is denied, rather than in the qualities Arnold actually assigns her. Both Arnold and Wordsworth elevate their child–figures in terms of paradox. In Wordsworth's case, the child's innocence is precisely that which allows him access to a spiritual state from which the adult is barred. Arnold, on the other hand, concedes none of the graces or joy acknowledged by Wordsworth: "superfluity of joy wafts not" from his child[11]. It

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[9] William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. De Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, (1947), vol. IV, p. 282.

[10] Park Honan, *Matthew Arnold, A Life*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 88: "He addresses the child as if it were one of Wordsworth's promising outcasts, full of obscure but profound knowledge". The critic also gives a negative judgement on the poem's poverty in Arnold's philosophy and theology as well as "his lack of any animate idea that might encourage the spontaneity he wants." (p. 89). See also Anthony Harrison, "Matthew Arnold's Gipsies: Intertextuality and the New Historicism", *Victorian Poetry*, 4 (1991), p. 369: "'To A Gipsy Child by the Sea–Shore' is a pessimistic, if not morose, elegy that visibly reinscribes and transvalues Wordsworth's Intimations Ode."

[11] *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R.H. Super, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1973, vol. IX pp. 49–50: Though written years later, Arnold's essay "Wordsworth" includes the following explicit criticism of the *Immortality Ode* which confirms this oppositional stance to Wordsworth's representation of childhood: "[...] the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds, – this idea of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to

is interesting to see how the verb "wafts" itself is semantically connected to "hover" in the previous verse, recalling the poet back to his initial reflections and his recognition that, just as the sea–birds maintain a distance from the earth, so does the child assume a complete detachment from the life around her. The quality of stoicism, that becomes a recurrent feature of Arnold's mature poetry, is already evident here, and the elevated diction instils a seriousness in asserting its importance as an ideal to be followed. The five–syllable Latinate noun "superfluity" (the longest word in the poem) carries an intellectual weight that is incongruously at odds with its subject. The rest of the stanza presents rejected states of being ("[...] nor longings vain/Nor weariness [...]") aligned against human suffering ("thy hunger and thy pain"). The child is endowed with quasi–extra–human qualities at one level, and condescendingly pitied at another. The contrasting rhyme words, "joy"/"annoy" and "vain"/"pain", one indicative of superficiality, the other of profound suffering, also maintain this paradoxical oscillation between childhood and experience that the child herself embodies.

It is in stanza IV that, for the first time in the poem, the child is referred to as an active agent. Yet curiously, the verb choice ("drugging") suggests her endeavour to neutralise her pain through the apparent virtue of patience, apparent because the neutralising effect mitigates the otherwise positive connotations of that noun. Furthermore, the verb also reinforces the gloom that is intrinsically connected with the child, however tempered by the stoic attitude of patience. But stanza IV is also a central moment because it clarifies the speaker's role as the chosen object of the gipsy child's attention. Until this moment, no mention has been made of a parent. Now, although a mother is referred to, it is only in terms of rejection: "[...] half averse/From thine own mother's breast, that knows not thee [...]". This mutual non–recognition between mother and child is ironically contrasted with the mutual recognition between the

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say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful."

child and the speaker (a complete stranger): "With eyes which sought thine eyes thou didst converse". It is at this point, a quarter of the way through the poem, that poetic voice and poetic subject converge. It may not be going too far to claim that there is a sense in which the speaker becomes foster–father to the rejected child. This series of interrelations is paraphrased in the following actantial scheme:

(Thou) → averse from → mother's breast
thine own mother → knows not → thee
That soul-searching vision → fell on me → that sought (thee)

It is, of course, imperative to point out that the poetic voice 'adopts' his subject (just as she offers herself to be 'adopted') as an alter–ego of his own poetic personality, one that will be characterised throughout Arnold's verse by a similar grim stoicism tempered with profound sadness. Thus, the gipsy child seems to feed her gloom into the speaker's eyes in order for him to discover that very quality in himself[12]. Nevertheless, he displays a diehard resistance in relating to the gipsy child's sorrow, for no sooner does he allude to this fantasy role than he simultaneously confesses that the state of gloom transmitted by the child is altogether too profound and saturated by a manifold experience for him to fathom: "Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known [...] Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own [...]". That this resistance is necessary to the fictional development of the poem is evident in the fact that it serves to sustain an important tension between poetic subject and poetic

[12] An observation may also be made that provides illumination from a biographical point of view. For what he (Arnold as opposed to the poetic voice) actually seeks and finds in the confrontation is a special kinship with the gipsy child, for her profound sadness is also a reflection of his own emotional distress at the time, which is accounted for by the fact that the scene for the poem occurred very shortly after the sudden death of his father, Thomas Arnold. Thus, fatherless like the child, Arnold may very well be using her to project a fantasy of his own orphan–like state as a man whilst simultaneously taking on a quasi–parental role as poet as if to expiate for his loss.

voice[13], and at the same time transcend the romantic duality between innocence and experience. That the poetic voice is dramatised as subconsciously seeking the child all the time ("with eyes that sought thine eyes") in order to articulate his own emotional and spiritual state belies the fiction presented on the surface layer that a mere child is capable of opening him up to a world of sorrow and suffering. In this sense, the Wordsworthian paradox of the final line of stanza V: "Glooms that enhance and glorify the earth", and the almost Shelleyan quest for metaphors in the following four stanzas, in which the poetic voice resumes the interrogative tone of the poem's incipit, make sense only if applied figuratively to the poet himself:

> What mood wears like complexion to thy woe?
> His, who in mountain glens, at noon of day,
> Sits rapt, and hears the battle break below? –
> – Ah! thine was not the shelter, but the fray.
>
> Some exile's, mindful how the past was glad?
> Some angel's, in an alien planet born?
> – No exile's dream was ever half so sad,
> Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.
>
> Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
> Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore;
> But in disdainful silence turn away,
> Stand mute, self–centred, stern, and dream no more?
>
> Or do I wait, to hear some gray–haired king
> Unravel all his many–coloured lore;
> Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,
> Mused much, loved life a little, loathed it more? (*P*, pp. 24–5).

[13] Alan Grob, *A Longing Like Despair. Arnold's Poetry of Pessimism*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2002, p. 56: "Even in his earliest poem, then, Arnold is ready to attribute to himself those personal shortcomings that typify the Arnoldian persona: he has lived only on the meaningless surface, never at the meaningful depths; his life has been marked by unsteadiness, swings of mood, the eddyings of an unfixed identity that have so far debarred him from becoming truly self–sufficing like the gipsy child."

The lonely figure of the exile, prophet or king viewing a world of struggle and strife from a perspective of detachment anticipates a recurrent Arnoldian motif. Here the analogies unfold an emotional reaction that progresses from woe and sadness in stanzas XI[14] and XVII to culminate in a stern stoicism that borders on loathing in stanzas XVIII and IX[15]. Yet the repugnance towards human life embodied in the "grey–haired king" is in contrast, not comparable with, the passive absorption of human suffering in the gipsy child. That the poetic voice implicitly refutes the conclusion that full–knowledge of human existence can only lead to rejection of it is evident in the fact that, for the first time in the poem, he focuses attentively on the child's features, as well as simultaneously underlining her transcendental qualities:

> Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,
> Which years, and curious thought and suffering give.
> – Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
> Foreseen thy harvest – yet proceed'st to live (*P*, p.25).

The gipsy child embodies a poignant paradox that is central to Arnold's philosophy: to the knowledge of death ("pale"/"shadow"/"slope") and the vanity of all human hope (as evinced in the ironic rhymes "slope" and "hope"), corresponds the irresistible instinct for life. This condition is neatly weighed on a metrical level in the equal syllabic division of the final line of the stanza:

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[14] See K. Allot and M. Allot, *op cit.*, p. 24 (note) for a comparison between stanza VI and stanzas III and IV of Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*.

[15] Warren D. Anderson, *Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1965, pp. 137–8 suggests that stanza VIII: "reveals a less adequate understanding of Stoicism than the poet had achieved by 1849, when the poem was published [...] While the stoic was by no means incapable of emotional response, his philosophy committed him to absolute belief in a master plan: the 'logos' reconciled to a higher purpose all that seemed dissonant or defective." Paradoxically, yet perhaps not so considering the period in which the poem was composed: "Arnold's phrase "and dream no more" shows a strong element of Romanticism".

X / X / X X X / X /
Foreseen thy harvest – yet proceed'st to live

The composure and dignity in the gipsy child represents a reversal of Wordsworth's child as "father of the man" credo. Her pain is equated with an accumulation of experience denied even to the grey haired scholars (in the first stanza the speaker already asks: "Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes?"). The irony lies in the inability on the part of scholars to learn consciously what the child has 'learnt' unconsciously. Indeed, the idea of saturation of knowledge[16] can actually lead to the threat of oblivion: "I think, thou wilt have fathomed life too far,/Have known too much – or else forgotten all". It is precisely because of his innocence and purity that Wordsworth's child appears, to him, like a 'mighty prophet', in contrast with Arnold's gipsy child whose very presence teases man's capacity for endurance.

Significantly, the guide referred to in the sudden respite in stanza XIII is not qualified in religious terms[17], (apart from in his final poems, Arnold generally avoids explicit references to Christian figures and images). The idea expressed that some kind of faith in a superior being may help to mitigate the pain of human existence, even delude one from pain, is evoked in the image of a triple veil. Its suggestion of mystery and deliberate concealment is suggestive of a psychological bracing against reality and also carries the implication that the gipsy child has no such veil or protection, and, by extension, no such faith:

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil

[16] This became a central preoccupation during the compositional stages of *Empedocles on Etna* (see chapter two).

[17] A. Grob, *op. cit.*, p. 57, over-stresses the mysteriousness of this figure: "the first of those puzzling and pointedly fictive supernatural agents who from time to time will inexplicably intrude themselves into his poems". There seems no real reason to consider the "Guide" to be any more 'inexplicable' than the host of other figures already alluded to, and the allusion to a God-figure seems straightforward enough.

> Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps;
> Hath sown with cloudless passages the tale
> Of grief, and eased us with a thousand sleeps (*P*, p. 26).

This form of self–oblivion is antithetic to the drug–induced state associated with romantic sensibility: "Ah! not the nectarous poppy lovers use")[18] and the robotic passivity that results from the mechanical activity of daily life: "Not daily labour's dull, Lethean spring". The disconcerting tortuousness of the syntax of stanza XIV seems deliberately designed to reflect the unreality of a process that lies behind the consciousness:

> Oblivion in lost angels can infuse
> Of the soiled glory, and the trailing wing (*P*, p. 26).

Against the "glooms that enhance and glorify", "the soiled glory, and trailing wing" (again directly reminiscent of Wordsworth's Ode) speak rather of failure. Thus, any victory is only achieved at a heavy price:

> And though thou glean what strenuous gleaners may,
> In the thronged fields where winning comes by strife;
> And though the just sun gild, as mortals pray,
> Some reaches of thy storm–vexed stream of life (*P*, p. 26).

The adjective "strenuous" is dialogically connected with Keats's lines "[...] whose strenuous tongue/ Can burst joy's grape against his palate fine" from *Ode on Melancholy*[19]. But here the word is stripped of such sensual connotations. If there is any 'joy' to be reaped, it is at the price of almost fruitless

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[18] Leon Gottfried, *Matthew Arnold and the Romantics*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, pp. 116–7, describes this line as confusing and "more appropriate of Arnold's image of Keats than to the subject at hand". This momentary surrender to Keatsian diction is an indication of the complex two–way reaction of attraction and repulsion which Keats continued to exert on Arnold even in his more mature poetry (for eg. *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*).

[19] John Keats, *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Miriam Allot, London, Longman, 1970, p. 541.

hard labour: "Some reaches" only receive the sun's rays on the "storm–vexed stream". Thus, the "thronged fields", (just as "the clustered pier" of stanza II), rather than offering consolation, only serve to increase the sense of loneliness and alienation in the ultimate suggestion that the natural, as well as the human world, are qualified by an anonymity of which every individual form is an inescapable part.

The meditative tone that dictates most of the poem suddenly gives way to a climax that increases in emotional intensity in the final three stanzas. The sense of an irresolvable tension between struggle and suffering on the one hand and hope and salvation on the other is sustained by an equal number of contrasting lexemes:

SALVATION	STRUGGLE
winning	strife
just	storm–vexed
sun	blank
gild	blind
sunshine	cloud
ease	severed
grace	dulls
wisdom	decline
success	chain
majesty	grief

There results a sense of indecision underpinned by the five–fold rhetorical repetition of the adversative "though" which interchanges, negative (–) and positive (+) referents:

And though thou glean [...] +
And though the just sun gild [...] +
Though that blank sunshine [...] – though the cloud [...] +
Though ease dulls grace [...] –

The reference to the "just sun", which later becomes "blank sunshine" that "blinds", is particularly ironic. The subjunctive case is significantly shifted to the present indicative tense when referring to the disappearance of the cloud which initially re-

presented an obstacle between the child and the world, as if to suggest that the experience is now shared (if not assumed) by the poetic voice. Lexical repetition and broken syntax in the final stanza creates a tone nothing short of euphoric:

> Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
> Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain!
> Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
> And wear this majesty of grief again (*P*, p. 26).

The final urge for victory is juxtaposed with a simultaneous sense of death. The explicit encapsulates this paradox particularly in the juxtaposition of "majesty" and "grief" wherein the glory of triumph is marred by the pain of its illusion. Although there is no doubt that the child embodies a dignity and stoicism which the poet himself will adopt as the central tenet of his poetic attitude in his subsequent works, Arnold ultimately leaves the reader with a rather impressionistic conclusion, that begs a less mystical and more philosophical and existential exploration. In *Resignation*, which is a more complex and engaging poem, he definitely rebukes the logocentric epistemology of Wordsworth's legacy with its fusion of perception and object[20].

Resignation is the concluding poem of *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*. One of the striking features of the volume itself lies in its surprising variety of metrical forms and poetic genres: sonnets, iambic pentameter stanzas, blank verse, free imitation of classical metres, dramatic verse, trochaic tetrameters, anapaestic tetrameter quatrains, free–verse, iambic tetrameters etc. This metrical experimentation is symptomatic of an attitude that hovers between a reliance on the solid structures of poetic tradition (which, with a few exceptions of free–verse Arnold never relinquishes) and a desire to transcend them. The poem which best exemplifies this ambivalent metrical approach is the intriguing *A Modern Sappho*, (an exploration of possessiveness and jealousy towards a male friend who shuns the

[20] Cf. David G. Riede, *Matthew Arnold and the Betrayal of Language*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1988, p. 26.

company of the speaker in order to be with his woman) in which a basic meter of anapaestic tetrameter quatrains is rendered in lines ranging from ten to thirteen syllables. In spite of this, Arnold never takes his metrical experimentations to the lengths of Browning or Hopkins. His main preoccupation is not so much to transform traditional poetic forms from a metrical or linguistic point of view, than to champion a programme for moral reform in which poetry functions as a vehicle for expressing *ideas*. Indeed, the opening sonnet on Nature immediately reveals the poet's bias for a philosophical poetry (and, incidentally, provides a declaration of intent that is a foreboding of his own future life). Against the dominant work ethic of Victorian capitalism and industrialism he advocates an ideal of activity as a creative, organic process, of "toil unsever'd from tranquillity" taking place behind the spotlight of social advancement "in silence perfecting" and in mockery of our "vain turmoil" (*P*, p.19). It is the poet's hope that he be able to produce great work from such a quiet source. Ironically, in later years, his gruelling job as inspector of schools, which took him the length and breadth of the country as well as around Europe, would be one of the reasons why he ceased writing poetry altogether. Thus, the first volume already testifies to a simultaneous sense of the importance of activity together with the futility of all human effort. Indeed, the euphoria of Arnold's poetic creativity is under constant threat of annihilation by this sense of dejection and futility, a factor that has induced one critic to describe him as never having been a young poet[21]. The fact, for example, that the overbearingly intoxicated youth in *The Strayed Reveller* is represented in the context of a drama, places him at a distance from the stoicism of the real poet, leaving no doubt that his over-excited, rapturous monologues should be received with a keen dose of irony:

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[21] Stefan Collini, *Arnold*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 34. See also William A. Madden, Matthew Arnold, Bloomington, London, Indiana University Press, 1967, p. 220 who describes Arnold as a young man "preternaturally weary".

Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul! (*P*, p. 67)

Whatever tone qualifies the typically Arnoldian poetic voice it is certainly not this. The very fact that the poem begins and ends with the above speech serves merely to underline a circular structure that allows no room for progression. In spite of its central preoccupation of reconciling the two opposed states of involvement and detachment, the reveller, after drinking Circe's wine, is unable to go beyond the state of an "inexperienced poet who succumbs to the frenzy of images into intoxication and enchantment"[22]. In *The New Sirens*, a complex poem which the poet was even forced to clarify in a note to his most intimate friend Arthur Hugh Clough, he transforms the mythical creatures of Homer's Ulysses into modern romantic counterparts. Although the poetic voice is enchanted by their singing, this is no longer characterised by the primitive passions of yore, but now only leads to an irresolvable oscillation of alternative states of apathy and ecstasy:

Yet, indeed, this flux of guesses –
Mad delight, and frozen calms –
Mirth to–day and vine–bound tresses,

[22] G. Robert Strange, *Matthew Arnold: The Poet as Humanist*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 17. For a rather different interpretation of the poem see Warren D. Anderson, *Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1965, p. 26: "By absenting himself from the revel he elects not to be possessed by the power of Dionysus". See also A. Dwight Culler, *Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1966, p. 114, who sees the states as inherent problems of Arnold's own poetic self: "Arnold was adopting two stances that were, in reality, two acts of pretence – that of the Quietist to solve the problem of human suffering and that of the reveller to solve the problem of personal anguish".

> And to–morrow–folded palms;
> Is this all? this balanced measure?
> Could life run no happier way?
> Joyous at the height of pleasure,
> Passive, at the nadir of dismay? (*P*, p. 56)

The implicit criticism is that the romantic poet stops short at this state of impasse and thus fails to achieve a total comprehensive vision of human experience. It may, of course, be argued that this was never part of the romantic poet's programme in the first place and that the preoccupations that bedevil Arnold inevitably arise from the conditions of his own changing times[23] (not to mention his own personal dilemmas). Yet his need to measure himself against the romantic tradition (particularly Wordsworth) for his own poetic orientation is evident time and time again. In view of the complex interrelation of biographical, sociological and intertextual elements that make up the poem's background[24], *Resignation* can be considered the culminating moment of Arnold's first volume, tackling problems posed in such poems as *The Strayed Reveller* and *The New Sirens* in a more personal and direct way as well as offering philosophical

[23] For the complex topic of Arnold and the Romantics see: Leon Gottfried, *Matthew Arnold and the Romantics*, *cit.*, William A. Jamison, *Arnold and the Romantics*, Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1958, and D. G. James, *Matthew Arnold and the Decline of English Romanticism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961 and Roland A. Duerksen, "Arnold and the Romantics" in *Influence and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. G. Kim Blank and Margot K. Louis, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993, pp. 233–247.

[24] C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *The Poetry of Matthew Arnold. A Commentary*, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 67, point out the inter and extra–textual features which bear testimony to the poem's complex background: "The death of Arnold's father, the religious unrest, the Oxford Movement, and even Carlyle's notion of the importance of 'reducing one's denominator', are all [...] to be borne in mind when considering the spirit in which the poem was composed."

pronouncements that are in direct antithesis to the romantic legacy of Wordsworth[25].

Yet, surprisingly, the poem begins with a reference not to Wordsworth, but to Byron. For its two opening lines are nothing less than a loose quotation from *The Giaour, a Fragment of a Turkish Tale* published in 1813 and Byron's most important early work after *Manfred*. It may be useful to quote the passage concerned:

> 'Tis true, I could not whine nor sigh,
> I knew but to obtain or die.
> I die – but first I have possest,
> And come what may, I *have* been blest[26].

The Christian hero who utters these words is referring to his Turkish lover who has been executed by her own people for infidelity. Arnold adapts Byron's line to set up an uncompromising alternative which lies at the heart of the pilgrim's *raison d'être*: "To die be given us, *or* to attain!/Fierce work it were, to do again [...]" (italics mine). Arnold's early verse owes much to Byron and his subsequent views on the poet are well documented[27]. But in spite of his admiration for the poet's power of evocation, especially of single incidents, he finds him ultimately poor in terms of development of ideas ("The moment he reflects he is a child"[28]) and although he adopts the same thumping ana-

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[25] A. Grob, *op. cit.*, p. 75 describes the poem as "[...] the first and perhaps fullest exposition of metaphysical pessimism in nineteenth-century English poetry."

[26] Lord George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works of Byron*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981, p. 75.

[27] See in particular, *Memorial Verses, Courage, Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* and Arnold's essay *Byron*.

[28] R. H. Super *op. cit.*, vol. IX, p. 227. Arnold quotes from Goethe with whom he is in agreement. In the same essay he refers to Byron's own admission that the *Giaour* 'is but a string of passages' and puts this weakness down to the fact that he (Byron) "had not enough of the artist in him for this, nor enough of self-command" (p. 219). In a letter to Clough (29 September 1848) Arnold calls him: "[...] that furiously flaring bethiefed rushlight, the *vulgar* Byron" (italics mine). Cecil Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 120.

paestic tetrameter metre and rhyming couplets Byron uses for his poem, analogies cease here. Byron's bold romantic adventure is worlds apart from the introverted philosophical self–reflections of Arnold's poem. If any thematic analogies are to be drawn with Byron's poem, these must be in connection with the addressee, the Fausta of the sub–title, that is, his sister Jane[29]. Since the central action of Byron's poem is the avenging of a woman's death, could it be stretching issues too far to suggest that Arnold may be subliminally inscribing a dramatisation of his own brotherly angst towards a sister for whom he had a special fondness[30], particularly with the knowledge that the poem was written "to console her from a broken romance"[31]? Biographical speculations aside, *Resignation* is essentially animated by the qualities of deep thought and ideas (qualities Arnold saw as totally lacking in Byron). To put it more bluntly, he

[29] P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 176: "His sister Jane now becomes his alter ego; she is the half–bored, smiling, undisciplined Faustian activist in his own nature [...] but she is also important as a critic who punctures Arnold's complacent rhetoric and causes him to refine his ideas." As N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 93, points out, "K was an important reader of his poems". The following words from a letter to his sister show how central a figure K was to him in his poems at this stage: "You my darling have been a refreshing thought to me in my driest periods: I may say that you have been one of the most faithful witnesses (almost the only one after Papa) among those with whom I have lived & spoken of the reality & possibility of that abiding inward life which we all desire most of us talk about & few possess [...], C. Y. Lang, *op. cit*, vol. I, p. 171. Similar parallels may be made with Dorothy Wordsworth's influence on her brother.

[30] Such was the intimacy between Arnold and his sister that Honan feels obliged to warn the modern reader from placing the wrong kind of emphasis on their affections. See P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

[31] Ian Hamilton, *A Gift Imprisoned: The Poetic Life of Matthew Arnold*, p. 132. The poem appears to have been written and revised between 1843 and 1847. The critic goes on to ponder: "What Jane made of the poem, as consolation, no one knows". However, he continues: "It is unlikely that she saw it, or any part of it, in 1843. And in any case, she would have seen that Arnold in *Resignation* is not actually addressing *her*. Yet again, though here most markedly, he is straining to construct for himself a poetic that will resist accusations of escapist self–absorption." p. 89.

borrows Byron's voice in order to sing a very different kind of song.

To pursue a more fertile terrain, parallels between *Resignation* and one of Arnold's favourite Wordsworth poems, *Tintern Abbey* are naturally inevitable[32]. Both poems describe a revisited landscape and refer to two journeys which have taken place in different moments in time (Wordsworth's after five years, Arnold's after ten), both contain a brother and sister as central protagonists as well as exploring the poet's role in and perception of the world. Each also confronts the feeling of dejection and recognises a sadness in the external universe whether it be: "the still sad music of humanity" (Wordsworth), or a bleaker "mundane spectacle" (Arnold). Yet, for all the similarities that can be gauged from the two poems, there are essential differences. First, Arnold shares none of Wordsworth's sense of the healing power of the natural world. Indeed, his poem seeks a strange detachment from the kind of human love and charity advocated by the former. Second, the landscape of *Resignation*, which (in contrast with Wordsworth) is, at first, topographically delineated, marked by physical motion as well as densely populated (with its pilgrims, armies, walking parties and gypsies), is eventually transformed into an frighteningly gloomy backdrop to pessimistic ruminations on the plight of humanity. Third, there lies a difference in the roles assigned to the sisters in each poem; in *Resignation* the sister is assigned a relatively active role, whereas in *Tintern Abbey*, the sister's role is essentially passive. Not only, but Arnold's Fausta is a teasingly polemical presence, inspiring the speaker further and deeper into his grave metaphysical reflections. Fourth, whereas the poetic voice in Wordsworth's poem pitches his hopes on an uncertain 'belief' Arnold's speaker resigns himself to an ultimate knowledge that is certainly less mystical and not entirely independent of pre-established philosophical doctrine. Finally, in contrast with

[32] See L. Gottfried, *op. cit.*, pp. 219–223, the first modern Arnold critic to highlight the parallels between the two poems. See also M. G. Sundell "*Tintern Abbey* and *Resignation*", *Victorian Poetry*, 5 (1967), pp. 255–64.

self–centredness of the poetic voice in *Tintern Abbey*, there seems a definite reluctance on the part of the speaker in *Resignation* to identity himself as *the* poet of the poem. Arnold continually objectifies the poetic figure by qualifying it through the definite article thereby creating an uneasy tension, since although one understands it to refer to him, grammatically speaking it does not. Consequently, there is no merging of the individual soul into the realms of his own sensations and emotions – no dramatic subjective intensity, rather there prevails a brooding melancholy underscored by an ascetic objectivity[33].

Resignation is divided into ten sections[34]: the first, with its historical perspective and wide canvass, embracing worlds from all four points of the compass, describes pilgrims and armies of men at the point of reaching their aimed destination: the second section shifts to the present moment of the poem and describes, by contrast, the milder natures of men who have freed themselves from such religious or worldly passions. Section three describes the walk the protagonists of the poem took ten years previously whilst the following section describes the present walk of the poem: section five considers the plight of the gipsies and contrasts them to that of the poet: sections six and seven deal with the nature of the poetic sensibility whilst sections eight to ten offer the poet's philosophical/metaphysical

[33] Another difference that cannot go unnoticed concerns the formal aspects of the poems: Wordsworth's unrhymed iambic pentameters suggest a co–presence of freedom of expression and relative restriction whereas Arnold's rhyming iambic tetrameters reinforce the severity of his uncompromising, rational vision. See R. H. Super, *The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, p. 13, whose appreciation of the structural features of the poem is rather a question of its naturalness: "*Resignation*, in particular, shows the mastery of structure that Arnold learned from the 'conversational poems' of Wordsworth and Coleridge, a structure he used again in some of the best poems of his maturity."

[34] I am, of course, following Arnold's textual divisions here. See Alan Roper, *Arnold's Poetic Landscapes*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 132, who offers a more general tripartite division in which a static central section is flanked by an initial section of physical movement and a closing section of rhetorical movement.

reflections and conclusions. This outline alone suggests the distance Arnold's poetic maturity has travelled in terms of compositional organisation since *To a Gipsy Child by the Sea–Shore*. A good deal more thought lies behind its structure together with a profundity of reflection in tranquillity that owes much to Wordsworth[35] that make the poem the first major example of Arnold's skill in orchestrating a variety of powerful thoughts and moods.

The title defines a philosophical attitude that, by this stage, has become integral to Arnold's poetic world–view. Against the romantic's assertion of the individual self and its striving for self–realisation is posited the more gentle and passive attitude of quietism which leads to disinterestedness and freedom from desires. This is also a central teaching of the Hindu text *The Bhagavad Gita* which, with its emphasis on work without reward and tranquil wisdom, exerted a profound influence on the poet's thought at this stage of his development. The story behind the *Bhagavad Gita* is that of the warrior, Arjuna, and his reluctance to go into battle against an army comprised of people he esteems and reveres and his friend Krishna's spiritual justifications to persuade him to the contrary, (*Resignation* itself begins with references to Medieval Crusaders, Goths and Huns). However, In spite of its apparent condoning of war, *The Bhagavad Gita* is, in the words of one editor, "the great spiritual message of the human soul"[36]. Its central warning contains the fundamental precepts of Arnold's own ideals:

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[35] Murray's observation of the realistic detail of Arnold's description of the landscape fails to take in the essential differences in terms of topographical representation between the two poems, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

[36] *The Bhagavad Gita*, Translated from the Sanskrit by Juan Mascaró with an introduction by Simon Bodbeck, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2003, (1962), p. xlviii. See also C. Y. Lang, *op. cit*, vol. I, p. 89: "The Indiands distinguish between meditation or absorption – and knowledge: and between abandoning practice, & abandoning the fruits of action & all respect thereto. This last is a supreme step, & dilated on throughout the poem" (letter to Clough dated March 4 1848).

> 62 When a man dwells on the pleasures of sense, attraction for them arises in him. From attraction arises desire, the lust of possession and this leads to passion, to anger.
>
> 63 From passion comes confusion of mind, then loss of remembrance, the forgetting of duty. From this loss comes the ruin of reason, and the ruin of reason leads man to destruction.
>
> 64 But the soul that moves in the world of the senses and yet keeps the senses in harmony, free from attraction and aversion, finds rest in quietness[37].

When man surrenders his desires he becomes at one with God and, consequently, is at liberty to work in terms of the spirit. As propounded in the *Sonnet* to nature: "In liberty from the bonds of attachment, do thou thy work to be done: for the man whose work is pure attains indeed the Supreme".[38] Yet, at the same time, Arnold reveals an imperviousness towards any sense of ultimate joy which may derive from the serene detachment advocated in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The central preoccupation of the poem is not religious but metaphysical and philosophical.

Resignation may be seen to have three beginnings – almost as if the poet is seeking each time to set the right tone and perspective with which to confront his theme –. The opening lines unfold the historical vision of a universal human drama represented by religious pilgrims tribes and warriors:

> So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, prayed
> At burning noon; so warriors said,
> Scarfed with the cross, who watched the miles
> Of dust which wreathed their struggling files
> Down Lydian mountains; so when the snows
> Round Alpine summits, eddying rose,
> The Goth, bound Rome–wards; so the Hun,
> Crouched on his saddle, while the sun
> Went lurid down o'er flooded plains
> Through which the groaning Danube strains
> To the drear Euxine; so pray all,

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Whom labours, self–ordained, enthral [...] (*P*, p. 88).

This first 'beginning' is much more than a merely "boyish opening" as has been suggested[39]. Its circular pattern is specially designed to evoke a universal image depicting Christians, Muslims and Pagans equally co–involved in a gruelling quest, such that "to do again [...] were pain". Whether the goal be spiritual redemption or territorial occupation the Activist's plight is characterised by a hardship and endurance that knows no going back. In contrast, the second 'beginning' introduces the gentler nature of the Quietist, with a sudden shift into the present tense:

> But milder natures, and more free –
> Whom an unblamed serenity
> Hath freed from passions, and the state
> Of struggle these necessitate;
> Whom schooling of the stubborn mind
> Hath made, or birth hath found, resigned [...] (*P*, p. 89).

The teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* are reflected in the Hindu detachment which, differently to the first incipit, is described in a–historical terms, the implication being that the Quietist is free not only from passions but also from the burden of historicity: "these mourn not, that their goings pay/Obedience to the passing day [...]". By extension, the dividing line is ultimately that of the Victorian's sense of modern man as cut off from the past, (a problematic that was to become a major tenet of modernist works such as *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*). This section is particularly convoluted from a syntactic point of view. While the main subject is qualified by a verb (the negatively marked "mourn not") that is delayed for no less than six lines, the following four lines are occupied by two subordinate clauses in which the theme word "resigned" is placed in a curiously non–emphatic end–position and the second main clause ("These claim not [...]") is followed by at least four subordinate clauses.

[39] P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

This syntactic arrangement, together with the abstract nature of the lexical choices ("unblamed serenity [...] pay/obedience to the passing day [...] every laughing hour [...] handmaid to their striding power" etc) is not so much a question of ambiguity or non–clarity of thought. The four–fold repetition of the negative particle "not" reiterates plainly enough what is being refuted (passions, ambitions, the presumptions of the individual ego). Arnold is deliberately employing a form that is appropriate to the tactful, introverted nature of the speaker. In contrast to the regular marching rhythm of the first section which underlines the rigorous determination of the Activist, there is now a more subtle distribution of stressed and unstressed syllables that simultaneously contribute to the mildness of expression and quiet confidence of tone. There may also be the added humour that the poet is trying to persuade his sister and can only do so in a roundabout way! The last two lines: "These, Fausta, ask not this; nor thou,/Time's chafing prisoner, ask it now" convey an appropriate hesitancy through its two parenthetic clauses. Although Fausta herself is presented as the antagonistic voice in the poem she also embodies a predicament: as "time's chafing prisoner" she is at once historically dependant, like the Activists of the opening section, as well as rebellious towards the limitations imposed on her by her own times.

The third and final 'beginning' compares the two walks that concern the brother and sister, first as members of their now dead father's "motley bands" and second as the sole survivors of that company ten years later. These two walks are chiasmatically framed by the point of departure: "We left, just ten years since [...] we left to–day [...]". It is essential for the underlying dialogic nature of the text that the former walk be recalled not by the poetic voice, but Fausta herself: "We left, just ten years since, <u>you say</u>/That wayside inn we left today" (my underlining), in such a way, that the former is free to respond unpretentiously, though with a vividly imaginative recreation of that moment in the present indicative tense, (as opposed to the past tense used by his sister):

Our jovial host, as forth we fare,
Shouts greeting from an easy chair.
High on a bank our leader stands,
Reviews and ranks his motley bands,
Makes clear our goal to every eye –
The valley's western boundary [...] (underlinings mine)
(*P*, pp. 90–1).

The former walk is clearly a parody of the dreary, exhausting journeys described in the opening of the poem[40] and its energy, joviality and positiveness (in contrast with the "miles of dust", "alpine summits" and "flooded plains") lead to an image of spiritual renewal: "We bathed our hands with speechless glee/That night, in the wide–glimmering sea". From the beginning, the goal of the journey is clearly circumscribed ("The valley's western boundary") and its various landmarks passed with lightness and ease in a relentlessly linear progression:

A gate swings to! our tide hath flowed
Already from the silent road.
The valley–pastures, one by one,
Are threaded, quiet in the sun;
And now beyond the rude stone bridge
Slopes gracious up the western ridge.
Its woody border and the last
Of its dark upland farms is past –
Cool farms, with open–lying stores,
Under their burnished sycamores;
All past! and through the trees we glide,
Emerging on the green hill side (*P*, p. 91).

The contrast with section I of the poem is underlined in a series of deliberate echoes:

[...] who watched the miles
Of dust that wreathed their struggling files (I)

[40] I find myself in disagreement with Grob who sees the summons to action on the part of the pilgrims, Goths and Huns as a direct parallel with that of Arnold's father. See A. Grob, *op cit.*, p. 76.

Reviews and ranks our motley bands (II)

[...] the Hun,
Crouched on his saddle (I)
High on a bank our leader stands (II)

A goal, which, gained, may give repose, (I)
Makes clear our goal to every eye (II)

The struggling files (I)
Our wavering, many-coloured line (II)

At burning noon (I)
Through the deep noontide heats we fare (II)

The joviality of the former walk is characterised by the unqualified confidence the members of the party bestow upon their leader. There is no questioning of any hesitation in confronting: "Those upper regions we must tread" and even the walkers' "serious air" seems assumed as a counterfeit to their cheerful acceptance of their task. This is a far cry from Wordsworth's evocation in *Tintern Abbey* in which there is not so much a concern in delineating external features of the landscape as in exploring their beneficial effects on the poet's psyche. Thus, the deictics in Arnold's landscape description are unambiguous and clearly defined (he gives a vivid and 'faithful' representation in terms of a referential reality), whereas in Wordsworth they are essentially self-referential:

Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky
[...]
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,

> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
> And passing even into my purer mind,
> With tranquil restoration [...][41].

Wordsworth's landscape works on the very blood and bones of the poet. His "serene and blessed mood" in which "we become a living soul" and "see into the life of things" is a natural result of the communion between man and nature, or, rather, of the simultaneous process of perception and creation from which the poet extracts a moral lesson that becomes his spiritual sustenance. No such attitude enters Arnold's poem in which the landscape merely serves to corroborate his pessimistic world-view.

The fourth section also enumerates various landmarks to convey a sense of emptiness and apathy as the poet and his sister retrace the same path alone together: "Ghosts of that boisterous company". The resulting monotony is appropriately conveyed by the three–times repetition of the verb "tread" in the first three lines. This section is particularly replete with deictics (underlined):

> Here, where the brook shines, near its head,
> In its clear, shallow, turf–fringed bed;
> Here whence the eye first sees, far down,
> Capped with faint smoke, the noisy town;
> Here sit we, and again unroll,
> Though slowly, the familiar whole.
> The solemn wastes of heathy hill
> Sleep in the July sunshine still;
> The self–same shadows now, as then,
> Play through this grassy upland glen;
> The loose dark stones on the green way
> Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay:
> On this mild bank above the stream,
> (you crush them!) the blue gentians gleam.
> Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,
> The sailing foam, the shining pool!
> These are not changed; and we, you say,
> Are scarce more changed, in truth, than they (*P*, p. 92).

[41] E. De Selincourt and H. Darbishire, (eds.), *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 259–60.

The contrast between the two walks could not be more clearly marked. Just as the former is characterised by liveliness and joviality, the latter is marked by brooding melancholy and stasis. The predominance of insubstantial elements ("shallow", "faint smoke", "solemn wastes", "shadows", "loose–dark stones", "mild bank", "sailing foam") and passive verbs ("sit", "sleep", "lie" as well as verbs of perception) contribute to evoke a physical and spiritual apathy. The lifeless, almost dreamy atmosphere of the present walk is very effectively rendered in the long vowels and alliterating laterals and nasals in: "[...] and again unroll,/Though slowly, the familiar whole [...]". The most active verb, "crush", alludes to Fausta as a spoiler or destroyer of the landscape and this brash intrusion on her part in the poetic speaker's discourse anticipates her callous observation that they have hardly altered any more than the landscape. Her refusal (or naïve inability) to accept change reflects a youthful disregard for the passing of time which induces the older poetic speaker into imparting an impersonal moral lesson around the simple and unconscious gypsy–folk.

The gypsies described in this section are not to be confused with the gipsy child of *To a Gipsy Child by the Sea–Shore*, who is not represented in terms of her nomadic existence. Also, whereas her profound gloom bespeaks a foreknowledge of man's suffering, the gypsies in *Resignation*, on the contrary, represent the primeval condition of man's unconsciousness: "Chance guides the migratory race [...]". As aimless wanderers of a mean, purposeless existence made up of "dingy tents, dark knots and wild flame" they serve as a contrast to the travellers of the previous journeys in the poem[42]. The poet speculates on the gypsies similar re–encounter with a former scene, but only concludes with their inability to interpret the signs before them

[42] See A. D. Culler, *op. cit.*, p. 277, who sees a tripartite division between the majority of men who eddy about (like the gypsies), the few who try to achieve a goal (like the questers at the beginning) and the poet set in calm detachment from everything.

which would lead to a more profound awareness of their condition:

> Signs are not wanting, which might raise
> The ghosts in them of former days –
> Signs are not wanting, if they would;
> Suggestions to disquietude (*P*, p. 93).

The gypsies in the central section of *Resignation* provoke a series of sombre reflections upon man's destiny:

> For them, for all, Time's busy touch,
> While it mends little, troubles much.
> Their joints grow stiffer – but the year
> Runs his old round of dubious cheer;
> Chilly they grow – yet winds in March,
> Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch;
> They must live still – and yet, God knows,
> Crowded and keen the country grows;
> It seems as if, in their decay,
> The law grew stronger every day (*P*, pp. 93–4).

As a description of the effects of the passing of time, the passage above has a poignancy analogous to Gustav Holst's *Saturn*. The cruelty of the alternation between weakening restoration and increasing deterioration is aptly rendered in: "Time's busy touch/While it mends little, troubles much". The fact that most of the lines are end–stopped further reinforces the sense of limitation and rigidity that comes with old age. The only enjambment that occurs significantly suggests the rapid passing of time and culminates in the ominous alliteration in "dubious cheer/Chilly". But this is by no means the only ambiguity: "runs/his old round" indicates movement without progression: "Chilly they grow" also suggests a paradoxically static development. This simultaneous counteraction between contraction and stasis is subtly conveyed in the quasi–anagrammatic link between "sharp" and "parch" in the following line. The final cruel paradox lays to rest any doubts that Arnold may intend to retain some fragments of Wordsworth's positive response to the natu-

ral world. For him nature is, if anything, indifferent or hostile to humanity and any signs of its regeneration ("Crowded and keen the country grows") merely serve as a reminder of individual mortality:

> But no! – they rubbed through yesterday
> In their hereditary way,
> And they will rub through, if they can,
> To–morrow on the self-same plan,
> Till death arrive to supersede,
> For them, vicissitude and need (*P*, p. 94).

The 'blind' hereditary laws of the gypsies ironically reflect the same laws that govern the natural world. Their nomadic state is, in actual fact, a form of stasis in which the only real prospect is a "self–same plan". Their unawareness of mortality (for the speaker) is rendered in the penultimate line in which death acts as the main active subject of which the gypsies are passive agents. On the other hand, the harshness of the sibilants in "supersede" and "vicissitude" may very well betray a quasi–sadistic glee in the speaker's attempt to shock his sister into acknowledging the ultimate reality of death. This poetic 'pose', of course, bears witness to the psychological complexity in the relationship between brother and sister that lies behind its dialogical representation in the poem.

From the questers of section I to the gypsies of section V, the speaker now turns to the figure of the poet himself. Significantly, it is here (though not only) that Arnold reserves his most pointed references to Wordsworth:

> The poet, to whose mighty heart
> Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
> Subdues that energy to scan
> Not his own course, but that of man (*P*, p. 94).

The expression "mighty heart" directly refers to the concluding line of the sonnet *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge* ("And all that mighty heart is lying still"), but Arnold converts

Wordsworth's image of a city at sleep before dawn (with the implication of its bond of sympathy[43]) into an emblem of the poetic self capable of scrutinising the joys and sorrows of humanity rather than actively partaking in them[44]. Although the poetic figures in both poems are represented as detached from humankind, they differ in that Wordsworth exploits a vertical[45] plane in order to reassert those values that have been a part of his natural growth on a spiritually heightened level. Arnold, on the other hand, is concerned with epistemological issues that bypass such spiritual transcendentalism. His ideal poet is isolated in *kind* from the rest of humanity because of his deeper knowledge and awareness:

> Though he move mountains, though his day
> Be passed on the proud heights of sway,
> Though he hath loosed a thousand chains,

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[43] Francesco Marroni, "Quel cuore possente": La Città nella letteratura inglese dell'ottocento" (Prolusione), *Atti dell'Inaugurazione Anno Accademico 1991/92, Chieti, Università degli Studi "Gabriele d'Annunzio"*, 1992, p. 51, perceptively notes the potentially ambivalent effect of Wordsworth's metaphor. On the one hand, the majestic sight of London in *Upon Westminster Bridge* is, in reality, a temporary beauty that ultimately does not belong to it. Yet, on the other: "[...] è proprio quel cuore possente dell'ultimo verso [...] a dare la misura del fascino esercitato dalla scena sull'io poetico". ("[...] it is precisely that mighty heart of the last line that measures the extent to which the scene exerts a fascination on the poetic-voice", my translation). In the light of this paradox, there seems an added poignancy in Arnold's use of the metaphor.

[44] Another intertextual element is the verb "subdue", which Wordsworth uses in *Tintern Abbey*: and to which Arnold gives a quite different nuance of significance in his qualification of the philosophical attitude of the ideal poet himself: "For I have learned/To look on nature, not as in the hour/ Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes/ The still, sad music of humanity,/ Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power/ To chasten and *subdue*" (italics mine). E. De Selincourt and H. Darbishire, (eds.), *op. cit.*, vol. II, p.261.

[45] John R. Reed, "Romantic to Victorian Iconography of Nature" in *Influence and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. G. Kim Blank and Margot K. Louis, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993, p. 23: "The high place, whether above Tintern Abbey, on Snowdon or in the Alps, is the suitable vantage point for the Romantic imagination to reassess itself". As shall be seen, Arnold exploits this vantage point to very different ends.

> Though he hath borne immortal pains,
> Action and suffering though he know –
> He hath not lived, if he lives so.
> He sees, in some great–historied land,
> A ruler of the people stand,
> Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
> Roll through the heaving multitude;
> Exalts: yet for no moment's space
> Envies the all–regarded place.
> Beautiful eyes meet his – and he
> Bears to admire uncravingly;
> They pass – he, mingled in the crowd,
> Is in their far–off triumphs proud (*P*, pp. 94–5).

The image of Shelley's Promethean figure is the first in a series of three stages of the poet as represented by Arnold here: mythical, historical and tragic. The transition is characterised by a shift from emotional to cognitive to visual perception: "Though he hath borne immortal pains [...] Action and suffering though he know [...] He sees [...]". It is no accident that there are nine occurrences of verbs associated with sight to underline the final transformational stage of the poet who even when: "From some high station he looks down [...] does not say *I am alone*", for he essentially inhabits the same horizontal plane as his fellow men of whose joys, passions and pain he remains a passive witness: "Beautiful eyes meet his [...] he mingled with the crowd [...] He leans upon a gate and sees [...] Leaned on his gate he gazes [...] Before him he sees life unroll". Arnold's transition from a mythical perspective to one that is essentially anti–mythical, even anti–lyrical, is corroborated by an increasingly clichéd landscape, one not void of Wordsworthian echoes:

> He sees the gentle stir of birth
> When morning purifies the earth;
> He leans upon a gate and sees
> The pastures, and the quiet trees.
> Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,
> Folds the still valley almost round;
> The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,

Is answered from the depth of dawn;
In the hedge straggling to the stream,
Pale, dew–drenched, half–shut roses gleam;
But, where the farther side slopes down,
He sees the drowsy new–waked clown
In his white quaint–embroidered frock
Make, whistling, tow'rd his mist–wreathed flock –
Slowly, behind the heavy tread,
The wet, flowered grass heaves up its head (*P*, pp. 95–6).

Against a background of Wordsworthian exuberance where natural elements rejoice and delight etc., Arnold employs a deflated language in which any animation in the natural world is deliberately muted: "gentle stir [...] quiet trees [...] low woody hills [...] the hedge straggling to the stream [...] Pale [...] half-shut roses [...] drowsy new waked clown [...] slowly, behind the heavy tread". This de–energised landscape is corroborated by the emptiness of the poetic diction and the droning regularity of the trochaic tetrameters. The melodramatic expression "tears/Are in his eyes, and in his ears/The murmur of a thousand years" is also not uttered without self–conscious irony. Yet, through this poetry of the mundane, in which every natural feature is void of individuality, the following ten lines emerge all the more majestically in spite of their bleakness:

Before him he sees life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole –
That general life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;
That life, whose dumb wish is not missed
If birth proceeds, if things subsist;
The life of plants, and stones, and rain,
The life he craves – if not in vain
Fate gave, what chance shall not control,
His sad lucidity of soul (*P*, pp. 96–7).

In polemical response to Wordsworth's faith in a "spirit that rolls through all things", is posited the sombre, anti–lyrical unrolling of a "general life" that, in the neutrality of its placidity,

relentlessly supersedes individual mortality[46]. Similarly to the sense of anonymity in *To a Gipsy Child By the Sea–Shore*, the individual is again seen as a helpless entity within an impersonal mass force (a sense further underlined towards the end of the poem in the phrase: "Crowd as we will its neutral space"). As a result, the simple enumeration of basic natural elements such as plants, stones and rain[47], has a very different pathos to Wordsworth's precisely because of the refusal to recognise a transcendental power behind the impersonality of these life forms. In his epistemological 'retort' to Wordsworth's metaphysical certainty, Arnold's ideal poet is not only impervious to joy but displays no inclination whatsoever to "see into the life of things". The 'secret' of life, for him, lies in the desire for peace, for the end of struggle and escape from self–absorption. The metrical contraction in the final line from trochaic tetrameter to trochaic trimeter appropriately underscores the ideal poet's resignation to this existentially sober yet sombre view.

Although Fausta appears as polemical alter–ego to the poet, up until this moment her words are only reported in indirect discourse. In this passage, however, they are articulated through the speaker's intuition and speculation. The dynamics of the brother–sister relationship that constitutes the dialogic basis of the poem reach a critical point here, and from one perspective, expose the acute self–consciousness of the speaker:

> You listen – but that wandering smile,

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[46] See also other recurrences of the verb in the poem; lines 9–10 section IV: "Here sit we, and again unroll,/Though slowly, the familiar whole [...]", lines 13–14 section VI: "Sees his strong thought in fiery flood/Roll through the heaving multitude [...]", in which the concept of circularity is contrasted with the tortuous linear progression of the pilgrims and warriors of the first section and the corresponding lexical choices which reinforce this linearity ("struggling files", "thread back", "past straits, and currents" etc.).

[47] These descriptive elements interestingly recall the final line of Wordsworth's "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal", which intrinsically connects the dead woman with the natural world: "Rolled round in Earth's diurnal course,/With rocks, and stones, and trees". E. De Selincourt and H. Darbishire, (eds.), *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 216.

Fausta, betrays you cold the while!
Your eyes pursue the bells of foam
Washed, eddying, from this bank, their home.
Those Gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,
Are less, the poet more than man.
They feel not, though they move and see;
Deeper the Poet feels; but he
Breathes, when he will, immortal air,
Where Orpheus and where Homer are.
In the day's life, whose iron round
Hems us all in, he is not bound;
He escapes thence, but we abide –
Not deep the Poet sees, but wide (*P*, p. 97).

The coldness to which the brother is so sensitive 'betrays' an impasse in their relationship. The tension in his sister's silence seems to bespeak past conflicts which she is reluctant to rekindle. Thus, although her far–away gaze at the rocking waves symbolically anticipates her idea of the poet's real dimension (escape from mortality) it may also be seen as an intention to avoid manifesting her disagreement. It is interesting to note that the first part of her 'retaliation' (as voiced by the speaker) actually corroborates his binary opposition between gypsies and poet. Her apparent objection that the poet sees "not deep", is also never explicitly referred to by the speaker either. Her main contention leads back full circle to those influences Arnold himself is not only resisting but positively refuting; the poet as romantic escapist: "[...] but he/Breathes, when he will, immortal air". Fausta's bitter awareness of her condition as "time's chaffing prisoner" in which she is "iron bound" to the "day's life" incites one of the most beautiful, inspirational sections in the poem:

The world in which we live and move
Outlasts aversion, outlasts love,
Outlasts each effort, interest, hope,
Remorse, grief, joy; – and were the scope
Of these affections wider made,
Man still would see, and see dismayed,
Beyond his passion's widest range,

Far regions of eternal change (*P*, pp. 97–8).

Against Fausta's view of man as an "iron bound" prisoner on the one hand, and the poet as a vast seer on the other, the speaker envisages a grim Darwinian perspective in which the immensity of eternity, far from offering an, albeit undefined, spiritual consolation, is a depressing reminder of the absolute futility of human effort which is indiscriminately and indifferently nullified by the very "world in which we live". This world "outlasts" not only every human endeavour ("Beyond his passions widest range"), but even death itself. Interestingly, the section is equally divided into two octets, with the negation "nay", which opens the second part, reinforcing the negative view of the first:

> Nay, and since death, which wipes out man,
> Finds him with many an unsolved plan,
> With much unknown, and much untried,
> Wonder not dead, and thirst not dried,
> Still gazing on the ever full
> Eternal mundane spectacle –
> This world in which we draw our breath,
> In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death (*P*, p. 98).

These frightening lines show the depth to which Arnold has plunged in his metaphysical pessimism since *To a Gipsy Child By the Sea–Shore* and anticipate the metaphysical preoccupations that lie at the heart of *Empedocles on Etna*. The terrifying spatial–temporal reference: "Far regions of eternal change" finds a further qualification in the depressing phrase "the ever full/Eternal mundane spectacle" in which the idea of immensity is coupled with banality and stasis.

However, in section IX, the limitations of man's scope are eventually resolved by the perspective of the poet–figure. In his following retort to Fausta, it becomes increasingly apparent that Arnold's fictional representation of his sister serves as a threshing–floor upon which he can thrash out his self–conflicting ideas:

> Blame thou not, therefore, him, who dares
> Judge vain beforehand human cares;
> Whose natural insight can discern
> What through experience others learn;
> Who needs not love and power, to know
> Love transient, power an unreal show;
> Who treads at ease life's uncheered ways –
> Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise! (*P*, p 98)

The sudden imperative tone which takes over in the poem is intensified by the reinstatement of the initially tighter rhythm, verbal repetition and parallel syntactic constructions. The initial trochee stress on: "Blame" is reinforced by priority stresses on the key functional words "not", "him", "dares" and "vain", as if to spell out a message which grows in confidence as the discourse progresses: the poet intuitively discerns the vanity of human cares which his fellow beings only learn after the pain of experience. This natural, in–born 'knowledge' is not only distinguished from experience, but, as the anti–euphoric expression "uncheer'd ways" implies, is also in deliberate contraposition to the romantic poet's celebration of the imagination. Arnold's metaphorical transformation from gypsy child to detached poet is now complete. Nevertheless, just as the speaker in *To a Gipsy Child By the Sea–Shore* rejects the self–association with the child implied in the poem, the speaker of *Resignation* likewise steps back from acknowledging any final association between himself and his ideal poet to take his stand beside his sister: "And though Fate grudge to thee and me/The Poet's rapt security [...]", where the two interesting verb choices of "grudge" and "rapt" point to double meanings (grudge = a persistent feeling of resentment recalls 'begrudge' meaning to envy and rapt = absorbed or engrossed is simultaneously undermined by the noun 'rapture', which is precisely what the poet is denied). Arnold's rhetoric once again hovers between assertion and persuasion underlining the deliberate hesitancy used by the speaker to convince his interlocutor:

> Rather thyself for some aim pray
> Nobler than this, to fill the day;
> Rather that heart, which burns in thee,
> Ask, not to amuse, but to set free;
> Be passionate hopes not ill resigned
> For quiet, and a fearless mind.
> [...]
> Yet they, believe me, who await
> No gifts from chance, have conquered fate.
> They, winning room to see and hear,
> And to men's business not too near,
> Through clouds of individual strife
> Draw homewards to the general life.
> Like leaves by suns not yet uncurled;
> To the wise, foolish; to the world,
> Weak; yet not weak, I might reply,
> Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,
> To whom each moment in its race,
> Crowd as we will its neutral space,
> Is but a quiet watershed
> Whence, equally, the seas of life and death are fed
> (*P*, pp. 98–9).

Emphatic reversals ("Rather thyself [...] rather that heart [...] ask not [...]") ellipsis ("To the wise foolish [...] Yet not weak") and lexical repetition (particularly of the negative adverb "not") run counter to the convoluted phrasing of Arnold's syntax and his typical litotes: "Be passionate hopes not ill resigned [...] And to men's business not too near", to effectively convey the speaker's crafted verbal struggle. But the rejection of Western (romantic) individualism for Oriental detachment and objectivity rendered in the metonym and simile of: "Through clouds of individual strife/Draw homewards to the general life/Like leaves by suns not yet uncurled", clearly indicates a degree of optimism until now absent in the poem. The alexandrine deviation in the two extra feet of the final line further articulates, on a metrical level, this endorsement of the quality of neutrality with its even 4x4x4 syllabic division between metrical and syntactic unit: "Whence equally the seas of life and death are fed". Yet, for all the rhetoric of persuasion in the speaker's plea that the young Fausta placate her passions and "pray For quiet and a

fearless mind", the binary oppositions between the agitations of passion and the sereneness of detachment are, of course, the contradictory elements of Arnold's own tormented self which he seeks to reconcile through an uncompromising philosophical and existential position that he can only present as a challenging ideal.

In the final section of the poem, which contains some of Arnold's most famous lines, the speaker, rather than seeking to ram home his dismal message, elaborates a tentative, open–ended conclusion:

> Enough, we live! – and if a life,
> With large results so little rife,
> Though bearable, seems hardly worth
> This pomp of words, this pain of birth;
> Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
> The solemn hills around us spread,
> The stream which falls incessantly,
> The strange–scrawled rocks, the lonely sky,
> If I might lend their life a voice,
> Seem to bear rather than rejoice (*P*, pp. 99–100).

The sudden imperative adverb "enough" (whose final aspirate has all the connotations of a sigh of resignation) followed by the matter–of–fact statement "we live", brings to a halt the speaker's sombre ruminations over human destiny. Without the comma separating the three words, the phrase would become elliptic and carry a slightly different shade of meaning (i.e. "it's enough that we live"), though this sense of ironic gratitude is also contained in the neutral statement "we live". It is a poignant moment in which the speaker's surrender (he has exhausted his subject and can go no further) leads to a deliberate underestimation of man's pain and suffering. Furthermore, his resignation threatens to become a mere form of self–deprecation. Thus, before it is even complete, "this pomp of words" that is the poem, is already recognised as being too grandiose and pretentious beside the futility and vanity of human life ("with large results so little rife"). Similarly, the phonetic connection be-

tween "pain" and "pomp" is as ironic as it is affecting, for it gives the impression that the speaker sets even less store in life than he does in his own 'empty' poetry. No longer confident in the joyful creation of his own means, the poet can only conclude with an acute awareness of the impotency of language which is seen as totally inadequate to illuminate or save him from his own melancholy and suffering. Nature, by parallel, is either silent ("the mute turf we tread") or its language is undecipherable ("strange–scrawled rocks"). The "quiet sky" of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, which bespeaks a universe characterised by harmoniousness and meekness, becomes a "lonely sky" in *Resignation* underlining the ultimate isolation of humanity from the natural world. At the same time, the natural elements are almost presented as an intrinsic expression of the speaker's own pessimistic solipsism: "If I might lend their life a voice". If the priority stress here be given to *I* (as opposed to some other poet) the poem acquires all the force of an act of philosophical vengeance. Given his chance to offer his own interpretation of the natural world, the speaker finds the same resignation and lack of joy in the natural world as he finds in himself. The final seven lines leave the sense of this negativity fundamentally open–ended and, rather than a conclusion, offer an image menacing in its vagueness:

> And even could the intemperate prayer
> Man iterates, while these forebear,
> For movement, for an ampler sphere,
> Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear;
> Not milder is the general lot
> Because our spirits have forgot,
> In action's dizzying eddy whirled,
> The something that infects the world (*P*, p. 100).

The anaphoric sequencing of the first part of this section seems designed to anticipate a dramatic climax which is, however, negated by the heavy subordination of the second part. Against man's spiritual urge for an "ampler sphere", nature itself "forebears" (i.e. resists). The delay in syntax suggests the inefficacy

of man's "intemperate prayer" which only (eventually) reaches the "impenetrable ear" of Fate (Arnold's use of negatives are again significant). But the final four lines exploit the double pattern of poetic line and syntactic unit in such a way that the decrease in tension from a syntactic point of view is paralleled by an increase in lexical intensity. A rearrangement of the linear semantic sequence shows the first two lines as being the first and second part of the main clause respectively, and, conversely, the third and fourth the second and first part of a subordinate clause. Thus, to re-phrase:

275 The general lot is not milder
276 Because our spirits have forgot
278 The something that infects the world
277 In action's dizzying eddy whirled

The effect of detraction from the main clause to the subordinate clause is countered by a sequence of increasingly negative lexical choices (from "milder" → "dizzying" → "whirled" → "infects") framed by the initial stress given to *milder* and the end-stress to *infects*. The conclusion is a statement posing as a half-answer. It is also ambiguous: "oblivion does not make the world a necessarily bearable place"; and/or "it is not oblivion that makes the world bearable". This ambiguity is underpinned by the vagueness of "something that infects the world" since the conjunction "because" on which it depends is qualified by "not" and is therefore only the beginning of an answer that the speaker leaves deliberately incomplete. Whilst: "The something" is menacing in its anonymity, "infects" unambiguously points to the certainty of a malefic force working like a poison not only against humanity, but the world at large. Yet, in "action's dizzying eddy whirled" human activity is simultaneously offered as an alternative possibility. The adjective "whirled" recalls the stream into which Fausta looks earlier in the poem which represents an escape from her enchained condition[48].

[48] It may be no accident that the term is also adopted by Empedocles (whom Arnold was at this time studying) in his outlining of the dynamic al-

This is further reinforced on a broader level by the fact that (the ungrammatical) "forgot" echoes the interjection "Enough" and that both indicate conscious and unconscious 'resistance' through action which is the human being's ultimate weapon for survival. That there is a possibility that things be milder, that human beings be blessed with the capacity for forgetfulness of their tragic plight, is seen as a matter of consolation rather than a weakness against an ingrained corruption and evil which the philosophical attitude of resignation Arnold advocates should help one to transcend. This alone is sufficient indication to suggest his own doubts about whether it can.

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ternation between love and strife that characterises the movement of the cosmos. The 'whirl' refers to an a-cosmic state in which the elements are separated and all life and the world is destroyed.

2

A Poem of Rejection

Empedocles on Etna

> [...] *I alone*
> *Am dead to life and joy, therefore I read*
> *In all things my own deadness.*

Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems (1852) is undoubtedly Arnold's most wide ranging and ambitious volume. It contains some of his most well-known poems, among which *Tristram and Iseult, A Summer Night, The Buried Life, Human Life,* and *Lines Written in Kensington Gardens,* the sonnet *Youth's Agitations,* and four of the poems that were to make up *Switzerland* and *Faded Leaves*. *Empedocles on Etna* itself[1] ranks among Arnold's greatest productions. Its attempt to combine poetry and philosophy makes it undoubtedly one of the most ambitious poems of the nineteenth century, and, as one critic has noted, in its major character "we recognise [...] a portrayal of our own confusion, the modern condition"[2]. Besides its theme of suicide[3], which touched many a sensitive Victorian nerve, the poem ideologically takes its cue from the existentially negative conclusion of *Resignation* and the character of Empedocles reflects (or strives to represent) the stoic qualities Arnold advocates in that poem. Yet there is an obvious difference between the two works besides that of poetic form. Whilst *Resignation* is permeated with a brooding, melancholic speculation, *Empedocles on Etna* vibrates with a tension that is the product of an tangible mental

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[1] Arnold worked on the poem intermittently between 1849 and 1852. It was, in progress during the writing of most of the titles in the volume.

[2] Paul Zietlow, "Heard but Unheeded: The Songs of Callicles in Matthew Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*" in *Victorian Poetry*, 21, 1983, p. 254.

[3] Such sociological considerations are outside the scope of the present study. But see Linda Ray Pratt, "Empedocles, Suicide, and the Order of Things", *Victorian Poetry*, 26 1988, pp. 77–9 for a brief discussion.

struggle. Its central theme of the deracination of a divided mind, is an inverted parody of Wordsworth's self–confident celebration of the growth of a poet's mind[4]. Furthermore, the intellectual complexity of the poem is a testimony of the various radical philosophical influences that were exerting themselves on Arnold, and that constituted a powerful challenge to the self–gratifying climate of conservative Victorian intelligentsia[5]. Arnold's linguistic interplay between the two main characters (Empedocles and Callicles) is also underscored by an implicit intertextual network which anticipates the compositional strategies of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and testifies, at the same time, to his heavy reading and brain cramming[6] of an array of philosophical systems. However much he may have rebuffed suggestions that his characters were conceived as mouthpieces

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[4] Some critics place the poem in the tradition of Byron's Manfred. See Warren D. Anderson, *Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1965, p. 36. See also Kenneth Allott, "A Background for Empedocles on Etna", in David J. Delaura (ed.) *Matthew Arnold*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, 1973, p.63 who associates Arnold's Romantic melancholy with Byron's poem.

[5] In the following words from a letter to his sister Jane, Arnold depicts the barren ground of Victorian English Intellectual society: "[...] England has fallen intellectually so far behind the continent that we cannot fail to see her assisting to carry on the intellectual work of the world from the point to which it is now arrived: for to what point it is arrived not 20 English people know: so profoundly has activity in this country extirpated reflection [...]". C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 107. See also L. Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 79: "[...] he (Arnold) wrote primarily for a small group of saddened intellectuals for whom the dominant world was a wasteland [...]".

[6] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 78:"For me you may often hear my sinews cracking under the effort to unite matter". During this period (1849–52) Arnold immersed himself in a multitude of philosophical systems including those of Lucretius, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Carlyle (particularly his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*), Emerson, Senancourt (i.e. *Obermann*) and Spinoza, not to mention the classical references that abound in Callicles' songs. The intertextual density behind the poem that makes it such an intellectual tour de force prefigures the so–called mythical method that was to be such a radical feature of Pound's and Eliot's poetical works. As D. G. Ried, *op. cit.*, p. 78, points out, it is Arnold's ultimate failure to connect the fragmented thoughts disseminated in the poem that is the reason for its artistic success.

to voice his own opinions[7], the poem is the ultimately personal struggle of a young man seeking some "Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by its multitudinousness"[8]. Yet, for all his mental efforts, it remained the one major work he excluded from further editions until eventually reinstating it at Robert Browning's insistence in 1867. The famous *Preface* to the 1853 edition, which partly elucidates the reasons for the poem's exclusion and partly attempts to herald a different poetic attitude and vision, is, in reality, the culmination of a long struggle "between the urge to formulate "general criticism" and the desire to abstain from it"[9]. The deliberate unfairness with which the poem is offered up for sacrifice, seems the necessary price the author was ready to pay in surrendering to the opportunity to systematically set down his own ideological poetic programme.

First and foremost, Arnold imperatively denies that the rejection of *Empedocles on Etna* was a question of the remoteness of its subject:

> I have, in the present collection, omitted the poem from which the volume published in 1852 took its title. I have done so, not because the subject of it was a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago, although many persons would think this a sufficient reason (*P*, p. 654).

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[7] See C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 287–8.

[8] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 128. Letter to Arthur Hugh Clough, December 1848.

[9] Manfred Dietrich, "Arnold's Empedocles and the 1853 Preface", in *Victorian Poetry*, 14, 1976, p. 315. Dietrich offers a stimulating account of the intellectual background to Arnold's Preface. Rather than being an afterthought, the Preface developed "long before Empedocles was written" (p. 316). Indeed, both works are products of parallel but contradictory developments" (*ibid.*).

In swift response to criticism[10], Arnold asserts that the dramatic poet's prime duty must be the selection of an "excellent action" which is representative of the universality and homogeneity of human feelings: "That which is great and passionate is eternally interesting" (*P*, p. 657). The fitness of a poetical subject is a question of its inherent qualities which override the fact of its modernity or antiquity. Shakespeare is a precursory model for the English writer in this respect: "For we must never forget that Shakespeare is the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action [...]" (*P*, p. 666). For Arnold, the real weakness of *Empedocles on Etna*, lies precisely in the fact that it lacks such an 'excellent action'[11]. As has been pointed out[12], his self–criticism is, in reality, confined to dramatic poetry and the fact that he does not make this sufficiently clear in the *Preface* explains the critical confusion that was to grow around his retrospective condemnation of the fallacious Romantic idea of poetry as an expression of the suffering soul where there is "everything to be endured, nothing to be done, and in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged",(*P*, p. 656) especially since he himself continued to compose poems of this order. Less problematic is his rejection of poetry as a mimetic art form in which exclusive priority is given to mere accuracy of representation:

> A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment (*P*, p. 655).

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[10] Those whose criticisms were directed at the subject matter of the poem included the poet's friend Arthur Hugh Clough, Elisabeth Barrett Browning and Charles Kingsley. See also Douglas Bush, *Matthew Arnold: A Study of His Poetry and Prose*, London, Macmillan, 1971, p. 26.

[11] On the other hand, Empedocles' suicide can also be seen precisely as the "vent in action" Arnold claims the poem lacks. See M. Dietrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 322–3.

[12] D. G. James, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–4.

Thus, the mimetic approach, besides conveying charm and infusing delight, must also increase understanding. As Northrop Frye succinctly points out, literature appeals not to any pleasure in the vicious things it presents as entertainment but in "the exhilaration of standing apart from them and being able to see them for what they are because they aren't really happening"[13]. The text must be able to appeal to the sensibility of its reader in such a way that aesthetic enjoyment of the work be a product of its reception from a moral point of view. To lend further audaciousness to his justification, Arnold draws a dividing line between the ancients, whose first consideration was "the poetical character of the action in itself and the conduct of it", and the moderns, whose attention is primarily focussed on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. As a result: "We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression" (*P*, p. 661). For Arnold, the moral grandness of the ancients lay in the pleasure derived from the total impression of the work. Such an aesthetic evaluation depends, as Trilling has pointed out, precisely on "the achievement of a philosophical wholeness"[14], whereas the modern poet, who is constantly prevailed over by the world's 'multitudinousness' can only achieve an a–moral, impressionistic subjectivism. The fallacy of such a historically clear–cut polarity between ancient total impression of poetical sense and modern fragmentation of rhetorical sense, is exposed by what is, in effect, Arnold's underlying preoccupation with his own self–conflicting artistic temperament which he seeks to resolve by means of his growing awareness of the poet's social function[15]. His belief that the poem fails to perform a moral, didactic purpose, on one level, is therefore undermined by the fact that his choice of sub-

[13] Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1964, p. 100.

[14] L. Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[15] Arnold would later contradict his own preaching by republishing a selection of Callicles' songs separately in later editions of his poems.

ject (a Sicilian Greek philosopher of the fifth century B. C.) and eventual rejection of that subject, masks a controversy which he is all too ready to make plain:

> But I say, that in the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. *They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in Art, and we do not* (*P*, p. 670, italics mine).

As a victim of "the bewildering confusion of our times" and an accomplice to the destruction of the calm, cheerful, disinterested objectivity of the Classical Greek world, Empedocles embodies the vacuous state of transition and uncertainty that characterises Arnold's own epoch. At the same time, however, his consideration of the decline of the Greek State as a "historical analogue"[16] to the modern world, begs the question of precisely which age he considers to be in decline[17]. What is true is that as Arnold's character is plunged into a frustratingly fruitless modern "dialogue of the mind with itself" (*P*, p. 654), which is given "no vent in action" (*P*, p. 656), he makes him an intellectually impotent witness of a crisis that is as much about the Victorian age as the decline of the Ancient Greek world. In this sense, Empedocles' suicide is sufficiently justified by Arnold's own condemnation of him[18]. Therefore, although the preface may read as an apologia for a poetical criteria that *Empedocles on Etna* fails to

[16] L. Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

[17] In a letter to Clough dated 28 October 1852, Arnold bypasses the problem of classifying poetry in terms of historical periods by making a distinction between a poetically mature and a poetically youthful 'age', seeing the forever young Keats and Shelly, "on a false track when they set themselves to reproduce the exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and the felicity of the Elizabethan poets [...]. Consequently, critics who go along for the ride do so with the conviction that "the object of poetry is to produce exquisite bits and images [...]" C. Y. Lang, *op cit.*, vol. I, pp. 245–6.

[18] It has also been noted by more than one critic that the poem itself contains an implicit comment that Empedocles is not a fitting matter for poetry in Callicles' final song. See A. Dwight Culler, *op. cit.*, p.176 and P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

fulfil, the author's censure of his work should not be seen as a rejection of a certain poetics as such, but the expression of a cultural and spiritual malaise that had become engrained in the Victorian intellectual world[19].

Empedocles of Acragas in Sicily (c. 492–432 BC) is generally considered one of the most important of the pre–Socratic philosophers. His poetical works *On Nature* and *Purifications* exist in more than 150 fragments, though little is known about their composition – just as little is known about Empedocles himself[20]. He has been variously considered a materialist physicist, a shamanic magician, a mystical theologian, a healer, a democratic politician, a living god, not to mention a fraud. The world–view conveyed in his writings is one of a cosmic cycle of

[19] As R. H. Super, *op cit.*, p. 18 points out, Arnold's is "an objective diagnosis of the age not a purely private, essentially emotional approach to life". For suggestions of autobiographical elements behind the composition of the poem itself see also N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p.128: "Arnold's identification with Empedocles' *ennui* – which was also the reason why he was to drop the poem from the next edition of his poems – is clear enough. Exhausted by his inspecting duties, out of sympathy with the intellectual and aesthetic climate, disillusioned with politics, yet still convinced that he had something to say, Arnold found a metaphor for his own unease in the life of Empedocles". That Arnold's criticism of modern poetry is, in reality, directed to the critics finds confirmation in one of his letters to Clough: "They (the critics) still think that the object of poetry is to produce exquisite bits and images [...] whereas modern poetry can only subsist by its *contents*, by becoming a complete *magister vitae* as the poetry of the ancients did [...]" (original italics). C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 246. D.G. James, *op. cit.*, p. 58 sees the Preface as a deliberate imitation and counter–statement to Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* and pinpoints key phrases that emulate its manner and rhythms. As shall be seen, a critique of Romantic conceptions and principles is also engrained in the poem.

[20] Arnold's primary source for Empedocles' poem was Simon Karsten's two–volume work *Philosophorum Graecorum Veterum (praesertim qui ante Platonem Floruerunt)Operum Reliquiae* published in 1830, though the ultimate source, which he also must have consulted, is Diogenes Laertius' Lives of Empedocles and Parmenides. Indeed, all that is known of Empedocles is due to Laertius' account. For the background to the poem see C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–303 and Kenneth Allott, "A Background for Empedocles on Etna", in J. Delaura, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–70, especially for Arnold's use of Karsten's edition.

constant change in which two cosmic forces, Love and Strife, engage in an eternal battle for supremacy. Empedocles was also a believer in the transmigration of souls and claimed to be a *daimôn*, a divine or potentially divine being. Arnold's representation of Empedocles as a lonely, sad, exiled figure, completely out of touch with his times, seems to have derived from a misreading of a passage in Empedocles' poem which refers not to a personal exile, but to every individual's state of incarnation. In being made incarnate, every person is, for Empedocles, exiled from the gods: "Thus, I too am [...] an exile from the gods and a wanderer, trusting in mad strife"[21]. Empedocles' idea of exile is therefore inextricably connected with the concept of original sin. As a result of its fallen state, the human being necessarily inhabits a world of woe which, for Empedocles, is the only world at its disposal if it wants to seek redemption or enlightenment. Arnold draws on some of Empedocles' central pronouncements and the extent of his attraction–identification with the philosopher can be gauged from his preparatory notes for the poem:

> He has not the religious consolation of other men, facile because adapted to their weaknesses, or because shared by all around [...]
> He sees things as they are – the world as it is – God as he is: in their stern simplicity [...]
> But his friends are dead: the world is all against Him, & incredulous of the truth: his mind is over–Tasked by the effort to hold fast, so great & severe a truth in solitude[22].

However, it is patently obvious that Arnold used the original poem as a frame around which to explore his own intellectual and philosophical preoccupations. As with his fascination over the *Bhagavad Gita* during the writing of *Resignation,* his engaging interest in Empedocles (a source of bemusement to his friend Clough), together with his absorption of a variety of phi-

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[21] Empedocles, *The Poem of Empedocles, A Text and Translation* Introduction by Brad Inwood, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001, p. 217. Subsequent quotations refer to this edition and are followed by the abbreviation *EMP* and page references.

[22] C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

losophical systems, nurtured the moral fibre of a very personal poetic vision.

From a structural point of view alone, the 468–line poem is a product of acutely conscious patterning. The tripartite division of its two acts, with two scenes in act one and a single scene in act two, is underpinned by its three–fold topological, actantial, and thematic development with corresponding temporal, spatial and natural dimensions which demarcate Empedocles' inexorable ascent towards the crater of Etna as outlined below:

Forest	**Morning**	**Coolness**	**(Rest)**
↓	↓	↓	↓
Glen	**Noon**	**Heat**	**(Climb)**
↓	↓	↓	↓
Summit	**Evening**	**Fire**	**(Fall)**

The increasing intensity of the natural references which parallels Empedocles' mounting pathos until his leap into the flames (Fall), is undermined by the poem's circular structure which actually concludes with Callicles' description of the cold distant stars (the fact that he is also the first and last speaker reinforces the circularity of the poem). This triadic structure is extended to the three characters, Callicles, Pausanius and Empedocles himself, who respectfully embody three different generations and professions. The actantial levels are schematised below:

YOUTH	**Callicles**	**(Poetry)**
MATURITY	**Pausanias**	**(Medicine)**
AGE	**Empedocles**	**(Philosophy)**

The chronological order of each character's appearance coincides with that of their exit (thus, Callicles is sent away by Pausanias[23] who, in turn, is dismissed by Empedocles who, in turn, disappears by casting himself into the volcano) to suggest not only the relinquishing from one generation to another, but also a trajectory which symbolically demarcates Empedocles'

[23] The fact that Pausanus is believed to have been Empedocles' boy–lover may add an unintentional humour to his dismissal of Callicles!

undertaking and successive denial of these branches of knowledge in the three stages of his own life. The poem derives much of its pathos and tension from the fact that Empedocles' interrelations with the Ariel–like character Callicles (an invention of Arnold's and a figure of central importance to the dramatic development of the poem) and his faithful friend Pausanias, are nothing less than a series of dramatic confrontations with the two former selves he has been forced to outgrow and reject before taking on his final role as philosopher. But philosophy, rather than providing him with the resolutions for his existential problems, only makes him more acutely conscious of them. From one angle, therefore, Empedocles' suicide represents the absolute rejection of all three possibilities of cultural salvation from spiritual and moral aridity.

The poem's incipit in *medias res* summarises the plot element so far (from *this hour* to *all night*) in which Callicles, after following Empedocles and Pausanias, has overtaken them and is waiting in a pass in the forest:

> The mules, I think, will not be here this hour;
> They feel the cool wet turf under their feet
> By the stream–side, after the dusty lanes
> In which they have toiled all night from Catana,
> And scarcely will they budge a yard. O Pan,
> How gracious is the mountain at this hour!
> A thousand times have I been here alone,
> Or with the revellers from the mountain towns,
> But never on so fair a morn [...] (*P*, pp. 156–7).

Callicles immediately strikes an objective note in this opening speech by shifting what could have been a description of his own fatigue after his all–night pursuit of Empedocles and Pausanias onto a consideration of the temporary respite given to the mules. The irony of his observation that Etna, which is to be the place of Empedocles' suicide, has never appeared to him so 'gracious', is countermined by the sense that this peak moment of felicity may placate the poet–philosopher's despair:

> One sees one's footprints crushed in the wet grass,
> One's breath curls in the air; and on these pines
> That climb from the stream's edge, the long grey tufts,
> Which the goat's love, are jewelled thick with dew.
> [...] Apollo!
> What mortal could be sick or weary here? (*P*, p. 157).

In spite of his Wordsworthian faith in the restorative powers of nature, Callicles' lyrically evocative description already contains anticipatory signs of the destruction ("foot prints crushed in the wet grass"[24]) and transience ("one's breath curls in the air [...] jewell'd thick with dew") that already mark Empedocles' plight. Callicles himself has a complex actantial function in the drama which cannot be reduced to that of an innocent prelapsarian pastoralist[25]. His own understanding of the nature of Empedocles' sickness, for one thing, reveals a subtle psychological awareness[26] that contrasts with Pausanias' more facile explanations:

> *(Pausanias)*
> [...] but now, since all
> Clouds and grows daily worse in Sicily,
> Since broils tear us in twain, since this new swarm
> Of sophists has got empire in our schools
> Where he was paramount, since he is banished
> And lives a lonely man in triple gloom –
> He grasps the very reins of life and death.
>
> *(Callicles)*
> 'Tis not the times, 'tis not the sophists vex him;
> There is some root of suffering in himself,
> Some secret and unfollowed vein of woe,
> Which makes the time look black and sad to him (*P*, pp. 162–3).

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[24] This line also echoes line 103 of *Resignation*.

[25] Comparisons between Callicles and the youth in *The Strayed Reveller* are inevitable. In their celebration of a Pagan world of mythology in their songs they both provide a reactionary element to Arnold's sense of the unpoetical spirit of his age.

[26] As Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 37 notes: "This evidently is no unreflecting child of nature, as some have tried to make out, but a psychologist and rationalist."

From a metrical point of view[27], the traditional iambic pentameter form of the 167 lines that make up the dialogue between Callicles and Pausanias in the first scene of act one (Pausanias himself never speaks anything but iambic pentameters), is an appropriate vehicle for their matter–of–fact conversation about Empedocles. Here, Pausanias' sees the Sophists' philosophy of subjectivism, relativism and cynicism as the inevitable by–product of changing times where "all/Clouds and grows worse [...]". Callicles', on the other hand, dismisses any attempt to lay the blame for Empedocles' distress on an external cause. The line "Some secret and unfollowed vein of woe", is, on hindsight, psychologically much closer to the bone than the immediate causes of Pausanias' explanation. Its very phonetic resonance is as suggestive as its lexical choices: the alliteration of the sibilant /s/ semantically links "secret", "suffering" and "sad" with the indefinite pronoun "some" and the assonance /əu/ connects Empedocles' isolation, implicit in "unfollowed", with his personal grief ("woe"). "Vein" invokes a three–fold allusion: the image of the veins of the human body branching out like a series of streams; a pun on vein, (i.e. streak), and through its phonetic echo with *vain,* the vanity, or senselessness, of Empedocles' suffering.

Callicles' simultaneous denunciation of Empedocles' indulgent self–pity and his mutual–identification with and admiration of the poet–philosopher, prove him to be a much more complex character than seems initially the case:

> He knew me well, and would oft notice me;
> And still, I know not how, he draws me to him,
> And I could watch him with his proud sad face,

[27] As shall be seen, no single poem by Arnold exploits complex metrical patterning quite to the same extent as *Empedocles on Etna.* It is no exaggeration to say that his prosodic achievements are, far from being a mere display of technical virtuosity, challenging and exciting, functional in highlighting the changing moods of the main character and intrinsic to the orchestration of the conflicting elements within the poem.

of this miracle" (*P*, p. 162). Although Empedocles' invective does concern what "profits" him, as shall be seen, this has nothing at all to do with the secrets of his so–called miracles.

It is ironic that the very first lines spoken by Empedocles are not an expression of his dejection, but an excited recognition of Callicles' music. It is significant also that Callicles' song interrupts the regular iambic pentameter used so far, with its alternation of iambic tetrameter and iambic pentameter lines:

/ / / /
The track winds down to the clear stream,
/ / / /
To cross the sparkling shallows; there
/ / / / /
The cattle love to gather, on their way
/ / / / /
To the high mountain-pastures, and to stay,
/ / / /
Till the rough cow-herds drive them past [...] (*P*, p. 165).

In his joyful recognition of Callicles' playing, Empedocles' words almost leap from the page with the interjectory force of a hopeful invocation:

Hark! What sound was that
Rose from below? If it were possible,
And we were not so far from human haunt,
I should have said that some one touched a harp.
Hark! There again! (*P*, p. 164)

It is a recurrent factor in the poem that whenever Empedocles emerges from his gloomy thoughts to momentary flashes of delight, such moments are the direct effect of Callicles' harp–playing. Though temporarily, his music continues to exert an influence over him. Pausanias, on the other hand, appeals to the cognitive side of Empedocles, and his insistence on learning the secret of the latter's most famous miracle, provokes a derisive comment:

> Spells? Mistrust them!
> Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.
> Man has a mind with which to plan his safety;
> Know that and help thyself! (*P*, p. 165).

Empedocles' declared faith in the guiding powers of the human mind is ironic in view of the fact that he himself is subsequently unable to follow his own advice. Not only, but his sudden recognition of Callicles' music causes him to interrupt Pausanias' quoting of his actual doctrine which holds the very opposite view:

> *Pausanias*
> But thine own words?
> 'The wit and counsel of man was never clear,
> Troubles confound the little wit he has.'
> Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,
> To lead those false who trust it.
>
> [*The harp sounds again*]
>
> *Empedocles*
> Hist! once more!
> Listen, Pausanias! Ay, 'tis Callicles!
> I know those notes among a thousand. Hark! (*P*, p. 165)

Pausanias' later remark: "But Apollo!/How his brow lightened as the music rose!", reveals the extent to which the emotional power of music is still capable of arousing Empedocles' morale, even in his most spiritually deadened moments. But such brief bursts of optimism are a mere flash in the pan, for the spatial distance from which an invisible Callicles plays his music from the second scene onwards, like an outcast spirit from the past, only reinforces the impossibility of Empedocles' salvation. In his "fierce, man–hating mood", (*P*, p. 160) the philosopher has irremediably withdrawn into the refuge of his own isolated self not only from a society governed by sophists, but from the world at large.

With its three hundred and fifty lines, Empedocles' seventy–stanza invective dominates the second scene of act 1. Its met-

rical deviation, which consists of heavily stressed iambic trimeters (or hexameters broken into quatrains) also immediately counteracts the light tripping movement of the initial metrical deviation of Callicles' first song. In terms of content, this central section may be seen as a free reinterpretation of the existing fragments of Empedocles' original work, which is similarly addressed to Pausanias for the benefit of his instruction: "And Pausanias, Son of wise Anchites, you listen", (*EMP*, p. 217) and in which Empedocles actually promises to reveal the 'magic' of his 'wizardry': "All the potions which there are as a defence against evils and old age/You shall learn, since for you alone will I accomplish all these things" (*EMP*, p. 219). But Arnold subverts the confident tone of Empedocles' philosophical discourse in the original poem into a deliberately inchoate expression of self–loathing and confusion. That Empedocles only 'speaks' his discourse in response to Callicles' song whilst accompanying himself on his harp in a sad self–parody, is sufficient confirmation that all joy and spontaneity are irretrievably lost to him. His invective (as indeed all his discourses[29]), is an ironic contrast to Callicles' melodious song about Chiron who instructs Achilles with the same lore that was handed down to him from his father Peleus. Callicles' songs, as will be seen, have an undeniably dramatic effect in the poem, in their being continually set against Empedocles' tormented monologues:

> In such a glen, on such a day,
> On Pelion, on the grassy ground,
> Chiron, the aged Centaur lay,
> The young Achilles standing by.
> The Centaur taught him to explore
> The mountains; where the glens are dry
> And the tired Centaurs come to rest,
> And where the soaking springs abound
> And the straight ashes grow for spears,
> And where the hill–goats come to feed,

[29] There is a certain pathos in the fact that Empedocles' speeches are invariably responses to Callicles' songs. In effect his present (philosophical) self is dependent on his former (poetic) self to goad him into speaking.

And the sea–eagles build their nest [...] (*P*, pp. 166–67).

This is a landscape of energy and vitality (lively rendered by a regular tripping metre, verbal repetition, alliteration and anaphora) in which all creatures have their part. Its mountains, which offer welcoming solace for the weary Centaurs, are an ironic contrast to the desolate ashen mountain landscape that is the scene of Empedocles suicide. If, as Zietlow points out, Callicles' tone is one of disinterested objectivity, wholly concerned with the external manifestations of a moral or right order deriving from myth[30], Empedocles' attempts to provide a moral framework for his world–view are construed from conclusions drawn from philosophical speculation which only lead him back full circle to the egotistical self[31]. His invective is, in effect, the first real sign of his breakdown. For the regularity of its metrical structure and rhyme scheme, which suggests the inflexibility of frozen dogma, conceals a discourse characterised by a series of lethargic utterances counter–marked by continually shifting attitudes from lamentation to explication and recommendation in which each stanza concludes in a release of tension embodied by an alexandrine[32]. The first ten lines are a sardonic evocation of man's Genesis[33]:

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[30] P. Zietlow, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

[31] Arnold clearly and deliberately exposes the poetical limitations of Empedocles' ode. As D. G. Riede, *op. cit.*, p. 81, points out, Empedocles becomes "just another questionable voice" in a poem ultimately concerned with "the 'dialogue of the mind with itself'".

[32] This fixity is further underlined by the strict rhyme scheme (significantly Empedocles' only rhyming speech) whose alternating abab pattern is reinforced by the rhymes carried over into each successive alexandrine (thus *toy/employ* etc).

[33] To appreciate the difference between Arnold's Empedocles and the original poet, one may consider the opening lines of one of the fragments which directly concerns his healing of the dead woman: "As soon as I arrive in flourishing cities I am revered by all, men and women. And they follow at once, in their ten thousands, asking where is the path to gain, some in need of divinations, others in all sorts of diseases, sought to hear a healing oracle [...]" *EMP*, p. 211.

> The out–spread world to span
> A cord the Gods first slung,
> And then the soul of man
> There like a mirror hung,
> And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy.
>
> Hither and thither spins
> The wind–borne, mirroring soul,
> A thousand glimpses wins,
> And never sees a whole;
> Looks once, and drives elsewhere, and leaves its last employ.
> (*P*, pp. 167–78).

It is generally acknowledged that Arnold derived the opening image, as well as the general tone of Empedocles' invective, from Senancour's *Obermann*[34]. For nowhere in the original fragments does one find anything like the bitterness and disillusionment expressed by his character. The opening stanza, which indicates the soul's helplessness and lack of direction, is marked by lexical items that underline its insignificance. Lines 3–4 of stanza two also seem to sum up Arnold's own predicament at this stage of his intellectual life. For was he not also seeking his own enlightenment in an "iron time/Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears"[35] through the feverous study of different systems of thought? And did not the existence of these different systems merely serve to fire his anxiety over the possibility of discovering wholeness, just as Empedocles wonders whether or not: "The Gods "laugh in their sleeve/To watch man doubt and fear" (*P*, p. 168) in their mockery of all intellectual endeavour?

It is immediately symptomatic of the essentially inconclusive nature of his whole invective that Empedocles' initial tirade becomes an open–ended statement as soon as it is uttered: "Is this, Pausanias, so? [...] I will not judge". His advice to

[34] See *P*, p. 167, Like Empedocles, Obermann suffers a similar conflict between acceptance and rejection of society (note to lines 80–1).

[35] *Memorial Verses*, *P*, p. 241.

Pausanias to follow paths that do not degrade the mind seems a partial attempt to counter his cynicism:

> Be not, then, fear's blind slave!
> Thou art my friend; to thee,
> All knowledge that I have,
> All skill I wield, are free.
> Ask not the latest news of the last miracle [...] (*P*, p. 168).

The final line of stanza VI is a thin disguise of Arnold's own indictment of the unquestioning acceptance of new trends which he castigates in the *Preface* in his reassertion of the importance of the "eternal objects of Poetry", that is, the great human actions which provide moral sustenance: "Ask what most helps when known, thou son of Anchitus!" (*P*, p. 196). With a down-to-earth realism that recalls the poetic voice in *Resignation*, Empedocles offers Pausanias' humbling advice, marked by characteristically Arnoldian litotes: "He treats doubt the best who tries to see *least ill* [...] May'st see *without dismay*" (*P*, pp. 168–9, italics mine). In his recognition of Pausanias as a fellow sufferer, Empedocles effectively uses him as a sounding board for the exposition of his ideas. As a result, the self-reflexive slant to his discourse becomes increasingly ruthless, and consequently disjointed, as his rhetoric swells:

> What? hate, and awe, and shame
> Fill thee to see our time;
> Thou feelest thy soul's frame
> Shaken and out of chime?
> What? life and chance go hard with thee too, as with us [...]
> (*P*, p. 169).

Empedocles' awareness of people's envy of Pausanias ("Thy citizens, 'tis said,/Envy thee [...]", *P*, p. 169), is equally self-applicable. But his confusion in pinpointing external blame on his (their) mental distress is compounded by his attributing it not solely to them, but above all to the gods: "Scarce can one think in calm so threatening are the gods", (*P*, p. 169) as well as the

Sophists themselves: "forsake/A world these sophists throng" (*P*, p. 170). His confusion finds temporary vent in apocalyptic images: "Heaven is with earth at strife [...] The dead return to life,/Rivers are dried, winds stayed [...]" (*P*, p. 169). Suffice it to say that the term "strife" in describing the condition of intellectual and moral helplessness into which Empedocles has plunged is a key word in Empedocles' philosophy[36]. Congestion of intellectual knowledge ironically leads to the assertion of individual self–dependency; "[...] the wiser wight/In his own bosom delves [...] Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!" (*P*, pp. 169–70). It is no accident that the lexemes "sink" and "shrine", which frame the last line, respectively allude to the states of perdition and salvation that constitute the dilemmas posed by Empedocles' self–isolation. Yet even this realisation leads to a lengthy invective (practically the remainder of his speech) against human vanity and pretentiousness:

> What makes thee struggle and rave?
> Why are men ill at ease?
> 'Tis that the lot they have
> Fails their own will to please;
> For man would make no murmuring, were his will obeyed
> (*P*, p. 171).

As Arnold concludes in his sonnet *Youth's Agitations*: "One thing only has been lent to youth and age in common – discontent" (*P*, p. 152). Empedocles allows his own discontent to impede him from formulating a coherent philosophical exposition, for, from this point onwards, his diatribe becomes a self–enclosed discourse which alternates level–headed counsel with heated condemnation of man's folly. Thus, his explanation for man's discontent by the fact "that he makes this 'will'/The measure of his 'rights' [...]" whereas "man has no right to bliss"

[36] Empedocles' world–view is that of the cosmic cycle of eternal change in which the two forces of love and strife constantly battle for supremacy.

[...][37] (*P*, p. 171), is born unwittingly into the world and forced to submit to influences beyond his wilful control: "To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime" (*P*, p. 173). As a result, the recurrent Arnoldian image of the sea, appears here in an ominous association with the detrimental effects of such unsolicited experience which "soaks all–effacing in" (*P*, p. 174)[38]. Not only, but man stubbornly refuses to accept the fact that "inward peace", the end of sorrow and "all pleasant ends" (*P*, p. 175) can only be achieved through the labour of effort. As in Arnold's response to the materialistic Victorian work ethic in *To a Gipsy Child by the Sea–Shore*, Empedocles advocates a similar act of labour that leads to spiritual self–enlightenment, but whose possibility he sees overwhelmed by the moral negligence and laziness of humankind: "But we an easier way to cheat our pains have found" (*P*, p. 176). Against everyman's innate tendency for self–deception, Empedocles posits the virtues of the wise man whose plan is: "To work as best he can,/And win what's won by strife" (*P*, p. 176) (the Empedeclean word again). Therefore, only through actions characterised by a humble acceptance of his limitations and mortality, can man overcome his frustrations and dissatisfactions and readily accept his lot.

But Empedocles dampens the air of finality in this moral lesson by reverting to an admonishment that even when the individual forsakes sin, other presences intervene to thwart its happiness:

> Like us, the lightning–fires
> Love to have scope and play;
> The stream, like us, desires
> An unimpeded way;
> Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large (*P*, p. 175).

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[37] These lines may also be compared to the following in *Resignation*: "Yet they, believe me, who await/No gifts from chance, have conquered Fate [...]", *P*, p. 99.

[38] The to–and–fro shift of Empedocles' thoughts themselves are like the waves of the sea, constantly pushing forward and drawing back, never finding rest.

Since nothing in the natural world operates deliberately against his will, man has no right to rage. Nature is, to quote Trilling, "Spinozistically neutral"[39]: "Nature, with equal mind,/Sees all her sons at play;/Sees man control the wind,/The wind sweep man away" [...] (*P*, p. 176). But even if harm does not come man's way via nature, there are always the ill deeds of others to "make often *our* life dark" (*P*, p. 176, Arnold's italics). Empedocles' oscillating anxieties continue with his denouncement of man's ultimate madness:

> So, loth to suffer mute,
> We, peopling the void air,
> Make Gods to whom to impute
> The ills we ought to bear;
> With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily (*P*, p. 177).

If gods are invented by man, then Empedocles is the first to be guilty of this indictment, for he himself has already blamed the gods for his own troubled state. In spite of this there follows what is probably one of Arnold's strongest denunciations of religion:

> Fools! That in man's brief term
> He cannot all things view,
> Affords no ground to affirm
> That there are Gods who do;
> Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest.
>
> Again. Our youthful blood
> Claims rapture as its right;
> The world, a rolling flood
> Of newness and delight,
> Draws in the enamoured gazer to its shining breast;
> [...]
> Fools! That so often here
> Happiness mocked our prayer,
> I think, might make us fear
> A like event elsewhere;

[39] L. Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

> We scrutinise the dates
> Of long-past human things,
> The bounds of effaced states,
> The lines of deceased kings;
> We search out dead men's words, and works of dead men's hands;
> [...]
>
> But still, as we proceed
> The mass swells more and more
> Of volumes yet to read,
> Of secrets to explore.
> Our hair grows grey, our eyes are dimmed, our heat is tamed
> (*P*, pp. 178–9).

For Empedocles, the fact that the infinite possibilities provided by knowledge transcend the scope of the individual: "Man's measures cannot mete the immeasurable All" [...] (*P*, p. 179)[40] is self-evident. What is not so is that the individual has a right to happiness: "Fools! That so often here/Happiness mocked our prayer [...]" (*P*, p. 181). The conflict between the will and the self-contradictions which beleaguer the final remarks of Empedocles' long invective are the ultimate confirmation of the philosopher's lack of existential convictions. First, he harshly condemns the vanity of man's dreams and advocates a moderate acceptance of what life offers: "Make us not fly to dreams, but moderate desire" (*P*, p. 181). Significantly, the language of philosophy makes way for a language of prayer, as the pleading tone in the line suggests. But no sooner is this wish uttered than there follows his immediate self-contradiction in the following stanza with the hopeful thought that life may lead to more than merely moderate bliss "for those who know/Themselves, who wisely take/Their way through life, and bow/To what they cannot break" (*P*, p. 181). After firing a series of rhetorical ques-

[40] See *P*, p. 179 (note to line 341). The phrase *the immeasurable All* may derive from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*: "Such a minnow is Man; his Creek, this Planet Earth; his ocean the immeasurable all [...]". But Carlyle's reference to the ocean also intends to underline the smallness not only of man, but of his own immediate world.

tions around man's inability to content himself with the simple pleasures of the universe, Empedocles reaches a final forced moral lesson, conveyed through Arnold's characteristic use of litotes; "Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair!" (*P*, p. 182), whose ominous and dubious consolation, emphasised by the half–rhyme between "are" and "despair", is not so distant from the existentially bleak conclusion of *Resignation*[41].

The long grim pause that punctuates Empedocles' invective is interrupted by the melodic notes of Callicles' harp. Whilst Empedocles warns Pausanias of the dangers of dreaming, Callicles' evokes an alternative dream–world in his mythical story of Cadmus and Harmonia as an ironic counter–response to Empedocles' isolated condition:

> Far, far from here,
> The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay
> Among the green Illyrian hills; and there
> The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,
> And by the sea, and in the brakes.
> The grass is cool, the sea–side air
> Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers
> More virginal and sweet than ours.
> And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,
> Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,
> Bask in the glens or on the warm sea–shore,
> In breathless quiet, after all their ills [...] (*P*, p. 183).

Callicles' song is about two people who share the experience of exile in the warmth and serenity of a lyrically beautiful landscape[42] after having been transformed into two snakes. The phonic echo of the diphthongs /ɪə/ in "here" in the opening line

[41] As James Longenbach notes "Empedocles' song is carefully constructed to defeat its own presuppositions", "Matthew Arnold and the Modern Apocalypse", *P.M.L.A.*, 104, 1989, p. 851.

[42] The fact that Arnold later extracted all five of Callicle's songs, publishing them under separate titles, testifies to his sense of a need to return to the qualities of Classical Greek poetry in a polemical reaction to the romantically oriented poetry of the time.

of Callicles' song and leal in "despair" in the final line of Empedocles' invective suggests a connection between the two words that cannot be accidental, whilst Callicles' repeated lexeme "far", entices the listener away from the self–torment and misery of Empedocles' discourse. A binary opposition is established in the chiasmus of the following lexical interconnections of the two discourses:

despair → *here* (human world)
there → *fair* (mythical world)

If the "sustaining and ameliorating wholeness"[43] conveyed in his songs is seen in terms of a plausible alternative to Empedocles' vision of despair, the apparently ineffective role played by Callicles would be very much undermined. His songs are expressions of objective creation, untainted by self–preoccupation. The self is merely the channel through which a stable universal order is celebrated. But Callicles' lyrical evocations belong to the realm of dream, which, for Empedocles, is connotative of a feigned bliss: "Of doubtful future date", in which we: "Lose all our present state" (*P*, p. 182). For Empedocles, appreciation of the natural world necessarily belongs to the dimension of immediate experience: "Is it so small a thing/To have enjoyed the sun,/To have lived light in the spring [...]?" (*P*, p. 181). The fact of the matter is that Callicles' songs are effectual to the extent that they point to the self–contradictions and hopelessness of Emepdocles' discourses. But, at the same time, they cannot help betraying themselves as cold pastorals. Operating, as they do, within a dramatic framework, Empedocles' speeches and Callicles' songs are counter expressions of 'non–creation': the one a spiralling, self–tormented discourse leading to self–destruction, the other a verbal celebration of a static world void of human sentiment. For in a sophistic world of deadened rationalism

[43] P. Zietlow, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

there is no breeding ground for original or inspirational poetry[44]. Whilst Callicles' songs depend upon convention and tradition for their expression, Empedocles' discourses are the product of an individual (romantic) soul that can only give vent to its suffering. Between the two modes there can be no communication (Callicles is oblivious of Empedocles' reactions because he is in no position to witness them, and Empedocles always interprets Callicles' songs erroneously). An inconsolable Empedocles can by now only affectionately but regretfully dismiss Callicles' song: "He ever loved the Theban story well!/But the day wears [...]" (*P*, p. 184).

The iconic significance of the adjective "Alone", which exclusively occupies the opening line of act II (rather like the initial dramatic note of a musical symphony), is reinforced by its emphatic indentation[45]. Empedocles' lonely climb to the summit of Mount Etna is a temporal–spatial regression into the recesses of his own aridity and sterility. The waste land he walks upon is the waste land of his own soul:

> Alone –
> On this charred, blackened, melancholy waste,
> Crowned by the awful peak, Etna's great mouth,
> Round which the sullen vapour rolls – alone! (*P*, p. 186)

Empedocles speeches in act II are marked by an increasing metrical variation which effectively reflects his psychological turmoil. Whilst his diatribe in act I encompasses a last ditch attempt to communicate with his fellow men, his monologues in act II oscillate between iambic pentameters (suggesting a return

[44] Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism" in *Collected Prose Works*, cit., vol. III, p. 261: " [...] the grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual atmosphere [...] But it must have the atmosphere, it must find itself amidst the order of ideas, in order to work freely; and these it is not easy to command".

[45] The indentation is not an indication of metrical continuity because the line preceding it (the final line of act II) is a perfect iambic pentameter delivered by Pausanias: "Just since, down at the stream, Ho! Callicles!"

to his old self) and a variety of irregular patters in distressful emulation of his disorientation and suicidal madness. The above lines mournfully resonate with a preponderance of nasals (/m/ /n/ and /ŋ/) through which key negative lexemes connotative of Empedocles' solitude and existential–philosophical pessimism are interlinked: "blackened [...] melancholy [...] Crowned" (a cataphoric allusion to Empedocles' final ironic 'victory') [...] "Etna's [...] mouth [...] sullen [...] alone". The circular structure ("Alone → alone") already designates the enclosure of Empedocles' self–referential discourse which can have no outlet save in his own self–annihilation. For all this, Empedocles presents his decision to commit suicide[46] as an act enforced by a hostile world rather than induced by a tormented self–consciousness:

> No, thou art come too late, Empedocles!
> And the world hath the day, and must break thee[47],
> Not thou the world. With men thou canst not live,
> Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine [...]
> (*P*, p. 186).

Empedocles' antagonistic reactions against the world are made less effective by his sense of the self–sufficient nature of his own joys. That he is only able to vaguely identify the cause of his sorrow as a 'something' recalls Callicles earlier diagnosis: There is *some* root of suffering in himself,/*Some* secret and unfollowed vein of woe [...] (*P*, p. 163, italics mine):

> And being lonely thou art miserable,
> For something has impaired thy spirit's strength,
> And dried up its self–sufficing fount of joy.
> Thou canst not live with men nor with thyself—
> O sage! O sage! Take then the one way left;

[46] It is interesting to note that the actual term 'suicide' never actually appears in the poem. Neither is it used by Arnold in any of his poetical works.

[47] The reduction to four stresses in the second line ("world [...] day [...]" and must break") significantly alludes, on a metrical level, to Empedocles' break with the world.

> And turn thee to the elements, thy friends,
> Thy well–tried friends, thy willing ministers,
> And say: Ye helpers, hear Empedocles,
> Who asks this final service at your hands!
> Before the sophist–brood hath overlaid
> The last spark of man's consciousness with words –
> Ere quite the being of man, ere quite the world
> Be disarrayed of their divinity –
> Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,
> And awe be dead, and hope impossible,
> And the soul's deep eternal night come on –
> Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!
>
> (*P*, pp. 187–88)

To whatever extent Empedocles' words may reflect Arnold's darkest feelings at the time of the poem's composition (particularly in his letters to Clough[48]), the melodramatic tone of the philosopher's discourse seems implicitly ironic: "O sage! O sage! [...] And say [...]". Furthermore, the fact that Empedocles feels the threat of the annihilating potential of the sophists only confirms his inability to uphold his own philosophical vision. His "self–sufficing fount of joy" has dried up for that very reason.

As John Woolford points out, the first act of the poem is ethical–pedagogical, with Empedocles instructing Pausanias on the correct way to live his life, whilst the second, in which he reflects on the nature of his own self and his relations with the world is ontological–eschatological[49]. Yet, the apparently monological tone of act II is challenged by the contrasting voice of

[48] See, for example, Arnold's letter to Clough dated 23 September, 1849, "My dearest Clough these are damned times – everything is against one – the height to which knowledge has come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great *natures*, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities [...] our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties [...]" C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 156.

[49] John Woolford, "Arnold on Empedocles", *Review of English Studies*, 50, 1999, p. 35.

Callicles[50] that, from a distance, continues to prolong the dramatic interplay between the two diametrically opposing visions of destruction (Etna) and creation (song). In a most striking stage direction, Callicles' melodious song is eerily juxtaposed[51] with the description of Empedocles advancing towards the smoke and fire of the roaring volcano: "He [Empedocles] advances to the edge of the crater. Smoke and fire break forth with a loud noise, and Callicles is heard below singing". Already, Empedocles' gesture is indicative of defeat and an anticipation of his suicide.

Though much debate has circled around the significance of Callicles' final three songs[52], they should, as in the case of his previous songs, be viewed in terms of their dramatic function in relation to Empedocles' existential dilemmas. Though the latter denies the myths of Callicles' songs their true meaning by failing to see them as the objective expressions of a common humanity, their potential is not destroyed precisely because his interpretation of them depends on self–association: "He fables, yet speaks truth! [...] Great qualities are trodden down,/And littleness united/Is become invincible" (*P*, p.191). Empedocles' aristocratic vision of the individual against the ignorant and superstitious masses: "[...] a people of children/Who thronged me in their cities [...]" (*P*, p. 192) recalls the fact that, in competing against the gods with his magic, he has become a figure of worship himself. In his rejection of human community, therefore, he necessarily rejects the myths that perpetrate the idea of pre–ordered existence. Furthermore, the fact that both of Callicles',

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[50] A. Dwight Culler, *op. cit.*, p. 176 notes how Callicles becomes a kind of chorus or disembodied voice at the end of the poem to the point of being indistinguishable from that of the author.

[51] Warren D. Anderson similarly notes something "[...] almost frightening", in Callicles' serenity, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[52] See, for example, P. Zietlow, *op. cit.*, in particular pp. 246–251. See also Ruth ApRoberts, "The Theme of Vocation in Matthew Arnold", *Victorian Poetry*, 16, 1978, pp. 53–5 for a discussion on the dialogic relationship between Empedocles' speeches and Callicles' songs.

songs are concerned with the punishment of individual assertion (the rebel Typho vanquished by Zeus and Marsyas slain by Apollo for daring to compete with his music[53]) is an ironic prediction of Empedocles' own tragic destiny. In the following description images are juxtaposed in a way analogous to the extraordinary stage direction of the opening:

> But an awful pleasure bland
> Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face
> When the sound climbs near his seat,
> The Olympian council sees;
> As he lets his lax right hand,
> Which the lightnings doth embrace,
> Sink upon his mighty knees.
> And the eagle, at the beck
> Of the appeasing, gracious harmony,
> Droops all his sheeny, brown, deep–feathered neck,
> Nestling nearer to Jove's feet;
> While o'er his Sovran eye
> The curtains of the blue films slowly meet.
> And the white Olympus–peaks
> Rosily brighten, and the soothed Gods smile
> At one another from their golden chairs,
> And no one round the charméd circle speaks (*P*, pp. 190–91).

The frightening discrepancy between Empedocles' despair and Callicles' serenity is underscored in the contrast posited here between the calm, static world of the gods qualified by the lethargic lexemes "bland", "lax", "sink", "gracious", "slowly" and "soothed", together with a continual deceleration of the metrical pace[54], and their potential violence as counter qualified by the

[53] Apollo, though not the actual inventor of the lyre (Mercury is said to have invented the instrument), is the god who gave it its fame.

[54] Arnold's metrical skills cannot be adequately emphasised. Here he achieves a balanced structure of strophe and antistrophe (two initial quatrains followed by two twenty–two line stanzas) whose considerable variation and deviation contribute much towards the effect of deceleration. The first quatrain varies in number of syllables (the first line contains 10 syllables, but 9 if lyre is not considered as a diaeresis, the second 11, the third 10 and the fourth 6) as well as in stress pattern (alternating iambic and anapaestic meters), against

lexemes "awful", "Thunderer's", "lightnings" and "mighty". Callicles' song of Typho opens Empedocles' eyes to the fact that his magic, which he merely used to trick people, had been better left abandoned: "All the fool's-armoury of magic! Lie there,/My golden circlet,/My purple robe!" (*P*, p. 192), just as his song of Apollo, which, in turn, reminds him of his state of isolation from men, induces him to lay down the "scornful Apollo's ensign" (*P*, p. 194) of his poetic laurel bough. As Joyce Zonan notes, at this point Empedocles can no longer recuperate "his original, almost childlike identification with nature. Rather, he must embrace the Orphic way of purification, death and rebirth, choosing a literal enactment – death by fire – of the symbolic purging encouraged by the Orphics"[55].

Empedocles' dramatic final speech is an inevitably doomed search for a lost integrity within a confusion of prevailing "multitudinousness". His discourse wretchedly oscillates between the need for human companionship and the equally urgent need for absolute solitude, until he eventually realises that any contact with men only constitutes a threat to the integrity of the soul:

> Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?
> But they will gladly welcome him once more,
> And help him to unbend his too tense thought,
> And rid him of the presence of himself,
> And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,
> And haunt him, till the absence from himself,
> That other torment, grow unbearable;
> And he will fly to solitude again [...] (*P*, pp. 195–6).

For Empedocles, only death can cut these oscillations short: "and so/Bring him to poise. There is no other way [...]" (*P*, p. 196), but he momentarily resists this desperate realisation laps-

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which the second quatrain reverts to a traditional iambic pentameter for the first three lines and an iambic trimeter for the fourth. The metrical structure of two twenty–two line sections includes iambic pentameter, iambic trimeter and regular and irregular 7 syllable iambic tetrameters.

[55] Joyce Zonana, "Matthew Arnold and the Muse: The Limits of the Olympian Ideal", *Victorian Poetry*, 23 (1985), p. 66.

ing into a sentimental evocation of the purity and integrity of his glorious youth:

> Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
> Nor outward things were closed and dead to us;
> But we received the shock of mighty thoughts
> On simple minds with a pure natural joy;
> And if the sacred load oppressed our brain,
> We had the power to feel the pressure eased,
> The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again,
> In the delightful commerce of the world.
> We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
> Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy.
> The smallest thing could give us pleasure then—
> The sports of the country–people,
> A flute–note from the woods;
> Sunset over the sea;
> Seed time and harvest,
> The reapers in the corn,
> The vinedresser in his vineyard,
> The village–girl at her wheel (*P*, p. 197).

The smooth movement of the first eleven blank verse lines, with their alternation of enjambments and end–stops, is reminiscently Wordsworthian, as is the lexical choice (particularly the deliberate paradoxes in "shock of mighty thoughts", and "sacred load", together with the simple joys man is able to derive from the natural world)[56]. That Empedocles' enthusiastic recollections of the happy moments of his youth are dampened by his loss of poetic confidence is reflected in the metrical breakdown of the final seven lines, whose irregularity in syllable numbers is counteracted by the stubborn insistence of a regular dimeter pattern. Thus, the barrenness of the present threatens to annihilate all possibility of a harmonious interrelation between inner and outer life that once epitomised the philosopher's full response to life.

[56] Such echoes render problematic the view of Callicles as exclusive representation of the Wordsworthian voice. See, for example, P. Zietlow, *op. cit.*, n 2, p. 241 and A. D. Culler, *op. cit.*, 161.

Empedocles' lament at the passing away of a youthful world of grace and innocence which was well placed "on the road of truth" (*P*, p. 196), may also be read as a poignant epitaph for the death of a Romantic ideology which can no longer be shared. As far as the 'truth' is concerned, it remains an unqualified assertion, enveloped in Romantic subjectivity, intangible and insubstantial, the moment it is evoked. The fact that "fullness of life and power of feeling" are now only for the happy few: "for the souls at ease,/Who dwell on a firm basis of content!" (*P*. p. 197) is no consolation for Empedocles who has lost all faith, having not only outlived his prosperous days, but remained exiled in a world whose rules are alien to him. It is precisely this realisation of being "trapped in the troubled space between culture and consciousness"[57], that leads to his self–conflict, which constitutes the real double sidedness of the poem. Empedocles' friction with the common cultural code is already evident in his 'misinterpretations' of Callicles' songs. But it is further accentuated by his aristocratic detachment from the superficial and superstitious crowds ("a people of children") and his striving for a moral vision (in direct antagonism with the moral lethargy of the stoics) as evidenced in his invective to Pausanias.

The dramatic silence of the long pause preceding Empedocles' apostrophe to the stars is a symbolical enactment of his imminent death. The apostrophe is made up of two sections of almost equal length (25 x 22 lines) in which an initial objective shift of perspective indicating a temporary escape from the self on a vertical plane (self → stars) is negated by the circularity of Empedocles' inevitably self–obsessive discourse (stars → self). The two sections are also differentiated on a metrical level. The twenty five lines of the first section are an example of Arnold's experimentation in free verse and effectively articulate the hesitant movement of Empedocles' interrogative and conflicting thoughts:

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[57] James Longenbach, "Matthew Arnold and the Modern Apocalypse", in *P.M.L.A.*, 104 (1989), p. 848.

And you, ye stars,
Who slowly begin to marshal,
As of old, in the fields of heaven,
Your distant, melancholy lines!
Have you, too, survived yourselves?
Are you, too, what I fear to become?
You, too once lived;
You, too, moved joyfully
Amongst august companions,
In an older world, peopled by Gods,
In a mightier order,
The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven (*P*, p. 198).

The first eleven dimeter and trimeter lines culminate in the triumphantly sonorous and galloping dactylic pentameter of the twelfth line which evokes the glory of a lost "older world". However, this central line breeds no other metrical equivalent. In fact, the second part opens with an adversative conjunction and trips haltingly as before until expiring lethargically in a final dimeter line whose stresses depend on the near repetition of "weary" and "weariness":

But now, ye kindle
Your lonely, cold–shining lights,
Unwilling lingerers
In the heavenly wilderness,
For a younger, ignoble world;
And renew, by necessity,
Night after night your courses,
In echoing, unneared silence,
Above a race you know not –
Uncaring and undelighted,
Without friend and without home;
Weary like us, though not
Weary with our weariness (*P*, p. 198).

Empedocles' attempt to elucidate his own gloomy interrogations by recalling "a mightier order" of universal harmony break down as soon as he links his own plight with that of the stars: "Are you, too, what I fear to become [...]?". In the second part, he precisely interprets their existence as a mirror of his own fate.

Thus, the "older mightier order" succumbs to a "younger ignoble world" (underlinings mine); the joyfulness with which the stars once moved "amongst august companions" dwindles to the sad condition of Empedocles' own loneliness: "Uncaring and undelighted" (again Arnold's characteristic use of litotes) "without friend and without home [...]". The shift to regular pentameter blank verse in the second part of Empedocles' apostrophe, underlines the conviction of his negative conclusions[58]. The four times repeated "no" in the first two lines are indicative of this ultimate negativity:

> No, no, ye stars! There is no death with you,
> No languor, no decay! Languor and death,
> They are with me, not you! Ye are alive –
> Ye, and the pure dark ether where ye ride
> Brilliant above me! (*P*, p. 199)

No sooner does Empedocles trace a connection between himself and the outer world, in terms of the pathetic fallacy, than he almost as instantly recognises the essential division. To the four–times repeated "no" in the first four lines corresponds the four–times repeated "I" in the final lines, thus reinforcing on a rhetorical level Empedocles' ultimate self–negation:

> I only
> Whose spring of hope is dried, whose spirit has failed,
> I, who have not, like these, in solitude

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[58] Significantly, Empedocles speaks the language of iambics whenever deep in reflection, or seeking to re–order his thoughts, e.g.:

> / / / / /
> For I must henceforth speak no more with man
> / / / / /
> He has his lesson too, and that debt's paid;
> [...]
> / / / / /
> No, thou art come too late Empedocles
> / / / /
> And the world hath the day, and must break thee [...] (*P*, p. 186).

> Maintained courage and force, and in myself
> Nursed an immortal vigour – I alone
> Am dead to life and joy, therefore I read
> In all things my own deadness
> (*P*, pp. 199–200, underlinings mine).

As Empedocles stands upon the charred and quaking crust of the terrible volcano, he becomes intensely aware of the life of the natural world both above and below. But it is a life menacing in its potential for destruction:

> And thou, fiery world,
> That sapp'st the vitals of this terrible mount
> Upon whose charred and quaking crust I stand –
> Thou, too, brimmest with life! – the sea of cloud,
> That heaves its white and billowy vapours up
> To moat this isle of ashes from the world,
> Lives; and that other fainter sea, far down,
> O'er whose lit floor a road of moonbeams leads
> To Etna's Liparëan sister–fires
> And the long dusky line of Italy – (*P*, p. 199).

Far from a Wordsworthian acknowledgment of the moral benefits of nature, Empedocles underlines its frightening autonomy in lexemes connotative of death and annihilation: "sapp'st [...] charred [...] quaking [...] ashes [...] sister–fires [...] dusky". His recognition of the schism between his own subjective world and the objective world of nature leads to the ultimately negative qualifications of his subjective perceptions: "[...] therefore I read/In all things my own deadness" – this final line being the key to the whole section and exposing the circular movement of Empedocles' thoughts. Yet, his state of depression is not intended to represent that of everyman, but of 'thinking' man who, in isolating himself from the world around him, "has not maintained courage" and therefore lost all self–integrity.

The quatrain that follows has an unpredictable metrical pattern in emulation of Empedocles' confusion and despair as is evidenced in the distribution of stresses within irregular, anapaestic and iambic patterns:

/ / /
Oh, that I could glow like this mountain!
/ / / / /
Oh, that my heart bounded with the swell of the sea!
/ / / / /
Oh, that my soul were full of light as the stars!
/ / / /
Oh, that it brooded over the world like the air![59] (*P*, p. 200)

The forced tone of the repeated interjection: "Oh" is a deliberate ploy on the part of the poet to expose the rhetoric of a dead Romantic ideology. The emptiness is reinforced by the fact that any liveliness is derived from the metrical pattern, rather than the diction, which ranges from nine to twelve syllables, almost in buoyant mockery of the philosopher's desolation. The heavier movement of the regular iambic lines of the following quatrain, on the other hand, appropriately articulate Empedocles' ultimate despair:

> But no, this heart will glow no more; thou art
> A living man no more, Empedocles!
> Nothing but a devouring flame of thought –
> But a naked, eternally restless mind! (*P*, p. 200)

In finally reducing himself to a source of negative energy, void of a corporeal identity, Empedocles hypothesises a condition of joy in the body's return to the elements. Here Arnold freely draws on the ideas of the original philosopher regarding the transmigration of the soul. It may be interesting to compare the following two passages which both concern the four elements which make up the soul:

> By earth we see earth; by water, water:
> By aither, shining aither; but by fire, blazing fire [...]
> (*EMP*, p. 221).

[59] The reduction to four stresses in the last line may be seen as another metrical parallel to Empedocles' break with the world (see also note 47).

> To the elements it came from
> Everything will return –
> Our bodies to earth,
> Our blood to water,
> Heat to fire,
> Breath to air [...] (*P*, p. 200).

Similar to the original Empedocles, Arnold's character refutes the idea of the finality of death. Just as the former sees no "end in destructive death/but only mixture and interchange of what is mixed [...]" (*EMP*, p. 221)[60], the latter envisions a blissful state of entombment in which "we might gladly share the fruitful stir/Down in our mother earth's miraculous womb [...]" (*P*, p. 200). As far as the body is concerned, the return to the womb constitutes a consoling and reconciling image. Yet the ultimate preoccupation is not with the body, but the mind:

> But mind, but thought –
> If these have been the master part of us –
> Where will *they* find their parent element?
> What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home?
> (*P*, p. 200, original italics)

In spite of the enslaving influence of the mind, Empedocles has also received a broader awareness of the universe which he must take into account if, to paraphrase Barbara T. Gates, he is to put his death under his own power[61], thus making his will to die correspond with a moment of self–integrity. In spite of this, Empedocles' leap into the flames is not an entirely unproblematic finale and there is a haunting sense that he is ultimately unable to completely conquer the self–doubts with which he is continually tormented, particularly in view of the fact that his

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[60] The following lines further clarify the logic behind Empedocles' doctrine: "For it is impossible that there should be coming to be from what is not/and that what is should be destroyed is unaccomplished and unheard of [...]", *EMP*, p. 221.

[61] Barbara T. Gates, *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories*, Princeton N.J., Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 87.

final discourse oscillates irresolutely between loss of self and self–recovery: "And we shall be the strangers of the world [...] And then we shall unwillingly return [...] And in our individual human state/Go through the sad probation all again,/To see if we will poise our life at last [...]" (*P*, pp. 201–2). The determined search for the "deep–buried self" with which Empedocles may be finally united with the world is characterised by frustrating counter–remarks on the soul's self–estrangement[62] and continual state of perdition:

> Or whether we will once more fall away
> Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
> Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
> Forged by the imperious lonely thinking–power (*P*, p. 203)[63].
> [...]
> And who can say: I have been always free,
> Lived ever in the light of my own soul? –
> I cannot; I have lived in wrath and gloom,
> Fierce, disputatious, ever at war with man,
> Far from my own soul, far from warmth and light (*P*, pp. 202–3).

Empedocles' evocation of "warmth and light" recalls Arnold's own coupling of "sweetness and light" derived from Swift. His sense that "the immense spiritual significance of the Greeks as having been inspired with this central and happy idea of the essential character of human perfection [...]"[64] is also pertinent to *Empedocles on Etna*, which fails to reconcile into a unity or

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[62] "The unrecognising sea" evoked by Empedocles (*P*, p. 201) recalls "The strange scrawled rocks" in *Resignation* (*P*, p. 100).

[63] The image of the final line recalls Blake's "mind–forg'd manacles" from *London* in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

[64] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 66–7. For the quotation from Swift's *Battle of the Books*, see Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub with Other Early Works – 1696–1707*, ed. Herbert Davies, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1965, p. 151: "[...] instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chose to fill our hives with HONEY and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two Noblest of Things, which are Sweetness and Light." The words form the conclusion to Aesop's lengthy descant.

harmony the binary oppositions embodied by Callicles and Empedocles. However, the latter also recognises the sincerity behind his struggle in a momentary and uncharacteristic flash of pride:

> But I have not grown easy in these bonds –
> But I have not denied what bonds these were.
> Yea, I take myself to witness,
> That I have loved no darkness,
> Sophisticated no truth,
> Nursed no delusion,
> Allowed no fear! (*P*, p. 203)

As he leaps into the roaring flames of Etna, Empedocles carries with him the illusion that thought has been unsuccessful in totally enslaving him. Nevertheless, his conviction that he is "not to die wholly" and that he is suddenly able to "breathe free" (*P*, p. 203) is instantaneously negated by the anxious doubts of his desperate final words:

> Is it but for a moment?
> – Ah, boil up, ye vapours!
> Leap and roar, thou sea of fire!
> My soul glows to meet you.
> Ere it flag, ere the mists
> Of despondency and gloom
> Rush over it again,
> Receive me, save me! (*P*, p. 204)

The hope for rebirth he envisages after his suicide is marred by a partial awareness that he dies only with the illusion of being 'saved': "[...] ere it flag, ere the mists/Of despondency and gloom/Rush over it again [...]". Therefore, his final utterance has all the desperation of a prayer for help.

The irony behind Callicles' concluding song does not lie solely in the fact that he is unaware of Empedocles' death. His paean to Apollo, in contrast to his opening lines in act I, actually declares the inappropriateness of Etna as a setting for the

Muses[65]: "Not here, O Apollo!/Are haunts meet for thee [...]" (*P*, p. 204). Furthermore, the metrical regularity of its dimeter lines reflects the call for order and stability:

> First hymn they the Father
> Of all things; and then,
> The rest of immortals,
> The action of men.
>
> The day in his hotness,
> The strife with the palm;
> The night in her silence,
> The stars in their calm (*P*, p. 206).

However, as Joyce Zonana rightly observes, Callicles' song may provide "a harmonious and calm conclusion to the painful drama of Empedocles" but "it is hardly a resolution of that drama"[66]. The two poetical modes represented by Callicles (pastoral/conventional) and Empedocles (subjective/Romantic) remain irrevocably separate. The final voice in the poem is a stiff, stylised, and heartless utterance of an artificial poetic convention. The individual voice of human suffering has disappeared, swallowed up by the violent flames of a raging volcano that embody the destructiveness of the passions when not countered by

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[65] See A. Roper, *op. cit.*, p. 188 who perceptively points out how Arnold, by including the phenomena of the natural world in his philosophical concepts, makes Etna an epitome of the natural world which: "Like man exemplifies the perpetual shifting relationship between harmony and strife". Thus, "Callicles opens the drama by asking of Apollo 'what mortal could be sick or sorry here?' [...] and closes the drama by assuring Apollo that this is no place for the god of poetry [...] ".

[66] J. Zonana, *op. cit.*, p. 67. See also Anne Marie Moss, "Seeing Through a Glass Darkly: Perspective in Romantic and Victorian Landscape", in *Influence and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Poetry*, *cit.*, p. 258: "Juxtaposed within the multi–vocal texture of the poem to the homily of Empedocles, the lyrics of Callicles contain no consolatory gesture for the philosopher's suicidal despair." See also D. G. Riede, *op. cit.*, p. 92, who points out that "the simple fact Arnold withdrew the poem in 1853 indicates that he himself did not regard Callicles' song as definitive, did not regard the 'dialogue of the mind with itself' as closed".

the vision of objectivity. As a result of this irreconcilability, the irony of Callicles' final song, which functions in juxtaposition to Empedocles' farewell speech and not as a reply, may be fully appreciated. Just as Empedocles invokes an illusive after–life (or after–lives) through his corporeal reunification with the elements, Callicles appeals to a reassuring, hierarchically organised world of myth: "First hymn they the Father [...] and then,/The rest of immortals/The action of men" (underlings mine). That the only representation of the action of men in the poem is Empedocles' suicide is, of course, the ultimate irony. The static serenity evoked in the closing lines of Callicles' hymn to Apollo: "The night in her silence/The stars in their calm", rather than neatly tying up the poem in a final image of consolation, functions in juxtaposition to the disturbingly pregnant silence that follows Empedocles' deathly leap into the crater of Etna. It is this silence that continues to haunt the imagination long after the poem ends.

3

The Fragmented and the Buried Self

Madman or slave, must man be one?

Arnold's critical assessments in the *Preface* to *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* highlight the ideological shift that occurred in his poetic views between 1849 and 1853. The wise passiveness advocated in *Resignation* and the unresolved existential dilemmas of *Empedocles on Etna*, are supplanted by his concept of a poetry of ideas to present eternally relevant moral concerns in terms of a total impression. Nevertheless, this third 'phase' of his artistic vision is, in actual fact, frustrated by his own poetic practice, since the two mutually exclusive modes of classical objectivity and distraught modern subjectivity that tear at the heart of Empedocles, continue to characterise the mood of Arnold's poetry. In his macro text, the objective approach highlighted by the mythological subjects of his dramatic works *Tristram and Iseult, Sohrab and Rustrum,* and later *Balder Dead* and *Merope,* teasingly alternates with his acutely subjective representation of the self in the lyrical verses and elegies. Not only, but in a letter to his sister Jane, dated 7 March 1849, no less than four years before the *Preface,* Arnold was quick to pinpoint what he already realised as the underlying 'weakness' within the individual poems themselves:

> Fret not yourself to make my poems square in all their parts, but like what you can my darling. The true reason why parts suit you while others do not is that my poems are fragments i.e. that I am fragments, while you are a whole: the whole effect of my poems is quite vague & indeterminate: this is their weakness [...][1].

The fragmentation of "separate thoughts and images" on which his criticism of Romantic verse focuses in the *Preface,* therefore

[1] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

ironically backfires onto the poet himself. Yet, as Anne Marie Ross has pointed out, fragmentation in Romantic poetry: "[...] often instigates the visionary moment from incompleteness to wholeness whereas in Victorian poetry fragmentariness is a constituent element in human perception[2]." For Arnold, fragmentation undoubtedly constitutes an artistic principle, as testified by his own candid admission that poetic composition is nothing less than "an actual tearing of oneself to pieces"[3]. For the modern reader, the fact that his poetry enacts the cognitive difficulties in transforming the fragmentary experience of "the world's multitudinousness" into a wholeness, constitutes a virtue, and is precisely that which makes him a forerunner among the Victorians. The extent to which his fragmentation is a modernist feature or merely an expression of an ideological and psychological disorientation is, however, a moot point that may be side–stepped for the more interesting question of his equation between 'poetic' self and 'real' self. Arnold's diagnosis is undeniably intriguing from a psycho–biographical point of view, especially when one recalls the important role his sister played in his artistic development. For in bestowing onto her (as alter–ego) the quality of wholeness ("you are a whole") lacking in his own self, he masochistically underlines his failure as man *and* poet ("my poems are fragments" i. e. [...] 'I am fragments' [...][4]. More pertinently, however, is the discrepancy implicitly embedded in his blunt self–analysis – and borne out in the poems – between the true, integral "buried self" and the inconsis-

[2] A. M. Ross, *op. cit.*, p 253.

[3] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 402. From a letter to K dated 6 August (for September), 1858.

[4] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 171. In a letter to Jane dated May 1850, Arnold directly implicates his sister in his theory in a powerful declaration of brotherly affection: "You my darling have been a refreshing thought to me in my driest periods: I may say that you have been one of the most faithful witnesses (almost the only one after Papa) among those with whom I have lived & spoken of the reality & possibility of that abiding inward life which we all desire, most of us talk about & few possess – and I have a confidence in you & in this so great that I know you will never be false to yourself: and everything merely fanciful & romantic should be sacrificed to truth."

tent and contradictory, divided or fragmented self. Far from intending the mutually exclusive characteristics of a split identity, these distinctions, though qualified by a subjective/objective polarity (as Arnold puts it in *Obermann* "[...] two desires toss about/The poet's feverish blood/One drives him to the world without/And one to solitude [...]", *P*, p. 140) are governed by the spatial coordinates of parallel itineraries along which, on the surface level, the individual, anaesthetized by the fret and senselessness of daily life, is unable to detect the real, buried self that lies concealed in the profound level of the "unregarded river of our life" (*P*, p. 288)[5]. Arnold's conception of poetry as the direct preoccupation of subjective (i.e. truthful to the individual) experience is a Wordsworthian legacy with which he has no qualms in identifying[6]. In a sense, his lyrical poems are conceived as a series of appeals to the "buried self" which alone can utter poetic 'truths'[7]. As he states in his essay "Wordsworth", poetry is: "[...] nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth [...][8]." For Arnold, it is precisely Wordsworth's greatness that: (he) "tells of what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source" (i.e. nature), "and yet a source where all

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[5] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero–Worship and the Heroic in History*, Notes and Introduction Michael K. Goldberg, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, University of California Press, 1993, p. 69. Arnold's notion may well owe something to Carlyle's concept of the 'Divine Idea', derived in turn from Fichte, which lies at the bottom of all appearances: "To the mass of men no such Divine Idea is recognisable in the world; they live merely [...] among the superficialities, practicalities and shows of the world, not dreaming that there is anything divine under them".

[6] D. G. James, *op. cit.*, p. 58, makes the interesting observation that Arnold's Preface is a self–conscious imitation of Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, to the point that "the manner and rhythms of it are more Wordsworth's than Arnold's own".

[7] The term 'truths' is significant, for Arnold's conflict is not characterised by a moral scale of values (good versus bad) but by ontological investigation (false versus true). In his prose works, Arnold later altered his terms to those of the Good and the Bad Self. See also A. D. Culler, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

[8] R. H. Super, *op. cit.*, vol. IX, p. 39.

may go and draw for it[9]." Above all, he tells it with the sincerity of first-hand experience: "Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique[10]." Besides indicating Arnold's partial realignment with a Romantic tradition he otherwise eschews, these comments serve to clarify how his distinction between "parts that suit" and "others" that "do not" reflect his uncomfortable recognition of the discrepancy between the poetry he was actually composing, which he felt to be a selective and false representation of the self, and the poetry he was striving to achieve and that would be the closest expression of the real "buried" self. For Arnold, Wordsworth's poetry has a saving grace, which, as has been noted, consists in the fact that: "[...] his imaginative system allows for at least moments of personal assurance from memories that mitigate the fret and fluster of modern life[11]." In view of this possible ideal, Arnold's poetry plays out the tensions of a parallel itinerary represented by two distinct selves: the restless, fragmented self, helplessly caught up in the "stupefying power" of the daily flux of an existence void of significance (*P*, p. 290), and the true, permanent, "buried self" that lives in calm detachment from the tensions and struggles of daily existence but rarely, if ever, emerges from "[...] the deep recesses of our breast [...]" (*P*, p. 288).

A Summer Night and *The Buried Life*, both of which were included in the volume of 1852 and revived in 1855, are among the poet's most powerful explorations of this binary opposition between the fragmented and the buried self. In both poems, his formal experimentation is borne out by the adoption of a metrical pattern that almost spills over into free–verse, and a decidedly irregular rhyme scheme. The prosodical tension between regularity and irregularity, appropriately reflects the dramatic conflict between the restless fragmented self and the calm detached real buried self that recurs throughout the poem. The

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[10] *Ibid*, p. 54.
[11] R. A. Duerksen, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

ten–line stanza that constitutes the incipit of *A Summer Night*, is divided into two equal parts which immediately encapsulate the very different existential dimensions of these binary states:

> In the deserted, moon–blanched street,
> How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
> Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
> Silent and white, unopening down,
> Repellent as the world; but see,
> A break between the housetops shows
> The moon! and, lost behind her, fading dim
> Into the dewy dark obscurity
> Down at the far horizon's rim,
> Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose! (*P*, p. 282)

The first five lines present the essentially antagonistic relationship between the individual and the "repellent" human world in which any attempt at communication is denied as the vagueness of the speaker's gaze is met with the intimidating and blank frown of the "silent and white" windows. Arnold's use of negative prefixes in the poem is significant. Here the negative adjective "unopening", alludes to the possibility of acceptance in the root adjective 'open', whilst simultaneously underlining the abstract entity of a disturbingly impersonal presence that excludes the speaker from its inner world. The pivotal point of transition which occurs at the caesura break in line five, is marked by the speaker's self–exclamation of wonder: "but see!" as the negative features of the descriptive elements in the first part dissolve before the vertical movement of gradual euphoria in which a very different landscape is revealed: the presumably half–hidden moon of "the moon–blanched street" becomes the moon that suddenly "between the housetops shows;" to the despondent and empty street itself corresponds "a whole tract of heaven." This sudden transfiguration from a cold, hostile universe through which the speaker moves like a lonely exile, to a sudden heart warming prospect of the opening sky is one of the most magnificent descriptive sequences in Arnold's poetry. The liberating effect of the spatial expansion *EARTH* → *HEAVEN*

on the speaker's psyche leads to a temporal shift in his recollection: "Of a past night, and a far different scene" (*P*, p. 283). Yet, in spite of the lyrically soothing evocation of that past moment in which: "The spring–tide's brimming flow/Heaved dazzlingly between;/Houses, with long white sweep, Girdled the glistening bay [...]" (*P*, p. 283), the speaker is forced to acknowledge a condition of stasis in which he recognises within himself "the same restless pacings too and fro/And the same vainly–throbbing heart [...]" (*P*, p. 283). Denied all communication with the world of men, he is compelled to compose an imaginary dialogue with a calm moon whose words serve to objectify a personal dilemma which consists fundamentally in the inability to live fully either physically or spiritually:

> And the calm moonlight seems to say:
> *Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,*
> *Which neither deadens into rest,*
> *Nor ever feels the fiery glow*
> *That whirls the spirit from itself away,*
> *But fluctuates to and fro,*
> *Never by passion quite possessed*
> *And never quite benumbed by the world's sway?*
> (*P*, p. 283)

The speaker's loneliness and isolation is heightened by the fact that, like Empedocles, he continually hovers in a limbo state: "And I, I know not if to pray/Still to be what I am, or yield and be/Like all the other men I see" (*P*, p. 283). The resistance to be like other men is justified by a sombre vision in which humanity is reduced to the two basic categories of 'slaves' or 'madmen':

> For most men in a brazen prison live,
> Where, in the sun's hot eye,
> With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
> Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,

Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall[12]
(*P*, p. 284).

In his shift from subjective to objective preoccupation, Arnold's nightmare depiction of a fruitless industrial world[13] in which men futilely and purposelessly expend all their vital energies, is rendered in lexical items that are connotative of an inferno: the emotionally marked "brazon", (semi–alliterating with "prison"), denotes the shamelessness of man's imprisoned condition as well as suggesting its metallic harshness (brazon = brass). This miserable state is compounded by the hostility of the natural world, characterised by the "sun's hot eye" that renders men blind to the possibilities of an alternative existence[14]. Thus, the negative prefix in "unmeaning" significantly conveys what is lost or ignored. The weariness and apathy of this senseless activity is rendered on a syntactic level in the convoluted inversions of the enjambed clause: "[...] they languidly/Their lives to some meaning taskwork give," in which subject and complement precede object and verb. The whole passage is marked by heavily stressed lines which, on a phonetic level, enact the exhaustion and toil of an activity whose *fresh* products are ironically the result of "barren labour" (*P*, p. 284). The gloomy atmosphere appears all the more forlorn by the fact that men continue to pursue this futile existence regardless: "Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall" (*P*, p. 284). Their only final

[12] For a similar example of gruelling fruitless labour see *Morality;* "With aching hands and bleeding feet/We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;/We bear the burden and the heat/Of the long day and wish 'twere done [...]" (*P*, p. 274).

[13] See T. Carlyle, *op. cit.*, p. 137: "Complaint is often made, in these times, of what we call the disorganised condition of society: how ill many arranged forces of society fulfil their work, how many powerful forces are seen working in a wasteful, chaotic, altogether unarranged manner."

[14] The hostility of the natural world in the face of man's labour in *A Summer Night* contrasts with Arnold's sense of purposeful activity in his early *Sonnet* to nature, in which the "glorious tasks" of the "sleepless ministers" of nature serve as an inspiration, against "man's senseless uproar mingling with his toil" (*P*, p. 19).

prospect being to die: "Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest" (*P*, p. 284). Arnold's negative prefixes once again serve to underline man's total ignorance of the conditions of freedom and grace which are denied him. At the same time, the adjective "unblessed" appropriately cross–rhymes with the noun "rest" which serves to connect the fates of these men with those that comprise the speaker's second category:

> And the rest, a few,
> Escape their prison and depart
> On the wide ocean of life anew.
> There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart
> Listeth, will sail;
> Nor doth he know how there prevail,
> Despotic on that sea,
> Trade–winds which cross it from eternity
> (*P*, pp. 284–85).

The phonic link stresses the common destinies of these two categories of mankind. For just as the former dies in ignorance, the latter, whilst braving the "despotic" winds, follows a false way, "undebarred/By thwarting signs" (*P*, p. 285). His escape from the prison is merely illusory, leading him to further tempests and lightening until his ship is reduced to a driving wreck:

> With anguished face and flying hair
> Grasping the rudder hard,
> Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
> Still standing for some false, impossible shore.
> And sterner comes the roar
> Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
> Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
> And he too disappears, and comes no more[15] (*P*, p. 285).

The individual's stubborn pursuit of an impossible goal is countered by overpowering forces that cruelly render his voyage a ludicrous enterprise, until he also dies an insignificant death in

[15] For a very similar marine image of man's struggle with the elements see *The Future*, (*P*, pp. 278–82).

the violent storms of the indifferent elements. Given these only alternative existences, the poem would seem to offer no form of hope whatsoever. If there is a means of redemption from this tragic fate it lies in the speaker's final question: "Is there no life, but these alone?/Madman or slave, must man be one?" (*P*, p. 285), which points to a third possibility ("be what I am", underlining mine) glimpsed in the liberating force of the natural scene of the beginning of the poem. Similarly to the conclusion of *Resignation*, but without its disturbing ambiguity, *A Summer Night* offers a potential image of hope, clinched by the optimism of its concluding iambic trimeter couplet: "How fair a lot to fill/Is left to each man still!" (*P*, p. 286). In the divine clarity and calm of the "untroubled" and unpassionate" heavens (*P*, p. 286), the speaker envisages an embodiment of the boundless possibilities of man's "soul's horizons" (*P*, p. 286). This final implicit choice to "be what I am" resides not in merging into the oblivion of the flux of daily life by blindly and unthinkingly obeying conventions, nor by stubbornly following a fixed but unknown objective, but in being true to the buried self that alone has the potential to discover its genuine spiritual identity.

In *The Buried Life*, which anticipates the central themes of *Switzerland*, the schism between fragmented and hidden self is explored through a surprisingly modern poetic form and psychological perspective. In spite of this, the tenets of Arnold's existential credo would be regarded today as more consonant with Victorian moral precepts than with modern views of the super–ego as such. The incipit presents a particular moment of emotional complexity in *medias res* in which the speaker's light–hearted banter with his woman, who remains the silent addressee of the poem, suddenly induces in him paradoxical feelings of melancholy and restlessness. The speaker's embarrassment and earnestness is effectively rendered through rocking lineation, verbal repetition, hesitation and inverted word order:

> Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
> Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!

> I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.
> Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
> We know, we know that we can smile!
> But there's a something in this breast,
> To which thy light words bring no rest,
> And thy gay smiles no anodyne
> (*P*, p. 286, underlinings mine).

The opening lexeme ("light") functions as an ironic point of departure for the speaker's ruminations on the deep buried life. Here, more intimately than in *A Summer Night*, Arnold probes beyond the surface layer of the conventional forces that condition the individual from revealing his or her true self:

> I knew the mass of men concealed
> Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed
> They would by other men be met
> With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;
> I knew they lived and moved
> Tricked in disguises, alien to the rest
> Of men, and alien to themselves – and yet
> The same heart beats in every human breast! (*P*, p. 287)

The binary opposition between human mistrust and the possibility of human solidarity is outlined in a sequence that, as a result of its heavy enjambment, moves with a natural, spoken rhythm that is comparable to Browning's dramatic monologues. Even more interestingly, the urgent didactic tone that runs throughout is underlined by a series of rhetorical repetitions (a recurrent feature of Arnold's lyrics[16]) that drive home the speaker's insistence that fidelity to the genuine self is paradigmatic of individ-

[16] The following are other examples of Arnold's use of rhetorical repetition in the poem: "Alas, is even love too weak [...] Are even lovers powerless to reveal [...]? [...] if even we/Even for a moment [...] But often in the world's most crowded streets,/But often, in the din of strife [...] And we have been on many thousand lines,/And we have shown on each talent and power/But hardly have we, for one little hour/Been on our own line, have we been ourselves/Hardly had skill to utter one of all/The nameless feelings that course through our breast/But they course on forever unexpressed [...]" (underlinings mine).

ual freedom, whereas man, in his frivolousness, is constantly possessed by distractions ("He would pour himself into every strife" (*P*, p. 288) and thereby loses his true identity[17]. In an image analogous to the helmsman's pursuit of his unknown goal in *A Summer Night*, the speaker fancies the individual following, in spite of himself: "The unregarded river of our life [...] Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,/Though driving on with it eternally" (*P*, p. 289). In this sense, *A Summer Night* and *The Buried Life* offer central images of the individual's search for truth, the former underlining its inevitable futility, the latter suggesting a possibility of illumination and redemption that is never entirely absent. *The Buried Life* therefore, overturns the negative representation of man's blind quest in *A Summer Night* with a cautious optimism conveyed in the apparently paradoxical image of man on a parallel itinerary, transported by the violent currents of the sea yet, at the same time, unconsciously pursuing the stream of his buried self. The following sequence, whose tone is reminiscent of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*[18], perseveres with this intimation of optimism with the speaker's recognition that the desire to discover the "buried life" lies at the heart of every man:

> But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
> But often, in the din of strife,
> There rises an unspeakable desire
> After the knowledge of our buried life;
> A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
> In tracking out our true, original course;

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[17] See also *The Future*: "Only the tract where he sails/He wots of; only the thoughts,/Raised by the objects he passes, are his" (*P*, p. 279).

[18] D. G. Riede, op. cit., pp. 185–92 traces a "disturbing implication (p. 190) in Wordsworth's voice here that leads him to a series of intertextual observations (including Milton's Satan, Shakespeare's Hamlet and Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*) that lead to a Babel of ancestral voices fighting for recognition. Such a deconstructive process is typical of Riede's general approach which, ultimately, as Alan Grob has recently commented (see *op. cit.*, p. 15) "disturbingly prefigures current critical tendencies by having considerably more to say against than in favour of Arnold's poetry".

> A longing to inquire
> Into the mystery of this heart which beats
> So wild, so deep in us – to know
> Whence our lives come and where they go (*P*, p. 289).

From the anxiety of his initial rhetorical questions, the speaker moves to an increasingly intense conviction of the feasibility of his existential credo which is further signalled by the pronominal shift from third person singular to first person plural, (since the desire for the deep buried self, precisely, "beats in *every* human breast.") However, this is countered by the alternative realisation that, although many attempt to penetrate the hidden recesses of the self[19], none succeed in delving "deep enough" (*P*, p. 289). For the speaker, discovering the essential essence of the buried self is a cognitive process, which is why at the root of man's failure lies the question of a breakdown in language; to the "nameless sadness" which oppresses the speaker at the beginning of the poem corresponds the "nameless feelings" that hardly anyone "had skill to utter" and that "course on for ever unexpressed" (*P*, p. 290). Thus, the search for the buried life is essentially the search for a language with which it may be poetically represented: "And long we try in vain to speak and act/Our hidden self, and what we say and do/Is eloquent, is well – but 'tis not true!" (*P*, p. 290). Arnold's opposition between the false conventions of eloquence and good manners and the true realm of man's "life's flow" (*P*, p. 275) is also an opposition between two different language codes. The tentative resolution in the image of the two lovers sitting hand in hand brings the poem round full circle to the initial scene in which the speaker begs his lover to lay her hand in his and presages the spiritually beneficial effects of such a union:

> Only – but this is rare –
> When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
> When, jaded with the rush and glare

[19] As Empedocles himself declares: "[...] the wiser wight/In his own bosom delves" (*P*, p. 161).

> Of the interminable hours,
> Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear [...]
> A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
> And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again [...]
> A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
> And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
> The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze
> (*P*, pp. 290–91).

The communicative force envisaged in the lover's spiritual bond is essentially non–linguistic, and runs counter to the lover's scene in the incipit, as well as Arnold's recurrent representation of the otherwise uncommunicative nature of the relationship between men and women in the *Switzerland* poems. As an attempt to resolve the dilemma he has put forward it does not convince. Neither is it supposed to. Indeed, the poem concludes with a partial withdrawal of the speaker's optimism in a phrase tainted with indecision: "And then he *thinks* he knows/The hills where his life rose,/and the sea where it goes" (*P*, p. 291, italics mine)"[20]. In contrast to the tentatively optimistic conclusion of *A Summer Night*, the underlying scepticism of *The Buried Life* leaves a bitter trace of disappointment. Any hope in Arnold's philosophical and existential optimism regarding the existence of a "buried life" depends upon an unpronounced faith in the human being's essential virtue, a trust that, beyond the daily distractions that render people restless and insensitive, there is an uncontaminated region of their being in which commonly shared qualities of goodness, gentleness and kindness permanently reside.

Arnold's recurring stress on the importance of the buried self may explain the general absence of subjective representations of passion and sexuality in his poetry[21]. For, besides constituting only one dimension of human experience, "the tedious vain expense" of passion with its "thwarting currents of desire"

[20] A. Grob, *op. cit.*, p. 153, describes this phrase as "one of Arnold's most disheartening aporias".

[21] Significantly, the same lack of passion and sexuality can be seen in Wordsworth's poetry.

(*P*, p. 152), needs to be necessarily mastered because synonymous of the contradictory and destructive tendencies in human nature. The poet's quest for the real, "buried" self is a means of transcending the agitations of the passions, which, as he had already learned from *The Bhagavad Gita,* only lead to confusion of mind and ruin of reason, together with the other vanities and weaknesses of humankind's transient existence. Naturally, such an existential search is carried out at the expense of a non–representation of passion.

The lyrical poems dedicated to the mysterious figure of Marguerite, which Arnold grouped together under the general title *Switzerland*[22] for the first time in *Poems* (1853), can be seen as a series of attempts to explore the attitudes generated by such moral concerns. The poems, which bear little relation to English love lyrics[23], pivot around the inner conflicts evoked by the transitory and buried self in the attempt to provide a truthful and unflinching representation of the mental oscillations of an intellectual caught in a sentimental crisis. In an elaboration of the theme of the foreknowledge of human vanity explored in *To a Gipsy Child by the Sea–Shore*, Arnold effectively deconstructs the conventional codes of the love lyric in his dramatisation of the speaker's premature insight into the transient nature of love and passion. At the same time, however, the poetic voice, to a certain extent, runs counter to the anti–lyrical and anti–mythical stance adopted in *Resignation*. Much critical speculation has predictably grown around the actual existence (or non) of the woman (or women) who may have constituted models for Marguerite[24]. Unfortunately, it is outside the scope

[22] Arnold made three trips to the alpine resort of Thun in Switzerland. All of the poems refer to his first two visits (1848 and 1849) apart from *Terrace at Berne* which was composed on his third visit ten years later. For biographical accounts see P. Honan, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–167 and N. Murray, *op cit.*, pp. 78–87.

[23] Cf. P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

[24] The very name 'Marguerite', the French word for the 'daisy', alludes to a symbolic dimension that transcends the idea of a particular individual. It

of the present study to dwell on the fascinating, biographical aspects of this enigmatic relationship[25] except to point out that most critical accounts insist on a narrative continuity in the sequence[26], or, at least, a unity deriving from "an underlying paradox in the speaker's situation"[27], that is not always possible to maintain. Arnold's own constant jostling with their ordering in successive editions, until their final arrangement in 1877 (in which two of the titles usually included in critical discussions

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is also a potently ironic symbol for the speaker's naive expectations of the woman's sexual innocence.

[25] The curious reader may turn to the particularly lively exchange between Arnold's biographer Park Honan and the co–editor of the Longman edition of his poems Miriam Allot, see Miriam Allott, "Arnold and 'Marguerite' – Continued", and Park Honan, "The Character of Marguerite in Arnold's *Switzerland*", *Victorian Poetry*, 23 (1985).

[26] See, for example, L. Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 122: "[...] even without the refutation of external evidence, it is almost impossible to read the poems themselves without being convinced that here is the attempt of a man to tell the truth about an important experience."; Fraser Neiman, *Matthew Arnold*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1968, p. 70, who refers to a story partly dramatic and partly narrative in form "spoken in the first person by a Tiresias–like commentator [...]; A. D. Culler, who traces a development that conveniently coheres with his critical representation of Arnold's three realms of forest glade, burning plane and wide glimmering sea and concedes that: "The story is not told consecutively through the whole series of lyrics, but rather is told in each lyric individually, but with varying completeness and with a shift of emphasis which does give to the series a consecutive character" *op. cit.*, pp. 122–3; M. Allott, *op. cit.*, p. 126: "When read in chronological sequence [...] they are seen to possess a clearly defined narrative and dramatic structure". See also, I. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–24 and N. Murray, *op. cit.*, pp.79–87 both of whom favour a narrative development of the poems, intriguingly entwining biographical and poetical considerations. Even D. G. Riede, momentarily puts to one side his deconstructionist objectives: "it is important to note that it *does* very much matter to our understanding of the poems whether Arnold was writing autobiography or was generating a fictive construct [...], *op. cit.*, p. 166. More recently, A. Grob, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–150, interlaces his discussion of the poems with a psychological narrative of Arnold's misogynistic tendencies and sexual anxieties.

[27] Ronald E. Becht, "Matthew Arnold's 'Switzerland': The Drama of Choice", *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 13, 1 (1975), p. 36. I find Becht's sense of a "progressive collapse of the love affair" (p. 38) difficult to accept, considering that the poems never attempt to present a chronological 'plot' or sequence.

are omitted)[28], denotes a disregard rather than concern for narrative unity[29]. If anything, his indecision overrides the idea that there was a real order in the first place. A casual glance at the publication dates arouses more than slight suspicion that the poems actually refer to a single biographical experience. No less than nineteen years separates the publication of the first and last in the group, coincidentally embracing the entire span of Arnold's poetic activity. This is surely sufficient indication that his editorial manipulations were due to hindsight rather than dictated by the structural principles of a pre–conceived narrative sequence[30]. One may even go so far to say that the poet's continual revisions of the *Switzerland* group are paradigmatic of his editorial procedures regarding his macro–text as a whole[31]. It therefore seems more appropriate to view the temporal dimension of the poems in terms of circularity rather than sequentiality, since, in effect, they centripetally reiterate the oscillating poetical–ideological sentiments of the speaker who ponders on a failed relationship that is over before it has had the opportunity to be poetically represented[32]. From this perspective, Arnold's thematic exploration can be seen as intrinsically connected with his poetic experimentation. For it is surely no accident that, with the exceptions of *Isolation. To Marguerite* and

[28] For the complex issue of the alterations Arnold made to the group see C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–3.

[29] There is inevitably disagreement among critics as to which of the poems are part of the sequence. R. E. Becht, *op. cit.*, p. 35, for instance, follows the 1877 arrangement which places *Meeting* as the first poem and omits *A Memory Picture*. E. E. Hale identified no less than twenty–one poems which deal with the Marguerite theme, see C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–3. Among these include; *The River, Excuse, Indifference, Too Late, On the Rhine* and *Longing*.

[30] The first poems were originally scattered individually in the Empedocles volume in the following order: *The Lake, Parting, Absence, To Marguerite*.

[31] Similarly to Wordsworth, though not to the same radical extent, Arnold was a constant reviser of his poems.

[32] I agree with Culler's observation that the poems "are really variations on a theme rather than a narrative action consecutively developed [...]", *op. cit.*, p. 125.

To Marguerite – Continued), none of the compositions in the group adopt the same metrical pattern[33]. Although *Switzerland* contains less metrical variety than *Empedocles on Etna*, the patterns used nonetheless encompass all of the most common metrical modes adopted by Arnold in his macro-text. Even more significantly, his favourite metrical unit, the tetrameter, (a decidedly stronger stress pattern than the iambic tetrameter, though lacking its flexibility) which features in approximately forty per-cent of his poems, is adopted in no less than seven cases in the "Switzerland" group[34], five of which are structured according to the popular 4 x 4 formation of the ballad, and seven containing the same alternating rhyme pattern.

A Dream and *A Memory Picture* (originally titled "To My Friends Who Ridiculed a Tender Leave-Taking") were excluded by the poet in his 1877 grouping, and, admittedly, with some justification. *A Dream*, the only poem entirely written in blank verse[35], is marked by a synaesthetically sumptuous language that evokes an atmosphere of sexual fantasy that is present in none of the other poems:

> [...] behind the pines
> The mountain-skirts, with all their sylvan change
> Of bright leafed chestnuts and mossed walnut-trees,
> And the frail scarlet-buried ash, began.
> Swiss chalets glittered on the dewy slopes,
> And from some swarded shelf, high up, there came,

[33] The following metrical patterns are adopted in each poem. *A Memory Picture*: Trochaic tetrameter quatrains. *Meeting*: iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter quatrains. *A Dream*: Iambic pentameter blank verse. *Parting*: Anapaestic and iambic dimeters; iambic pentameter. *A Farewell*: Iambic tetrameter quatrains. *Isolation. To Marguerite*: Iambic tetrameter sestets. *To Marguerite – Continued*: Iambic tetrameter sestets. *Absence*: Iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter quatrains. *The Terrace at Berne*: Iambic tetrameter quatrains.

[34] That Arnold favours the four-beat rhythm is significant, since it allows for a degree of syllable variation that hovers between stress-metre and syllable-stress metre, a characteristic of Victorian prosodic experimentation which has its most extreme example in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

[35] *Parting* uses iambic pentameters as a metrical break within the same poem.

> Notes of wild pastoral music [...]
> Upon the mossy rocks at the stream's edge,
> Backed by the pines, a plank–built cottage stood,
> Bright in the sun; the climbing gourd–plant's leaves
> Muffled its walls, and on the stone–strewn roof
> Lay the warm golden gourds; golden, within,
> Under the eaves, peered rows of Indian corn (*P*, p. 370).

The emphatic use of assonance (italics) and alliteration, particularly the consonant clusters of this descriptive sequence (capitals) ("BRighT LeaFeD CHeSTNUTS, and moSSeD waLNUT Trees [...] a PLaNK BuiLT CoTTage STooD [...] the CLimbing gourd PLaNT'S LeaveS [...] STaNe STReWN [...]") are reminiscent of the verbal sensuousness of Keats (perhaps the one Romantic poet who does not come immediately to mind in connection with Arnold). Such verbal aestheticism, which is more characteristic of his early verse[36], is an illustration of the rhetorical sense (as opposed to the poetical sense) that Arnold was actually working against. Also, the theme of solitude and lack of communication, which is central to *Switzerland*, is played down by the fact that the poet is, for the only time, in the company of a male friend. The curious atmosphere poised between vision and reality that differentiates *A Dream* from the other poems in the group, is evident from the incipit in which the verity of the title is immediately put into question: "Was it a dream? We sailed, I thought we sailed,/Martin and I, down a green Alpine stream" (*P*, p. 370) and the central encounter in which the two men espy the figures of Olivia and Marguerite on their chalet balcony just as they instantly fade from their sight, contains one of the rare instances of female sexual desire in *Switzerland*:

> They saw us, they conferred; their bosoms heaved,
> And more than mortal impulse filled their eyes.
> Their lips moved; their white arms, waved eagerly,

[36] See P. Honan, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–1. In spite of the fact that the poem was published in 1853 one may accord with Honan's view that it belongs, together with most of the other lyrics, to 1849.

> Flashed once, like falling streams; – we rose, we gazed;
> One moment, on the rapid's top, our boat
> Hung poised – and then the darting river of Life,
> (Such now, me thought it was, the river of life),
> Loud thundering, bore us by; swift, swift it foamed,
> Black under cliffs it raced, round headlands shone.
> Soon the planked cottage by the sun–warmed pines
> Faded – the moss – the rocks; us burning plains,
> Bristled with cities, us the sea received (*P*, pp. 370–71).

Whether or not intended as an actual dream, the poem is marked by a linguistic discrepancy which creates a double vision between the wistful, picturesque landscape and suppressed sexuality (lines 1–30), on the one hand, and, on the other, the grim philosophical speculation of the concluding six lines, which follow the spatial–temporal liminality of the phrase "Hung poised", with the recurrent Arnoldian images of the "River of life" and the "burning plains". The last two lines are rhetorically emphasised in the surprising inverted syntax of object + subject + verb ("Us burning plains/Bristled with cities, us the sea received") with its spiritually negative implications of post–orgasmic experience. The fact that only the explicit of *A Dream* reflects the general tone of the *Switzerland* compositions may be the reason for Arnold's hesitations regarding its inclusion in the group.

Similarly to *A Dream, A Memory–Picture* also differs markedly in tone from the other poems. The explosive laughter to which its opening refers and the galloping trochaics of its seven syllable lines, jar insensitively with the underlying earnestness of the poetic voice:

> Laugh, my friends, and without blame
> Lightly quit what lightly came;
> Rich to–morrow as to–day,
> Spend as madly as you may! (*P*, p. 114)

With its deliberate discrepancy between language and metre, especially in the grating refrain: "Ere the parting hours go

by/Quick, thy tablets, Memory!"[37], *A Memory Picture* sets up a self–satiric tone that continues in the following two poems of the group, *A Meeting* and *Parting*, and which gradually yields to the melancholic representation of universal tragedy in the remaining six compositions. In this poem, the central themes of *Switzerland* are presented in terms of an implicit dialogue between the speaker, his mocking friends and Marguerite:

> Once I said: 'A face is gone
> If too hotly mused upon;
> And our best impressions are
> Those that do themselves repair.'
> Many a face I so let flee,
> Ah! is faded utterly
> [...]
> Marguerite says: 'As last year went,
> So the coming year'll be spent;
> Some day next year, I shall be,
> Entering heedless, kissed by thee.'
> Ah, I hope! – yet, once away,
> What may chain us, who can say? (*P*, p. 114)

The speaker's earnest attempt to conquer time and change by mnemonically 'fixing' Marguerite's beauty in his lines, leads to a mere catalogue of stereotypic features which leaves no space for individuality:

> Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
> Her soft face, her hair around;
> Tied under the archest chin [...]
> All her pale, sweet–rounded cheek.
>
> Paint that figure's pliant grace [...]
>
> Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind [...]
> Those frank eyes, where deep I see
> An angelic gravity [...] (*P*, p.115).

[37] Originally: "Ere the parting kiss be dry/Quick, thy tablets, Memory!"

The satire directed at the speaker on the part of his friends in the penultimate stanza exposes his own sense of the absurdity of his attempt: "What, my Friends, these feeble lines/Show, you say, my love declines" (*P*, p. 115). His ultimate awareness that: "Time's current strong/Leaves us fixed to nothing long" (*P*, p. 115) is a momentary change of tone that prepares for the meditative self–absorption and melancholic reflection that are the more characteristic features of the *Switzerland* poems.

In the ironically entitled *Meeting*, the shortest lyric in the group, the speaker enumerates the same female traits of the previous poem, (fair figure, languid cheek, blue eyes) but this time the focus is on his thwarted passion. The circumstances of the poem are qualified by a spatial and temporal circularity (underlined by the recurrence of the lexeme: "Again") which obsessively re–iterates the same situation[38]:

> Again I see my bliss at hand,
> The town, the lake are here;
> My Marguerite smiles upon the strand,
> Unaltered with the year.
>
> I know that graceful figure fair,
> That cheek of languid hue;
> I know that soft, enkerchiefed hair,
> And those sweet eyes of blue.
>
> Again I spring to make my choice;
> Again in tones of ire
> I hear a God's tremendous voice:
> 'Be counselled, and retire' (*P*, pp. 122–23).

The speaker's continual failure to possess Marguerite, (whose "unaltered" beauty seems, as it were, to be 'frozen' in time), is assigned not so much to his own shortcomings but an external force. The poem is a fine example of Arnold's mastery of orchestration. There is nothing to prepare the reader for the sud-

[38] The return to an unaltered landscape recalls the third section of *Resignation*. See also D. G. Riede, *op. cit.*, p. 168 who sees in the lexeme "Again" an initial tone of "calm self–assurance".

den dramatic change that occurs in the third verse. The impulse of sexual passion indicated by the dynamic verb *spring*, which is disturbingly suggestive of an aggressive attack, is just as immediately frustrated by "a God's" voice, which, albeit, as Reide points out, "a vague, unspecified divinity"[39], may also be the projection of a guilt–ridden conscience. The syllabic parallelism between "enkerchiefed hair" and "tremendous voice" highlights the contrasting relationship between a frail humanity (as emblemised in the protective handkerchief) and an overpowering divine force[40]. Furthermore, the rising cadence in "tremendous" plays against the falling tones in "enkerchiefed" as well as contrasting with the other lexical items in the poem, with their connotations of frailty and delicacy.

Parting, which was originally placed after *A Dream*, is a decidedly more complex poem oscillating between the abandonment of passion and the desire for detachment[41]. These mutually exclusive states are rendered in two completely different metrical forms: the first in anapaestic dimeters, with considerably varying syllable numbers per line and stanza lengths and an abcb rhyme scheme, and the second in a regular iambic meter with rhyming couplets. The contrast between these two metrical parts is further complemented by the fact that they refer respectively to an outdoor and indoor scene. Throughout, the me-

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[39] D. G. Riede, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[40] The concept of a higher power antagonistically controlling man's fate is the central theme of *Self-Deception*. See also, *Destiny* "[...] Ask of the powers that sport with man!//They yoked in him, for endless strife,/A heart of ice, a soul of fire;/And hurled him on the Field of Life,/An aimless unallayed Desire" (*P*, p. 151); and *Human Life*: "[...] As, chartered by some unknown Powers,/We stem across the sea of life by night" (*P*, p. 146).

[41] P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 163, who highlights Arnold's anticipation of the psychological representations of modern poetry, particularly the dramatic monologue: "The poem must have been written in a fine impulsive rush of feeling and polished in tranquillity: its structure might be that of the unconscious. Arnold here opened a door to the future in predicting dramas of the experiencing psyche [...]".

chanical metre, forced poeticisms, heightened emotional tone and frequent interjections clearly expose a satirical intent[42]:

> Ye storm–winds of Autumn!
> Who rush by, who shake
> The window, and ruffle
> The gleam–lighted lake;
> Who cross to the hill–side
> Thin–sprinkled with farms,
> Where the high woods strip sadly
> Their yellowing arms –
> Ye are bound for the mountains!
> Ah! with you let me go
> Where your cold, distant barrier,
> The vast range of snow,
> Through the loose clouds lifts dimly
> Its white peaks in air –
> How deep is their stillness!
> Ah, would I were there! (*P*, p. 124)

As in *A Memory Picture* Arnold exploits metrical synchronicity and verbal exuberance to satirise the self-dramatisations of a speaker pleading for calm detachment whilst being simultaneously transported by the throes of agitation (just as he is by the lightly tripping anapaestic metre!)[43]. The two breaks in blank verse (each of which melodramatically conclude with two dimeter lines of five and four syllables) are appropriately applied to the entrance of Marguerite, whose clear, buoyant, musical voice

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[42] Analogy has been made between this poem and Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. See, *P*, p. 126 (note to line 75). Rather than analogy, Arnold's may be seen as a tongue–in–cheek response, since his poem is a reversal of Shelley's ideological pronouncements.

[43] A rough distinction may be made between those poems with a fixed metrical pattern, where expression tends to be subservient to rhythm, in which passion is a central preoccupation, and those with a more complex metrical structure, which probe the existential consequences of human isolation. A possible bi–partite thematic division of the poems, in this respect, could be as follows: *A Memory Picture, Meeting, Parting, Isolation – To Marguerite,* and *Absence* = passion, *A Dream, A Farewell To Marguerite – Continued* and *The Terrace at Berne* = isolation.

contrasts with the stormy winds and temporarily pulls the speaker away from his need for attachment:

> But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,
> Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear?
> Say, has some wet bird–haunted English lawn
> Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?
> Or was it from some sun–flecked mountain–brook
> That the sweet voice its upland clearness took?
> Ah! it comes nearer –
> Sweet notes, this way! (*P*, p. 124)

The speaker's temptation to fulfil the passion of his "unconquered joy" (*P*, p. 125) is immediately thwarted by the recollection of his real urge. But this time it is no God's voice that impedes the intercourse between the man and woman:

> Forgive me! Forgive me!
> Ah, Marguerite, fain
> Would these arms reach to clasp thee!
> But see! 'tis in vain.
>
> In the void air, towards thee,
> My stretched arms are cast;
> But a sea rolls between us –
> Our different past! (*P*, p. 125)

The responsibility for the failure in the relationship is now placed on the speaker's refusal to accept Marguerite as a sexually experienced woman: "To the lips, ah! of others/Those lips have been pressed,/And others, ere I was,/Were strained to that breast [...]" (*P*, p. 120). While it may be pertinent to question the extent to which Arnold satirises the speaker's idealisation of female virginity, the speaker's discovery of Marguerite's experiences leads to an inevitable estrangement between the man and woman that is characteristically rendered in the symbolic obstacle of the sea (which, in the later poem *To Marguerite–Continued* is transformed into a universal image of alienation in: "The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea", *P*, p. 131). As with *Meeting*, the moment of encounter is held in frustrated suspen-

sion ("In the void air towards thee,/My stretched arms are cast"), but already the very title of the poem anticipates the impossibility of a union between the couple. The final section, with its more emphatic quartet divisions, is marked by a definite change in mood as the speaker turns in resignation from the sweeping enumeration of landscape images to a brooding meditation on man's essential state of isolation (a condition the speaker himself eagerly seeks):

> Far, far from each other
> Our spirits have grown;
> And what heart knows another?
> Ah! who knows his own? (*P*, p. 126)

The melancholy of the concluding stanzas of *Parting* is taken up in the underlying iambic beat of the twenty-two stanza ballad *A Farewell*. The incipit of this psychologically complex poem is strongly reminiscent of Wordsworth's "Strange fits of passion have I known",[44] where the speaker is likewise riding on horseback at night towards his lover. The atmosphere of expectation and excitement in the opening descriptive sequence can also be compared with Robert Browning's *Meeting at Night*:

> My horse's feet beside the lake,
> Where sweet the unbroken moonbeams lay,
> Sent echoes through the night to wake
> Each glistening strand, each heath-fringed bay.
>
> The poplar avenue was passed,
> And the roofed bridge that spans the stream;

[44] Derek Attridge, *Poetic Rhythm. An Introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 7, observes: "Poetic rhythm strives not only for mimetic and emotional suggestiveness but also foregrounds literary associations. In *Switzerland* these factors come instantaneously into play. The metrical similarities with the equally enigmatic sequence of Wordsworth's Lucy poems will hardly escape the reader. The two sequences, both about an ended relationship, share similar thematic concerns, though they completely diverge in intent.

> Up the steep street I hurried fast,
> Led by thy taper's starlike beam (*P*, p. 132).

Nowhere else in *Switzerland* does the speaker appear in such a dynamic attitude, as his horse, a clear emblem of passion, erupts upon the quiet of the night with the virgin image of its "unbroken moonbeams". The pre-dominantly soft-voiced consonants (particularly nasals and liquids) effectively evoke the sense of a peaceful landscape and the decelerating effect of the final line of stanza I with the clogging consonant clusters (EaCH GListening STRand eaCH heaTH FRiNGeD [...]) conveys the tension of a moment held in suspension. In stanza III, for the first and only time in *Switzerland*, the speaker and Marguerite are wrapped in a physical embrace:

> I came! I saw thee rise! – the blood
> Poured flushing to thy languid cheek.
> Locked in each other's arms we stood,
> In tears, with hearts too full to speak (*P*, p. 132).

This, the most passionate moment in *Switzerland*, is striking in its emotional excess. Love and passion are intensified by the torment of separation to such an extent that it inhibits verbal communication ("with hearts too full to speak"). Verbal silence is also an initial sign of the couple's estrangement in the following stanza which re-proposes the same descriptive elements in a reverse situation:

> Days flew; ah, soon I could discern
> A trouble in thine altered air!
> Thy hand lay languidly in mine,
> Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew rare (*P*, p. 132).

The contrast between initial union and eventual separation is reinforced by the structural and lexical parallelism of the two stanzas. The euphoria of the swift actions in the first line of stanza III ("I came! I saw thee rise") corresponds to the rapid passing of time that leads to dejection in the first line of stanza

IV: "Days flew; ah, soon I could discern/A Trouble in thine altered air!" The woman's "languid cheek" flushing with passion in stanza III, becomes "grave" in stanza IV, whilst the lexeme "languid" is transformed into the adverbial: "Thy hand lay languidly in mine", which both contrasts with the couple's powerful embrace, rendered in the participle "locked" in stanza III, as well as underlining the woman's sudden apathy and indifference. Finally, the silence induced by the rush of emotions in stanza III acquires a completely different semantic nuance in stanza IV where the couple are reduced to the silence of estrangement. Although the signs of disaffection are initially manifested in the woman (as in *Parting*), the speaker initially appears to lay the blame for the failed relationship on himself: "This heart, I know,/To be long loved was never framed;/For something in its depths doth glow/Too strange, too restless, too untamed" (*P*, p. 132). This, however, leads to an ironic evaluation of the polarised forces represented by male and female, the former characterised by strong will, control and self-certainty, the latter by kindness, gentleness (a recurrent word in the poem) and insecurity:

> And women – things that live and move
> Mined by the fever of the soul –
> They seek to find in those they love
> Stern strength, and promise of control.
>
> They ask not kindness, gentle ways –
> These they themselves have tried and known;
> They ask a soul which never sways
> With the blind gusts that shake their own (*P*, p. 132).

The speaker now senses that he is a victim of the stereotypical attitudes he himself assumes in the previous poems, for, far from possessing 'masculine' strength and control, his intellectual nature has more qualities in common with a feminine sensitivity:

> I too have longed for trenchant force,
> And will like a dividing spear;

> Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,
> Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.
>
> But in the world I learnt, what there
> Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
> That will, that energy, though rare,
> Are yet far, far less rare than love (*P*, p. 133).

In spite of his longing, the speaker reveals an unease with male assertion, evident in the potentially destructive phallic image of the dividing spear and the strongly negative lexemes "trenchant" and "unscrupulous". The fact that his (real) gentle spirit, which nurtures doubts and fears, clashes with conventional notions of masculine identity, is precisely the dilemma that confounds his "restless" and "untamed" heart. That his attempt to smooth out his self-conflicting notions, which are heightened rather than resolved by his being in love, are, partly, dependent upon the woman's perception of his role as male lover rather than as a sensitive individual and, partly, a product of his own preconceptions, is seen in his contrast between the forces of convention, which condition the individual into expecting determined qualities and characteristics according to a patterned perception, and the exceptional experience of love:

> We school our manners, act our parts –
> But He, who sees us through and through,
> Knows that the bent of both our hearts
> Was to be gentle, tranquil, true (*P*, p. 133).

Hidden from conventional codes of behaviour, true love, for the speaker, is a product of gentle, tranquil souls and a means of nurturing the superior traits of the buried self. The alliterative connection between "tranquil" and "true" undoubtedly underlines the inextricability of their semantic bond. That the woman is as yet unable to realise this is evident in the bitter retort: "Go, then! – till time and fate impress/This truth on thee, be mine no more!" (*P*, p. 133). The speaker's sense of the power of their spiritual bond: "[...] for thou, I feel, not less/Than I, wast des-

tined to this lore" (*P*, p. 133) underlines his essential mistrust of passion as a basis for their relationship:

> Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
> Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;
> Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
> Our true affinities of soul (*P*, p. 133).

Only through the spiritual union of an asexual relationship that transcends earthly love, where man and woman become as brother and sister, can complete knowledge of the self and of the other be attained. But this is not to be achieved without a price: "Then we shall know our friends! – though much/Will have been lost [...] there will be yet/A sympathy august and pure;/Enobled by a vast regret,/And by contrition sealed thrice sure" (*P*, p. 134). This spiritual penance is reinforced by religiously connoted lexemes and Arnold's characteristic use of litotes: "[...] whose ways were unlike here [...] unreached by earthly jars [...] All our unquiet pulses cease!" (*P*, p. 134). The apparent circular structure of the poem, which concludes with the opening image of the untouched moonbeams: "The hush among the shining stars!/The calm upon the moonlit sea" (*P*, p. 134), ironically frames the speaker's transformation from the intensity of romantic passion to a vision of spiritual love, which, although it may be seen as a flight from sexuality[45], is a necessary itinerary in Arnold's quest for the buried self.

The language and tone of the concluding stanzas in *A Farewell* are carried forward in *Isolation. To Marguerite* and its follow-up *Marguerite–Continued*[46]. Stanza I of *Isolation. To Marguerite* temporally reverses separation and bond in a way that anticipates the death of the relationship:

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[45] A factor which leads Alan Grob to conclude that the poem offers "a vision clearly directed against love". See A. Grob, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

[46] Grob displays a curious disregard for Arnold's arrangement of the *Switzerland* poems by preceding his discussion of *A Farewell* with a consideration of *Isolation. To Marguerite*, and *Marguerite–Continued*.

We were apart; yet day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be.
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee;
Nor feared but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learned –
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith may oft be unreturned.
Self–swayed our feelings ebb and swell –
Thou lov'st no more; – farewell! Farewell! (*P*, p. 127)

The speaker's quest for mnemonic fixity in *A Memory Picture* becomes a moral concern for constancy. But the four words of the laconic abstract phrase with which stanza II begins fall like hammer blows to exclude any possibility of a lasting bond. The simplicity of the lexical choices in no way undermines their aptness: "grave", (with its obvious connotations, as a noun, with death) co–refers to Marguerite's grave cheek in *A Farewell* and the alliteration between "tried" and "true" underlines the intrinsic link between suffering and genuine happiness which is also central to that poem. Yet passion as a salvation from a hostile world, is an idea the speaker has already refuted from the start. As in *Meeting* and *Parting* his premature awareness of the isolated nature of individual experience ("far too soon") becomes a psychological barrier impeding any self–abandonment to another person. The final line of stanza II seems uttered with a terse indifference that borders on satire. Yet the meditative discourse assumes an earnestness that surely undermines any such intentions, as is evident in the Keatsian repetition of: "Farewell"[47] and the rhetorical emphasis in stanza III whose lack of punctuation in its four central lines contributes much in evoking a tone of anger:

Farewell! – and *thou, thou* lonely heart,

[47] Reminiscent of Keats's ode *To a Nightingale*.

Which *never yet* without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From the remote and spheréd course
To haunt the place where passions reign –
Back to thy solitude again! (*P*, p. 128, italics mine)

The recurrent cycle of passion teaches only: "How vain a thing is mortal love [...] But thou hast long had place to prove/This truth – to prove, and make thine own: 'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.'" (*P*, p. 128). The inversion of the temporal sequence of the final line is due to a rhetorical emphasis produced by a series of heavily stressed iambs (which would not be the case with a chronological order) to emphasize the bitterness of the speaker's self reproach. Like the child in *To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore*,[48] he 'foreknows' the vanity of human life. Nevertheless he succumbs to its temptations.

To Marguerite–Continued is not only the most dramatic pronouncement in *Switzerland*, but is undoubtedly one of Arnold's most powerful poems. Although a continuation of *Isolation. To Marguerite*, there is no explicit mention of the woman herself, beyond the title. The stress variations and alternating rhyme scheme also contribute to create a more restrained rhythm that contrasts with the swifter movement of the rhyming couplets of the former composition. Furthermore, it explores on a more profound level, the theme of isolation which is only suggested in the title of the previous poem, and its broader existential implications markedly depart from the representation of subjective experience that dominates *Switzerland* (with the possible exception of *Meeting*) and prefigure the power and profundity of such poems as *Consolation* and *Dover Beach*:

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,

[48] P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 157, comments that the poem "is a triumphant integration of Arnoldian themes" where "the unnecessary literal reading of the Switzerland poems, merely as records of Arnold's dalliance with a French girl is well exposed".

> We mortal millions live *alone*.
> The islands feel the enclasping flow,
> And then their endless bounds they know (*P*, p.130).

The poem is structured in the three parts of thesis, antithesis and re-affirmation of thesis. The rhetorical emphasis on the first word opens the poem in *medias res* to set up a counterpoint rhythm which postpones the main sentence after three subordinate clauses that stretch for as many lines. Arnold gives a powerful evocation of the bleakness of man's isolation through his favourite symbol of the sea, where verbal communication is emptied of meaning in the hollowness of "echoing straits" and the lack of physical contact is rendered by the inaccessibility of the elemental "shoreless watery wild". The ambivalence of the gerund "dotting" in terms of its grammatical category (verb/adjective) simultaneously suggests that individuals have been arbitrarily scattered around the world as well as tacitly complying with the state of isolation to which fate has consigned them. As in *Resignation*, the frightening impersonality of the natural world, with its "enclasping flow" (in mock parody of a passionate embrace) and the paradoxical "endless bounds", is a painful reminder of the individual's own tiny place in the universe and the inevitability of death as ironically underlined by the phonic association in "mortal millions", together with the contrasting juxtaposition of "millions"/"alone". In the final two lines, the shift of subject from first to third person plural significantly underlines the speaker's own detachment and isolation from others. At the same time, precisely because his discourse becomes objectified, the sense of tragedy is intensified with the fragmentation of the self becoming the symptom of a disintegration on a much larger scale. The two central stanzas which follow develop the antithesis in which desire for communication is seen as a natural human impulse reinforced by man's sense of a lost harmony with the natural universe:

> But when the moon their hollows lights,
> And they are swept by balms of spring,
> And in their glens, on starry nights,

The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour –

Oh! Then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain –
Oh might our marges meet again! (*P*, pp. 130–31)[49]

The lyrical features of stanza II contrast with the sombre evocation of estrangement with which the poem begins. The sound patterning, with its recurrence of soft-voiced consonants, and insistence on liquids and nasals, is particularly evocative of the therapeutically soothing effects of the natural world. Although, this incantation provokes the painful paradox of a nostalgic "longing like despair" for a lost golden age of unity and harmony, a saving grace is recognised in the human being's instinctual need for communication in the final line of stanza III: "Oh might our marges meet again", where the semi-alliteration of the phoneme /m/ in the archaic "marges" and "might" and assonance of /a:/ in "our and "marges"[50], simultaneously evokes the conditions of disjunction and conjunction. The final stanza comes back full circle to the initial statement of man's isolation by questioning its cause:

Who ordered, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?
Who renders vain their deep desire? –
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea (*P*, p. 131).

[49] These lines make an interesting comparison with the following from *The Buried Life*: "From the soul's subterranean depth upborne/As from an infinitely distant land,/Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey/A melancholy into all our day" (*P*, p. 290).

[50] The lexeme "marges" is also used to refer to the "River of Time" in *The Future*.

Although, at first glance, the choice of diction may seem connotative of passionate desire, "longing's fire" obviously co-refers to the "longing like despair" of the human desire for contact in the previous stanza, which is a spiritual expression of the deep buried self. As in *Meeting*, such a yearning is thwarted the moment it is experienced: "as soon as kindled, cooled". Also, as in *Meeting*, responsibility for all that conditions the human being's fate is attributed to "a God", a factor repeated with the revelation of a sudden discovery: "A god, a God their severance ruled!" The degree of significance in the lexical choice of "severance" can be gauged by considering it against its synonym "separation", which would have necessitated an eight-syllable line at the expense of eliminating the strongly emotive repetition of "a God". Furthermore, 'severance' implies a condition imposed by an external force, which is underpinned by "ruled"[51]. There is nothing in the poem, however, to prepare the reader for the surprising semantic density of its final line, certainly one of the most strikingly evocative in Arnold's poetry. The negative prefix un- in "unplumbed" simultaneously negates and evokes the sense of 'plumbed', an adjective with a physical roundness suggestive of Keats, which resonates with meaning. As a transitive verb it denotes experience of the worst kinds of misery (as in the idiomatic expression: "to plumb the depths of despair"), as well as to understand or master (as in the idiomatic expression: "to plumb a mystery"). Furthermore, the noun form included in the word, 'plumb', (a dead weight suspended at the end of a line used to determine water depth), directly links with the water imagery of the poem. Thus, the sea that symbolically represents the physical and psychological barriers of the human world, is connotative of the unfathomable and painful reality of the individual's ultimate isolation. The grammatical deviancy of

[51] D. G. Riede, *op. cit.*, p. 170, points out that God's voice here "emerges from the thoroughly questionable source of the speaker's psychological need for justification" and that it "cannot be taken seriously as more than the wish for certainty, the wish for absolute dictates to explain and justify human behaviour."

"salt" (noun for adjective) gives an almost iconic force to the bitterness of man's state of physical and psychological isolation that is underlined by the regular recurrence of the harsh sibilant /s/ (*salt, estranging sea*) which inextricably links the three lexemes to reinforce the notion of an uncompromisingly alien force of which man is at the complete mercy.

It is notable how Marguerite, who becomes increasingly distanced until vanishing from sight, is eventually reduced to a mere memory in *Absence* and *A Terrace at Berne*. These two poems, with which Switzerland concludes, ultimately resolve the final circularity of the group (which is further underlined on a structural level in the return to the initial ballad form), by respectively encapsulating the two recurrent themes of passion and isolation. They also turn back full circle to the initial preoccupation, particularly evident in *A Memory Picture* and *Meeting*, of the tension between fixity and flux. Finally, they also reconfirm the recurrent behavioural pattern of the speaker whose brooding meditations render him impervious to a passionate involvement in the present moment. Although its incipit evokes the presence of another woman, *Absence* is haunted by the ghostly presence of the lost Marguerite and the speaker's continual paradoxical feelings towards her. The opening line, which picks up from the conclusion of *To Marguerite–Continued* through the root word 'strange', as the "estranged sea" is transfigured into the "stranger's eyes of grey" (*P*, p. 144), effectively captures a psychologically disturbing moment in which the image of the former woman (LOVER) is superimposed on the new woman (STRANGER) creating a temporal confusion of particular emotional intensity:

> In this fair stranger's eyes of grey
> Thine eyes, my love! I see.
> I shiver; for the passing day
> Had borne me far from thee (*P*, p. 144).

The implicit chromatic contrast between the grey eyes of the female stranger and the blue eyes of Marguerite underscores the

negative transition from the idealised past to the dreary present, in which sentimental poetic musing succumbs to sombre philosophical reflection[52]. There is, at the same time, a poignancy in the speaker's reluctance to release his hold of the past which, like a ghost, comes back to haunt him ("I shiver"). The revisitation of Marguerite is all the more powerful because it comes unexpectedly, in spite of the apparently distracting influence of the flux of "the passing day". It is with growing bitterness that the speaker realises that nothing can obliterate the deeply imbedded memory of his former passion:

> This is the curse of life! that not
> A nobler, calmer train
> Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot
> Our passions from our brain;
>
> But each day brings its petty dust
> Our soon-choked souls to fill,
> And we forget because we must
> And not because we will (*P*, pp. 144–45).

Stanza II complicates the coordinates of Arnold's polarity between the fragmented and buried self by setting up an implicit double standard whereby the speaker's passionate feelings for Marguerite, are contrasted with the noble and "wiser thoughts" which, though not explicitly related to the new woman, nevertheless represent his present demands, in which any room for passion is denied. Concurrently, the resurgence of his passion is also posited 'against' the flux of "the passing day", as if it were an intrinsic expression of the buried self. Therein lies the painful paradox of the tormented consciousness of the speaker who, acutely aware of the "petty dust" of mortality that looms over mankind and the power of obligation over the will, realises that his aim to transcend the dark ignorance of his passions ("Once-

[52] See also *Separation* which deals with the same theme of the death and resurrection of love and whose explicit echoes the incipit of *Absence*: "*Who,* let me say, *is this Stranger regards me,/With the grey eyes, an the lovely brown hair?*" (*P*, p. 246).

longed–for storms of love") can only be accomplished by means of an ardent struggle towards the light of knowledge:

> I struggle towards the light; and ye,
> Once–longed–for storms of love!
> If with the light ye cannot be,
> I bear that ye remove.
>
> I struggle towards the light; but oh,
> While yet the night is chill,
> Upon time's barren stormy flow,
> Stay with me, Marguerite, still! (*P*, p. 145).

The final two stanzas contain significant verbal parallels and echoes. The affirmative and adversative conjunctions which follow the reiterated phrase "I struggle towards the light" underline the oscillation between cognitive illumination on the one hand and blind passion on the other. The parallel phrases: "Once–longed–for storms of love" and "Time's barren stormy flow" are also conversely related. If love is dismissed by the speaker in the first case as a transitory phenomenon that does not live by the light he is seeking, in the second, that same love is invoked to still the flux of time. The urgency of the self–enclosed final line (framed by the lexemes "stay" and "still") echoes the refrain: "Quick, thy tablets, memory" in *A Memory Picture*. Thus, the plea with which *Switzerland* begins comes full circle from the process of losing to a more profound and tragic realisation of what is inevitably lost. In this sense, nothing is ultimately resolved. Just as the poems reiterate the same basic dilemmas, the speaker is ultimately left in the identical position with which he began, his foreknowledge of the transitory nature of passion being finally confirmed through hindsight.

The Terrace at Berne, written in 1867, is a re–visitation of the Marguerite theme nineteen years after its inception. The tone of resignation and restraint is indicative of the changes that have occurred in Arnold's poetry during this lapse of time. There is an authorial control over the subject, and a sharper fo-

cus that is synonymous of an older, sadder, but wiser speaker, a sign that the poet himself may have finally come to terms with his tragic vision. As a result, *The Terrace at Berne* corroborates all that *Switzerland* is loath to recognise, and offers no resistance to what is acknowledged. The poem begins with the recurrent Arnoldian device of a revisited landscape: "Ten years! and to my waking eye/Once more the roofs of Berne appear" (*P*, p. 518). The familiar features of the landscape of the speaker's youth are now registered with a neutrality and detachment bordering on indifference: "The clouds are on the Oberland,/The Jungfrau snows look faint and far;/But bright are those green fields at hand,/And through those fields comes down the Aar" (*P*, p. 518). The charting of such precise place names which point to a referential reality has no correspondent in *Switzerland* but is a characteristic of Arnold's later verse. Furthermore, the poem develops not in terms of integral poetical images, but around a discourse comprised of a series of suppositions concerning the possible fate of Marguerite:

> Doth riotous laughter now replace
> Thy smile; and rouge, with stony glare,
> Thy cheek's soft hue; and fluttering lace
> The kerchief that enwound thy hair?
>
> Or is it over? – art thou dead? –
> Dead! – and no warning shiver ran
> Across my heart, to say thy thread
> Of life was cut, and closed thy span!
>
> Could from earth's ways that figure slight
> Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so?
> Of that fresh voice the gay delight
> Fall from earth's air, and I not know?
>
> Or shall I find thee still, but changed,
> But not the Marguerite of thy prime?
> With all thy being re-arranged,
> Passed through the crucible of time;
>
> With spirit vanished, beauty waned,
> And hardly yet a glance, a tone,

A gesture – anything – retained
Of all that was my Marguerite's own? (*P*, p. 519)

The speaker plays out a fantasy of transformations in which beauty cedes to repulsiveness, purity to indecency, in a mocking self-parody of his past idealisations. Shocked by his own indifference, he goads himself on to generating some sort of feeling which fails to surface: "Dead? – and no warning shiver ran/Across my heart [...] Could from earth's ways that figure slight/Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so?". Unlike *Absence,* where the mere memory of Marguerite provokes a shudder in the speaker, here he is unable to respond even to the possible fact of her death. Also, whereas *A Memory Picture* seeks to freeze the woman's beauty in lines that will consecrate her in time, *The Terrace at Berne* does exactly the opposite. It cruelly and unflinchingly records a series of transitions from youth to age, beauty to ugliness. The realisation, previously foreknown is now eventually acknowledged. The final two stanzas, which allude to the conclusion of a lifetime of poetic preoccupations of which Marguerite is the poignant symbol, are amongst the most moving in all of Arnold's verse:

Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,
So on the sea of life, alas!
Man nears man – meets, and quits again.

I knew it when my life was young;
I feel it still, now youth is o'er.
– The mists are on the mountains hung,
And Marguerite I shall see no more (*P*, p. 519–20).

The penultimate stanza reverberates with intratextual echoes from other Marguerite poems. Just as Martin and the speaker are carried away from the women in the stream in *A Dream*, the analogous water image here underlines the transitory and tenuous nature of all human contact. The recurrent Arnoldian motive of the sea of life, which is used with such power in *Isolation–To Marguerite* is here elicited as a potent spatial–temporal

symbol, on the one hand, embodying the ultimate isolation of the individual, and on the other the transitory flux of its essentially restless existence. The stern simplicity of the final stanza acquires a profundity and pathos when set against the dramatic background of *Switzerland* of which it is an ultimate comment, a pathos all the more significant and self–revelatory in the equation between loss of poetic vision, as symbolised by the mist covered mountain, and the definite disappearance of Marguerite.

4

Between Loss and Redemption

Wandering between two worlds, one dead
The other powerless to be born [...]

Silent – the best are silent now.

New Poems (1867) marks a watershed in Arnold's artistic and intellectual development. During the decade that separates its publication from his "noble" failure[1] *Merope* (1858), he had already begun, with a new fervour, to publish the essays of social and cultural criticism which would exert such a profound influence on twentieth century thought. The moral zeal that permeates these works frequently finds its way into those final poems which proffer solutions to the ontological and existential dilemmas of his poetic vision, often through a re–evaluation of Christian values and at the expense of deliberately suppressing the ambiguities and tensions which make his poetry so powerful in the first place. The dominant note of objectivity and moral imperative that characterises *New Poems* is significantly evident in Arnold's return to the sonnet form, a genre which frames his poetic activity at the tail ends of his career[2]. The secular theme of the early sonnets, especially the celebratory dedications *Written in Emerson's Essays*, *Shakespeare* and *To a Republican Friend*, for example, are in stark contrast with the Christian tone of tributary sonnets such as, *East London*, *Anti–Desperation*, *Immortality*, *The Divinity*, *The Good Shepherd with the Kid*, *East and West* and *Monica's Last Prayer*. The 1867 sonnets also differ structurally in their ballad–like

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[1] N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 161. Although many critics find Arnold's attempt at reviving the Classical form naïve, *Merope* surely deserves a more sympathetic assessment than it has so far received. Unfortunately, such a task is well outside the scope of the present study.

[2] Besides *Youth's Agitations* and *The World's Triumphs*, Arnold wrote no other sonnets during his middle period.

stanza divisions of 4 x 4 x 3 lines. As a result, *Rachel, East London* and *West London* in particular have a narrative development, typical of the ballad form, underpinned by an uncharacteristic socially–conscious realism:

> 'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
> Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green [...]
> (*P*, p. 525).

> Crouched on the pavement, close by Belgrave Square,
> A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue tied.
> A babe was in her arms, and at her side
> A girl; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare
> (*P*, p. 526).

However, such urban details only seem to confirm Arnold's engagement in the 'unpoetic' age of a feverish world. The very fact that he could muster little more than a handful of sonnets for his last volume (with notable exceptions, namely *Palladium* and *Obermann Once More*) is indicative of a fading voice – the last gasps of a poet who was aware that he had come to the end of the line[3].

To be more precise, *New Poems* is a mixture of new and old verse, some of which appeared in a collection for the first time. One of these, *Dover Beach*, which Arnold had apparently written years earlier and inexplicably delayed publishing until 1867[4],

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[3] Cf. C. Machann, *op. cit.*, p.68. There is general agreement that Arnold was aware that his poetical career was coming to a close. See I. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p.216: "There is also a feeling that with *New Poems* [...] Arnold is putting his poetic affairs in order." See also P. Honan, op. cit., p. 263 "Arnold became the elegiac figure of his own poetry: for in years ahead he lost the ability to write verse." N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 164, neatly condenses the interrelated factors that contributed to Arnold's waning poetic activity: "His theories and his critical strictures, coupled to the demands of his public life, were killing off the poet." It has become almost a cliché to see the end of Arnold's poetic activity as the result of such external factors, but it is nonetheless true.

[4] Most of the poem was probably composed during Arnold's pre–honeymoon visit to Dover with his wife in June 1851. See *P*, pp. 239–40. But see Donald J. Weinstock, "'Say Not We Are on a Darkling Plain'": Clough's

is without doubt his best–loved and most anthologised poem. Yet, such is the diminishing interest in his poetry that a critic like Alan Grob can complain of its having "received less and less attention in recent years"[5]. One only hopes that at least this single work upon which his fortunes as a poet seem exclusively to rest be spared consignment to oblivion! For, though the privileged status it occupies in his oeuvre may be debated, there is no doubt that *Dover Beach* is a most densely concentrated expression of the subjective and objective poles that characterise the angst of Arnold's poetic vision. Its irregularity of syllable numbers per line (ranging from 4 to 11[6]) and variation of verse–paragraph divisions (14 x 6 x 8 x 9 lines) are set against the regularity of a dominant iambic metre[7] and rhyme scheme[8] to underpin, on a structural–prosodical level, the contrast between form and formlessness reflected in the moving tension between the troubled poetic voice and the deceptively serene night–time landscape. In stanza I the threat of instability and change is anticipated in the implicit break with the traditional sonnet form.

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rejoinder to 'Dover Beach', *Victorian Poetry*, 19, I (1981), p. 73 (note 1), for a "representative sampling of opinions" which suggest dates from 1848 to 1862.

[5] A. Grob, *op. cit.*, p. 15. Grob himself provides a lengthy and detailed analysis of the poem, much of which the present writer is in accord. But his stress on the historicity of the poem by–passes a close consideration of certain linguistic and stylistic features which the present analysis aims to put into evidence.

[6] According to my own frequency analysis, the total number of feet divisions in the poem is as follows: two–foot = 1, three–foot = 6, four–foot = 11, five–foot = 19: the total number of syllabic divisions is: four syllables = 1; six syllables = 5; seven syllables = 1; eight syllables = 8; nine syllables = 4; ten syllables = 16; eleven syllables = 2 and the total number of stressed lines is as follows: two–stressed = 3; three–stressed = 8; four–stressed = 15; five–stressed = 11. On the basis of this calculation it is difficult to see how Kenneth and Miriam Allot arrive at the conclusion that "more than half the lines are five–stressed" (*P*, p. 240), which seems impossible even with an emphatic performance reading.

[7] There are almost one hundred occurrences of an iambic metre in the poem.

[8] The rhyme scheme being as follows: stanza I, abacdbdcefcgfh; stanza II, abacbc; stanza III, abcdbadc; stanza IV abbacddee.

For the graphically marked sestet and octet division of its fourteen lines, which deliberately alludes to one of the most common sonnet divisions, is undermined by a predominantly irregular metre in which only six lines are regular iambic pentameters. The opening sestet presents the external scene of calm and tranquillity that is framed by the window through which the speaker gazes into the night:

> The sea is calm tonight.
> The tide is full, the moon lies fair
> Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
> Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
> Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
> Come to the window, sweet is the night-air! (*P*, p. 254)

The theme of deception that underpins the whole vision of the poem, is emphatically underlined in *medias res* by the end-stopped opening line of apparent tranquillity in: "The sea is calm *tonight*" (italics mine)[9]. The ebbing and flowing of the sea waves and the serenity of the night-time scene are effectively rendered through the gentle rocking lineation of the free-flowing enjambment (especially in the gradually increasing syllable numbers in the first three lines) together with a sound patterning that resounds throughout with liquids and nasals interspersed with occasional sibilants: The *s*ea is ca*l*m to*n*ight [...] *m*oon *l*ies [...] the *l*ight/*G*leams and is *g*one [...] *G*lim*m*ering ... in the tra*n*qui*l* bay [...] *s*weet is the *n*ight-air [...]. The rhetorical elements on which such a lyrical interpretation of the seascape relies[10] already contain the signs that any idea of a stable universe, encouraged by the "cosmologically harmonizing powers that manifest themselves through the light that emanates

[9] Joseph Bristow (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 144, who correctly perceives that "[...] this sea is not always calm, it only happens to be so 'tonight'".

[10] The opening lines of *Dover Beach* make an interesting contrast to the incipit of *A Summer Night* where the apparent calm is an expression of a hostile human world.

from that night sky"[11], is about to be somehow negated. The sudden disappearance of the lights on the French coast is an ominous anticipation of the melancholic mood which permeates the remaining three quarters of the poem. Indeed, the octet proceeds to blur the distinction between real/external and imaginary/internal landscape as the speaker invites the woman to join him in gazing upon the view outside the window:

> Only, from the long line of spray
> Where the sea meets the moon–blanched land,
> Listen! you hear the grating roar
> Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
> At their return, up the high strand,
> Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
> With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
> The eternal note of sadness in (*P*, pp. 254–55).

The adverbial "only" ironically understates the ensuing negativity of the speaker's subjective interpretation of the nocturnal seascape, initially (also on a textual level) demarked by the line of white spray stretching along the moon–blanched land[12] that constitutes the threshold between human and natural world, and, by extension, stability and instability. The three dimensions of sea, land and sky converge to represent the naturalistic scenario of a dramatic confrontation which upsets the mild complacency of the initial descriptive sequence with the speaker/lover's assertion "sweet is the night–air". The positive lexemes: "calm", "full", "fair", "gleams", "glimmering" and "sweet", almost imperceptibly succumb to the negatively marked "grating roar" and "sadness" as the description moves from visual calm to auditory movement and, by extension, from stasis to flux. The slight textual alterations Arnold made at this point contribute in a significant way to the change in mood and orientation. For the original "suck" for "draw" in "the waves draw back", may seem

[11] A. Grob, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

[12] Which also recalls the "moon–blanched streets" of *A Summer Night*, confirming the association of hostility with which that poem begins.

phonically appropriate, but it highlights a sensuousness that actually runs against the direction of the speaker's reflections. The eventual term used has the two added meanings of 'chance' (as in the drawing of lots) and a forced retreat (an idea later confirmed in the lexeme "retreating"). The sense of individuals selectively and randomly cast about the earth against their own will, as in *Isolation. To Marguerite,* is already contained in this naturalistic detail of the apparently tranquil night–time scene. The "longing like despair" that characterises humanity's nostalgia for a lost world of harmony in *Isolation. To Marguerite* has its counterpart in the "grating roar/Of pebbles", in which "roar", far from alluding to the sound of a cheering crowd, is an onomatopoeic cry of collective pain.

The intensity of existential suffering is also significantly rendered in the adjective "grating" which suggests a penetration to the very nervous system. The implication that such a sound may provoke irritation in the hearer indicates an absence of human solidarity which is in some way symptomatic of the speaker's disdain of the world's ills highlighted at the end of the poem. A further anticipatory element in this stanza is the noun "strand" which, with its adjectival meaning 'abandoned', prefigures the vision of isolation with which the poem closes. But its further meaning of 'fibre' also conveys the image of a nerve, thus reinforcing the idea of a metaphorical representation of physiological disorder. Meanwhile, the opening and concluding lines of stanza I demarcate the two central perspectives of momentary serenity ("calm tonight") and perpetual sorrow ("eternal [...] sadness") which constitute the speaker's shifting phenomenological perceptions of the external scene. The very rhythm of the motions of the waves is subverted to an internal symbolism whereby sea and text are merged in the phrase "tremulous cadence", which in itself enacts a decelerated rhythm emphasised by the inversion of adjective and noun in "cadence slow" and the monotonous repetition of the line "Begin, and cease, and then again begin". Although the noun "Cadence" contextually refers to the rhythm of the sea waves, its main technical definition of a measure in poetry and music can-

not go unnoticed. The rhythmic monotony of "Cadence", in turn, is paradoxically juxtaposed with the emotional agitation of "tremulous" and these two states paradigmatically anticipate the conflict between calm and struggle which permeates the existential dimensions of the poem. The naturalistic signs of the night–time scene therefore become the textual features – framed by the window which is also the page – that the poetic speaker sets out to 'read' and interpret.

The brooding melancholy of the final image of stanza I leads to the discursive tone of philosophical reflection in which the sudden leap into the Classical world suggests the speaker's need to give authoritative support to his initial subjective impressions:

> Sophocles long ago
> Heard it on the AEgæan, and it brought
> Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
> Of human misery; we
> Find also in the sound a thought,
> Hearing it by this distant northern sea (*P*, p. 255).

Sophocles, one of Arnold's favourite Greek dramatists, functions as an intercultural link uniting temporal (ancient and modern), and geographical (Mediterranean and Northern) extremes[13]. The enjambment of "we/Find also [...]" serves to underline the sense of continuity in the fact that time is conflated to degree zero through the unison of analogous sensibilities, for just as Sophocles: "Heard it on the AEgæan", so the speaker hears it "by this distant northern sea"[14]. Yet, as has been noted[15], at the same time, the misery which qualifies Sophocles reflections, although it anticipates to a certain degree the speaker's semantically neutral "thought", is to be distinguished

[13] For possible textual references to Sophocles see C. B. Tinker and H. F Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–9.

[14] *A Summer Night* contains an analogous phrase at a similar turning point: "[...] and to my mind the thought is on a sudden brought [...]" (*P*, p. 283).

[15] A. Grob, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

from the latter which revolve around the decidedly historicist presumptions regarding the intellectual and spiritual crisis of nineteenth century Britain, and transcend the generalities of Sophocles' considerations of humankind's misery in general. Also, the speaker's "we" implies, or assumes, that the vision is shared by someone else (his lover?) so that the notion of isolation is temporarily mitigated.

Precisely what thoughts are 'found' on hearing "the turbid ebb and flow" are articulated in one of the most poignantly evocative stanzas in the whole of Arnold's poetic oeuvre:

> The Sea of Faith
> Was 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 (*P*, p. 256).

This stanza completes the transition from real ("The sea") to symbolic space ("The Sea of Faith") as the cross–references of textual elements converge towards the final nightmare vision of confusion and darkness. Yet, in bewailing the disappearance of the Christian faith, with the pronominal shift from "we" to "I" reinstating the isolation of his own individual response, the speaker simultaneously intimates the possibility of redemption from despair in the very image of the cyclic return of the sea waves[16]. The contrast between past faith and present loss of faith is enacted on a metrical level in the alternating line lengths in stanza III:

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[16] See A. Grob, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–9, who outlines the two basic positions regarding Arnold's tidal metaphor. On the one hand, the image of the withdrawing sea in itself contains an indication of future hope, on the other, the constant eroding of the tide only reinforces its destructiveness.

x / x /
The Sea of Faith
x / / x x / x / / /
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
/ x x / x x / /x /
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
x / x / x /
But now I only hear
x /x x x / x / x /
It's melancholy long withdrawing roar

The opening four–syllable line (the shortest in the whole poem and one of only three two–stressed lines) is deliberately laconic, its metrical brevity articulating a sense of apathy intrinsic to the lack of faith lamented by the speaker. This is followed by two loosely iambic pentameter lines in which the very evocation of past spiritual fulfilment, heightened by the use of enjambment, interlinear punctuation and long vowels, reinforces its present absence. The fourth line, with its reference to loss of religious faith, contracts to six syllables, whilst the iambic pentameter of the fifth line mirrors the second and fourth to complete, on a metrical level, the thematic transition from faith to loss of faith. Arnold's characteristic verbal repetition and parallelism is no less evident in this his most famous poem. Stanzas I and III, in particular, resonate with such examples. The adjective "full" referred to the tide (1) becomes a noun in the Sea of Faith "at the full" (III); the adverbial "Only" in "Only, from the long line of spray [...] you hear" (1) is later echoed with a significant change of subject: "But now I only hear" (underlining mine) (III); the "bright girdle furled" (III) recalls the "glimmering" lights (1); the "tremulous cadence slow" of the waves (1) co–refers to the more sombre "melancholy long withdrawing roar" (III); the image of the sea waves which "draw back" (1) is transformed into the sea "retreating to the breath of the night wind" (III). "Glimmering and vast (1) is transformed into the negativity of "vast edges drear" (III); finally, the "pebbles" (1) become the "naked shingles of the world" (III). Such a dense web of lexical interconnections contributes immensely in evoking the

haunting atmosphere that permeates the poem and testifies to the poet's acute awareness of the possibilities behind the rhetorical strategies of his craft. Even Arnold's use of the word "girdle", which has produced a series of critical interrogations[17], besides functioning as a protective image and conveying a visual simile for the sea waves[18], may also be explained in terms of the rhetorical dimension of his text. For it is surely no coincidence that the assonance of the back vowels in "girdle" and "furled" (italics mine) serves to underline the sense of protective enclosure conveyed in the two lexemes, as well as to contrast with the assonance of the long front vowels in the opposite negative image of "withdr*a*wing r*oa*r" (italics mine). The urgency of the "grating roar" in stanza I now dwindles to a sound that fades into the infinite bleakness of "vast edges drear". The horizon of lost hope can still be glimpsed in "edges", but it is far too distant ("vast") to reach. The resulting despair is evoked in the lexeme "drear", a poeticism for 'dreary' used with utmost effect, its abbreviated form both rhyming with "roar" as well as conveying the lethargy implicit in loss of faith. But the most interesting lexical choice of the final lines of this stanza is the substitution of "pebbles" in stanza I with "shingles". The two words are not placed in a strictly synonymic relationship because the latter also refers to 'gravel' and thus, by implication, alludes to the erosion of the landscape through time. Not only, but a further meaning of the term adds an unexpected semantic expansion to the whole stanza, as well as providing a plausible explanation for Arnold's previous use of the term "girdle". For

[17] Arnold's choice of "girdle" has sparked a controversial debate. See, in particular, the following response and counter response, William A. Ulmer, "The Bright Girdle of 'Dover Beach'", *English Language Notes*, 4, 1985, pp. 54–8, Lars-Håkan Svensson, "A Note on 'Dover Beach'", *English Language Notes* (4), 1988, pp. 46–53.

[18] So also, incidentally, does "garment" which was the word Arnold had originally written before deleting it in favour of "girdle". Admittedly, Ulmer also concedes that "girdle" contributes nothing that any of its far commoner synonyms would not also add." See *op. cit.*, p.57. My later suggestion for the reason behind Arnold's lexical choice, of course, has no bearing on the effect of the image as such.

"shingles" also signifies an acute viral disease characterised by inflammation, pain and skin eruptions in certain nerves. The connection with the metaphorical manifestation of nervous agitation in the image of the "grating roar of pebbles" in stanza 1 is inescapable, and again confirms the implicit preoccupation with human suffering in the poem. Moreover, "shingles" derives from the Latin term 'cingulum' the meaning of which is precisely 'girdle'[19]. If the deliberate pun on Arnold's part is granted, the ensuing co–reference between "shingles" and "girdle" can be seen to create an ominous nuance of meaning that is the exact opposite of the protective image originally evoked. The human being, once spiritually protected and nurtured by faith, now lies sick, abandoned and exposed in a desolate and hostile universe.

The initial sense of the speaker's reflections is that of the individual as a victim of the ephemeral circumstances of its uncertain existence. The image of the retreating waves suggests that there are forces beyond its control dictating the directions of an uncertain trajectory. Thus, the final, apocalyptic image of *Dover Beach* partly corroborates and partly retracts from the notion that individuals have no responsibility over their fate:

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! For the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night (*P*, pp. 256–57).

In his outline of the contrasting critical interpretations which regard *Dover Beach* as either cheerfully optimistic or darkly

[19] The OED definition of "shingles" clarifies the connection thus: "Var. of *cingulum*, girdle [...] An eruptive disease often extending round the middle of the body like a girdle (whence the name) usually accompanied by violent neuralgic pain."

pessimistic[20], Alan Grob argues against the view that Arnold's affirmation of love overwhelms the nihilistic images that follow it, by considering his "declaration of love and appeal for love's continuance" as "not a precautionary defence against the disturbance to follow" but as "itself that which must be defended against"[21]. Yet, in his attempt to justify the apparent contradiction, Grob fails to explain that the speaker's invocation is not a declaration of love, but an appeal for truth: "Ah, love, let us be true/To one another" (underlining mine). The quest for truth, as already seen, is the central preoccupation which lies behind *Switzerland*, where love, is mistrusted as a false emotion[22]. Its ideal realisation in *Separation*, it may be recalled, is in the spiritual communion of a brother–sister bond whose sense of allegiance and trust transcends the fleetingness of love and sexual passion in the quest for the real dimensions of the "buried self". In his final realisation that the world before them only "seems/To lie [...] like a land of dreams", the speaker sardonically dismisses the redeeming features of human existence, including love, in a series of negative conjunctions which run counter to the deceptive positivity of "*So* various, *so* beautiful, *so* new" (italics mine) in lines five and six: " [...] *neither* joy, *nor* love, *nor* light,/*Nor* certitude, *nor* peace, *nor* help for pain" (italics mine)[23]. Truth not only transcends the falsity of love, but also all the other illusive virtues of human life. The ultimate sense of *Dover Beach* is that humanity cannot be trusted to act autonomously, without the guiding light of faith. Just as the dis-

[20] A. Grob, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–84.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

[22] This, Grob himself recognises, of course, though his partial misperception of the speaker's invocation remains.

[23] See Joseph Bristow, "'Love, let us be true to one another': Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough, and 'Our Aqueous Ages'", *Literature and History*, 4/1 (1995), pp. 26–32, for an alternative discussion which considers the additional possibility of the poem's celebration of the security of male companionship against other–sex desires.

appearing lights over the French coast[24] lead the speaker into the melancholy reflections that dominate the poem, so is human life, void of faith, reduced to "confused alarms of struggle and flight" upon "a darkling plain" in which "*ignorant* armies clash by night"[25] (italics mine). The final image of grotesque military confusion, posits the barbarity of ignorance against the illumination and enlightenment of Christian faith. Any possibility of progress seems annihilated in this final image which suggests that misery and suffering are endemic to humanity[26].

The essentially negative conclusion of *Dover Beach* may seem a neat summation of Arnold's pessimistic philosophy. Yet it is by no means typical of his poetic attitude in general which, apart from individual exceptions (such as *Isolation. To Marguerite*, for example) is characterised by a tentative ambivalence and scepticism. Moreover, the increasingly explicit references to Christian values in his final poems are synonymous of his attempt to reconcile the tentative exploration of philosophical ideas with the certainty of moral truths.

Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse is undoubtedly one of the poet's most powerful explorations of the existential dilemmas of the Victorian intellectual after *Resignation* and *Empedocles on Etna*. Like those poems, it is constructed upon a dialogical confrontation between antagonistic philosophical and religious positions but, unlike them, it strives towards the vision of new–found faith which is a recurrent feature of Arnold's later

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[24] From a cultural point of view, symbolic darkness over France would be the ultimate apocalyptic image for such a Francophile intellectual as Arnold!

[25] For the background of this image, drawn from Thucydides, who was one of Arnold's father's favourite authors, see C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–6.

[26] Francesco Marroni, *Disarmonie vittoriane*, Roma, Carocci, 2002, p. 48: "Gli ultimi tre versi di *Dover Beach* [...] tematizzano non solo lo scenario apocalittico di un cosmo ormai in preda alle forze del caos, ma anche la fine dell'illusione del progresso. La fine della Storia." "The last three lines of *Dover Beach* [...] do not only prefigure the apocalyptic scenario of a cosmos now at the mercy of chaos, but also the end of the illusion of progress and History" (my translation).

verse. The poem appears to have been composed, like *Dover Beach*, during the poet's honeymoon in 1851 and was published in *Frazer's Magazine* in 1855 before being included in *New Poems*[27].

The Grande Chartruese itself is the monastery of the severe order of the Carthusian monks, situated in Isre, north of Grenoble, at a height of 3,205 ft. above sea level. The original settlement was founded by St. Bruno around 1084 and the first convent was built between 1132 and 1137. However, through the ages its buildings were often burnt – a testimony to the hostilities between this strict religious order and the outside world. By Arnold's time, it had become an irresistibly appealing objective for Romantic pilgrimages[28]. Yet his decision to visit a place so antithetical to his own intellectual and religious upbringing is significant. The physical remoteness and traditional ways of the old monastery offered the poet a rare imaginative insight into an anachronistic world which represented the very cradle of Christianity and continued to live by the dictates of medieval Catholicism. There was no more effective way to represent the death of traditional religious and spiritual values than to dramatise the irreconcilable contrast between the austere world of the monastery and a morally impoverished modern civilisation. Indeed, *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* explores on a more profound and personal level than *Dover Beach* the problem of lack of religious faith in an increasingly secular and scientific universe. The inflexible resistance of the medieval order of the Grand Chartreuse to the external modern world of progress and scepticism is reflected in the deliberate austerity of the language, particularly in the opening section. Similar to *Resigna-*

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[27] For a detailed account of Arnold's journey see P. Honan, *op. cit.*, pp. 238–242.

[28] Beckford had already written a fascinating account of his visit there in 1778. Thomas Grey, Horace Walpole and John Ruskin also bore testimony to the place in their writings. Most significantly of all, Wordsworth describes his visit to the monastery in 1790 in Book VI of *The Prelude*. There is small wonder that Arnold could barely resist adding his own name to this list of illustrious literary figures.

tion, the poem is written in iambic tetrameters and its thirty–five stanzas are divided into six basic parts: an external description of the gradual approach to the monastery gates (I–V); a description of the internal surroundings (VI–XI); an exploration of the inner conflicts of the disoriented poetic voice (XII–XIX); the vanity of past intellectual and artistic endeavour (XX–XXVI); a brief presentiment of a return to religious faith in a future world (XXVII–XXIX); the ultimate separation between the outside world and the monastery (XXX–XXXV).

As with *Resignation*, the presence of Wordsworth also looms behind the composition of *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. Having himself visited the monastery, where he remained for two days in pleasant contemplation of its scenery, he later included a description of it in *The Prelude*. Needless to say, Arnold's poem owes little to the appeal for the sublime and the picturesque characteristic of Wordsworth's evocation. His diary jottings, on the contrary, reflect a dramatically sombre interpretation of his journey conducted in a spirit hovering between curiosity (as a non–Catholic) and morbidity (as a disorientated soul on a spiritual quest). It is perhaps telling that the poetic recreation of his excursion conveys little of the alpine adventurousness with which it was actually peppered[29]. The precise topological features that plot the gradual progression towards the monastery in the first five stanzas are rather matter–of–fact and reveal referential features typical of Arnold's late verses:

> Through Alpine meadows soft–suffused
> With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
> Past the dark forges long disused,
> The mule–track from Saint-Laurent goes.

[29] Cecil. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 217. Fanny Lucy's letters testify to his staunch determination as he walked all the way from Col de Seigne to Cormayeur, "and scarcely seemed tired at all, although the heat was great and the ascent each day very long and fatiguing." Arnold's insistence on taking a dangerous but picturesque route found them pursuing narrow, rocky and steep paths: "Then I had my legs hanging over the edge at the most frightful height, with nothing for hundreds of feet below." See also P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

The bridge is crossed, and slow we ride,
Through forest, up the mountain–side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,
The wind is up, and drives the rain;
While, hark! Far down, with strangled sound
Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain,
Where that wet smoke, among the woods,
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,
Showing – then blotting from our sight!
Halt! – through the cloud-drift something shines!
High in the valley, wet and drear,
The huts of Courrerie appear.

Strike leftward! Cries our guide; and higher
Mounts up the stony forest–way.
At last the encircling trees retire;
Look! Through the showery twilight grey
What pointed roofs are these advance?
A palace for the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here!
Alight, and sparely sup, and wait
For rest in this outbuilding near;
Then cross the sward and reach that gate.
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
To the Carthusians' world–famed home (*P*, pp. 302–03).

The directional imperatives are reminiscent of the similarly assertive instructions of the father, as recalled in the childhood walk in *Resignation*. But the familiarity of the earlier scene contrasts with the alien landscape of the Alps, rendered all the more foreboding by such gloom-evoking phrases, not entirely void of gothic-like melodrama as: "long-disused", "autumnal evening darkens", "strangled sound", "Dead Guier's stream", "spectral vapours", "scars" and "twilight grey" and, with an adjective that comes straight from *Dover Beach*, "wet and drear" (underlining mine).

The initial perspective emphasises the a-temporal, or, more precisely, anachronistic dimension of a world abandoned to its own destiny[30] with the poetic speaker as ironically detached observer:

> The silent courts, where night and day
> Into their stone-carved basins cold
> The splashing icy fountains play –
> The humid corridors behold!
> Where ghostlike in the deepening night,
> Cowled forms brush by in gleaming white (*P*, p. 303).

The eerie atmosphere of the external landscape continues into the static, ghostly interior surroundings of the Chartreuse where the eternal silence is animated only by the comfortless sound of icy fountains and interrupted by anonymous hooded figures brushing by like forgotten phantoms in the night:

> The chapel, where no organ's peal
> Invests the stern and naked prayer –
> With penitential cries they kneel
> And wrestle; rising then, with bare
> And white uplifted faces stand,
> Passing the Host from hand to hand;
>
> Each takes, and then his visage wan
> Is buried in his cowl once more.
> The cells! – the suffering Son of Man
> Upon the wall – the knee-worn floor –
> And where they sleep, that wooden bed,
> Which shall their coffin be, when dead! (*P*, pp. 303-04)

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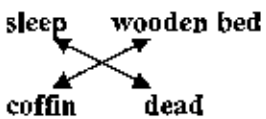
[30] The brooding melancholy of Arnold's opening description is in stark contrast with the excitement and euphoria of Wordsworth's account: "[…] while St. Bruno's pines/Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,/And while below, along their several beds,/Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death,/Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart/Responded; 'Honour to the patriot's zeal!/Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!/Hail to the mighty projects of the time!'" William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, London, Penguin, 1995, p. 231. See also *P*, p. 286, note 30.

The only human sounds to issue from this world of stern discipline are the harrowing cries of repentance and remorse, recalling the "grating roar" of *Dover Beach*. The intensity of the soul's communion with God[31] is marked by a painful struggle which leaves the individual drained of all vitality ("white uplifted faces [...] visage wan"). The emotionally detached speaker, whilst dutifully registering the ritualistic features of this severely disciplined monastic life, cannot help but note its inextricable associations with death in the semantically enclosed chiasmus of the image of the coffin–bed:



The deliberately inflated and archaic rhetoric which characterises the following stanzas outlines the unappealing qualities of the Carthusian order, particularly the grim sobriety of its library "[...] where tract and tome/Not to feed priestly pride are there, [...] They paint of souls the inner strife,/Their drops of blood, their death in life" (*P*, p. 304). If there is reverence on the part of the speaker for the ritualistic Roman Catholic manifestations of faith, it is the tentative reverence of a "guardedly skeptical tourist"[32]. Left to his own devices by an ephemeral guide, he suddenly feels the perverseness of his own presence there:

> Those halls, too, destined to contain
> Each its own pilgrim–host of old,
> From England, Germany, or Spain –

[31] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, W. H. Garner and N. H. Mackenzie (eds.), Oxford And New York, Oxford University Press, 1970 (1967), p. 100. Interestingly, Hopkins' sonnet of religious struggle, "Carrion Comfort" concludes with the same verb: "I wretch lay *wrestling* with (my God!) My God", (italics mine).

[32] Roger B. Wilkenfield, "Arnold's Way in *Stanzas From the Grande Chartreuse*", *Victorian Poetry*, 23 (1985), p. 413.

> All are before me! I behold
> The House, the Brotherhood austere!
> – And what am I, that I am here? (*P*, p. 304)

The central question is stressed in the first part of the clause of the final line; for the issue of the speaker's identity is what is at stake, rather than the circumstantial reality of his present surroundings. Precisely, "that I am here" is a given, but the crucial question is "what am I [...]?". For, the speaker discovers that his real journey does not reside in the confrontation with a mystical, austere and impenetrable world, but in a re–evaluation of the spiritual and intellectual resources of his own being.

The protagonist's journey consequently becomes an imaginative and dramatic confrontation with the ghostly voices of the rational masters of his past (i.e. Thomas Arnold, Goethe, Senancour, Spinoza etc)[33] all equally dumbfounded at the incongruousness of his presence in such a place:

> For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
> And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,
> Showed me the high, white star of Truth,
> There bade me gaze, and there aspire.
> Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:
> *What dost thou in this living tomb?* (*P*, p. 304).

The speaker–tourist finally abandons his protective mask of detached irony at this unexpected dramatic self–confrontation. The intensity of his personal struggle is marked by the striking difference in register, consisting in strongly marked verbs, emotionally rhetorical emphasis and repetition: "*rigorous* [...] *seized* my youth,/*Purged* its faith, and *trimmed* its fire [...] *there* bade me gaze, and *there* aspire [...] *Even now* [...] What dost *thou* [...]" (italics mine). To the austerity and severity of

[33] The very fact of visiting the monastery would have appeared, for the anti–Catholic Thomas Arnold, an act of rebellion on his son's part. Cf. A. Grob, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–97, who proposes a curious psychological interpretation of Arnold's regression into a moment beyond paternal authority and responsibility (see also note 36).

the Carthusian order correspond the rationally "rigorous teachers" of his youth, who, conversely "purged" him of all faith and who, in mock parody of the phantom figures of the monastery, return to haunt his tormented conscience. Their question: "*What dost thou in this living tomb?*" (underlining mine) echoes his own previous self–interrogation: "What am I that I am here?", and places a special stress on the apparently regressive nature of the course undertaken in his return to a dogmatic, ritualistic world–view he has been 'taught' to 'unlearn'. This places him in a paradoxical position with regard to his old masters, in spite of his insistence that: "I came not here to be your foe!/I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,/To curse and to deny your truth [...]" (*P*, p. 305). Yet, his awareness of the liminal space of the Grande Chartreuse, leads to the dramatic realization that he is also wandering: "between two worlds, one dead,/The other powerless to be born [...]" (*P*, p. 305): the past order of religious faith and certainty, and a non–existent limbo state held at bay by disbelief and scepticism and struggling into existence in his mind. Granted, his pilgrimage is not conducted with the veneration of the Christian pilgrim. His real 'gods' are elsewhere. "Think of me", he says to his old masters: "as [...] a Greek/In pity and mournful awe might stand/Before some fallen runic stone –/For both were faiths, and both are gone" (*P*, p. 305). Rather than leading to an enlightened awareness of the emptiness of old faiths, the speaker expresses a desires to lose himself in the hidden static topology of the monastery, in order either to retrieve them again, or lose them forever:

> Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
> Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
> Take me, cowled forms, and fence me round,
> Till I possess my soul again;
> Till free my thoughts before me roll,
> Not chafed by hourly false control! (*P*, p. 306)

This Empedoclean outburst of despair[34] poignantly contrasts with the ironic detachment of the previous two sections. The speaker's inner dialogue with the antagonistic masters of his education and the sarcastic voices of a society characterised by sciolists (the equivalent of Empedocles' "sophist brood") indifferent to matters of the soul, only intensify his sense of his own isolation: "For the world cries your faith is now/But a dead time's exploded dream;/My melancholy, sciolists say,/Is a past mode, an outworn theme [...]" (*P*, p. 306). His turning to the monastery for solace against the falsity of "earthly hours" is synonymous of the Arnoldian quest to reach the truthful essence of the buried life, as opposed to the "white star of Truth" towards which he has already been (falsely) 'guided' by the masters of his past. Thus, his simultaneous rejection of the 'old' world of religious faith and the 'new' world of his intellectual teachers. However, his recognition that the Grand Chartreuse represents the only remnant of unwavering faith on Earth, the only real stronghold, is one of the most poignant moments of the poem: "Ah, if it *be* passed take away,/At least, the restlessness, the pain; Be man henceforth no more a prey/To these outdated stings again!/The nobleness of grief is gone–/Ah, leave us not the fret alone!" (*P*, p. 306). In his imaginatively empathetic involvement with the silent world of the Grande Chartreuse, the speaker is able to envisage a possible solution to his own restlessness and pain in words that are short of prophetic when Arnold's future poetic activity is considered: "Silent – the best are silent now" (*P*, p. 307).

The spiritual silence of the monks is set against the silence of the "kings of modern thought" who have become the impotent recipients of "the grief men had of yore" and can only

[34] Compare this section with Empedocles' suicide speech: "Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,/And awe be dead, and hope impossible,/And the soul's deep, eternal night come on,/Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!" (*P*, p. 188).

"stand mute, and watch the waves" (*P*, p. 290) of the sea of time:

> For what availed it, all the noise
> And outcry of the former men?
> Say, have their sons achieved more joys,
> Say, is life lighter now than then?
> The sufferers died, they left their pain –
> The pangs which tormented them remain.
>
> What helps it now, that Byron bore,
> With haughty scorn which mocked the smart,
> Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
> The pageant of his bleeding heart?
> That thousands counted every groan,
> And Europe made his woe her own?
>
> What boots it, Shelley! That the breeze
> Carried thy lovely wail away,
> Musical through Italian trees
> Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
> Inheritors of thy distress
> Have restless hearts one throb the less? (*P*, p. 308)

The speaker himself represents one of the few impotent successors to the romantic heroes of the past who have now become fallen gods ("But we – we learnt your lore too well!" – *P*, p. 309), and whose rebellious standpoint against a hypocritical and corrupt society, which once generated a communal empathy, has been inevitably historicised and set aside: "The world, which for an idle day/Grace to your mood of sadness gave,/Long since hath flung her weeds away" (*P*, p. 309). Yet the implication that, in order to retrieve its true dimension, the individual has to transcend the 'noise' and 'outcry' that exemplifies such historically–conditioned responses is contradicted by the speaker's own hope that in some future time there "may dawn an age,/More fortunate, alas! than we,/Which without hardness will be sage,/And gay without frivolity [...]" (*P*, p. 309). The paradoxical core of the poem in which death and renewal merge at a midpoint, indicates Arnold's acute awareness

of the spiritual and intellectual impasse of his time and his equally keen Victorian optimism that a new age may signal a return to spiritual felicity[35]. As in *The Buried Life*, apparent mistrust for a cynical, frivolous, blind and ignorant humanity is countered by an underlying faith in its capacity for active regeneration and reform ("The same heart beats in every human breast"). The speaker's proclaimed ignorance of what such a future will hold is symptomatic of an attitude of non-commitment which contrasts with Arnold's actual zeal for renewal and reform as reflected in his prose writings. However, the one thing he does make clear is that he cannot, and never could accept the anachronistic world-view held by the Catholic monks:

> [...] We admire with awe
> The exulting thunder of your race;
> You give the universe your law,
> You triumph over time and space!
> Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
> We laud them, but they are not ours (*P*, p. 309).

In spite of this, Arnold actuates a curious pronominal exchange in the following stanza in the shift from first to third person plural, in which he momentarily blurs the distinction between the speaker and the monks:

> We are like children reared in the shade
> Beneath some old-world abbey wall,
> Forgotten in a forest glade,
> And secret from the eyes of all.
> Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,
> Their abbey, and its close of graves!
> (*P*, p. 309, underlining mine)

[35] Cf. P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

Far from suggesting a retreat to the regressive condition of childhood[36], the pronominal union marks his temporary identification with the monks. In fact, the simile "we are like children" three stanzas later refers only exclusively to the monks and signals the end of such an association. It is a psychologically telling shift that somehow seems to link up with the previous image of the Greek standing amid the ruins of his own ancient culture[37]. Thus, the image of childhood represents a primal stage in the cultural development of humanity which it has now outgrown. It is a painful process to recognise that the remnants of the past no longer have the vitality to influence the development of the present world. Just as Shelley and Byron lie forgotten in their graves, so also do the institutions that represent man's cultural and spiritual past lie dilapidated and abandoned. The only outlet from the imprisonment of a dead culture is the outside world of activity with which the poem concludes[38] and which seems to impinge on the contemplative life of the monks as a temptation to entice them from their immobility and isolation:

But, where the road runs near the stream,

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[36] See P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 241: "In the final stanzas, the Grande Chartreuse becomes a more manageable, personal symbol. The monastery, now, suggests his own childhood [...]". See also A. Grob, *op. cit.*, pp. 193–7 who finds the transformation of the speaker into a child "the most surprising and inexplicable" change in the coda of the poem and proceeds to offer a long psychological explanation which, amongst other factors of a biographical nature, sees the "turn to a reconstituted childhood in the abbey in the 'forest glade' [...] an attempt to undo the spiritual and psychologically withering effects" of his rigorous teachers. More accurately, R. B. Wilkenfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 416–17 notes that "Arnold's fusion with the brotherhood [...] "cannot be sustained" being only a brief moment "displaced by an extended period in which he repositions himself in relation to the outside world and the monks".

[37] Arnold's sense that the modern world has completely severed itself from the culture of the past anticipates similar modernist conceptions by almost one hundred years.

[38] Interestingly, *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* concludes with an image of a mass humanity representative of war and peace analogous to that of the opening section of *Resignation*.

Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam –
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war!

And through the wood, another way,
Faint bugle–notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some fair forest–lodge at morn.
Gay dames are there, in sylvan green;
Laughter and cries – those notes between! (*P*, p. 310)

It is an index of the dialogical intensity of the poem that the final words, 'uttered' by the monks, express the ultimate irreconcilability between secular and religious world: – *Pass, banners, pass [...] and leave our desert to its peace* (*P*, p. 311, original italics). The speaker is ultimately as crushed by the power of their autonomous presence as he is by the uncertain outside world in which there is: "nowhere yet to rest my head" (*P*, p. 306). As in *Resignation*, there are none of the sought–for effects of a pilgrimage (no spiritual rejuvenation or catharsis), merely a confirmation of a restlessness and angst in which any possibility of solace is ultimately refuted.

Ironically, it is in his great elegies, *Thyrsis* and *Rugby Chapel*, that Arnold hypothesises a vision of spiritual recovery and renewal that transcends personal tragedy and conflict. *Thyrsis* is in all probability one of his final poems[39]. Its Miltonically inspired inscription: "A MONODY, to commemorate the author's friend, ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, who died at Florence, 1861" (*P*, p. 537)[40] anticipates the intertextual nature of the poem, with its classical references to Theocritus, Lucretius and Virgil. The initial stages of the composition of the poem

[39] The date 1861, in its inscription, refers to Clough's death. The poem was projected during 1862–3 and probably not completed until 1866. See, *P*, p. 537 (note).

[40] Recalling Milton's heading in *Lycidas*: 'In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drown'd in his Passage from *Chester* on the *Irish Seas*, 1637 [...]'. See, *P*, p. 537 (note).

correspond with the poet's deliberate decision to revisit the scenes of his early days at Oxford two months after Clough's death with a volume of his verses:

> I shall take them (verses by Clough) with me to Oxford, where I shall go alone after Easter; – and there, among the Cumner hills, where we have so often rambled, I shall be able to think him over as I could wish[41].

Clough's poems no doubt served to rekindle the memory of an artistic/poetic dialogue in which growing disillusionment and final resentment were central. His vindication of the poetic principles of his youth leads to a partially biased representation of his friend's more idyllic side[42], as he himself was full aware, as well as confronting the problem of the loss of his own poetic powers. Indeed, there is every sense in which the poem is *also* an elegy on Arnold the poet[43]: "My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday! Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart/Into the world and wave of men depart [...]" (*P*, p. 500). Although he has remained ideologically faithful to his original ideals, the poetic speaker has been reluctantly forced into the daily grind of human activity and strife, whilst Clough/Thyrsis "of his own will went away" (*P*, p. 540) and his "piping took a troubled sound/of storms that rage outside our happy ground [...]" (*P*, p. 541). The ideological world–view around which *Thyrsis* revolves derives from its intratextual connection with the earlier poem *The Scholar Gipsy*, with which it shares the same pastoral

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[41] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 121. Letter dated 22 January, 1862.

[42] *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 35. In a letter to John Campbell Shairp, Arnold commented: "'Thyrsis' is a very quiet poem, but I think solid and sincere. It will not be popular, however [...] one has the feeling, if one reads the poem as a memorial poem, that not enough is said about Clough in it; I feel this so much that I do not send the poem to Mrs Clough. Still Clough *had* this idyllic side, too [...]".

[43] F. Neiman, *op. cit.*, p. 102, justly observes that elegy is not obituary and that "the formalism of the pastoral with its lamentation, change of mood, and consolation gave Arnold a congenial vehicle for his statement of the existential drama."

form, a ten–line iambic pentameter stanza (excepting the iambic trimeter of line six in each stanza) with a fixed abcbcadeed rhyme scheme. The association of Clough with this earlier poem also explains why, on his own admission, Arnold felt himself "carried irresistibly" into the same pastoral form in his portrayal of his friend in *Thyrsis*[44]. *The Scholar Gipsy*, based on the legend of a poor student who abandons the intellectual life of Oxford to become a wanderer among the Cumner hills provides the ideological inspiration for the celebration of a purer, simpler past which had: "one aim, one business, one desire" in contrast with the sick confusion of the modern world:

> O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
> And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
> Before this strange disease of modern life,
> With its sick hurry, its divided aims (*P*, p. 366).

Thyrsis, subsequently laments Clough's self-imposed exile from the world of the scholar gipsy of the earlier poem. As the poet recalls to his brother Tom in a letter dated 15 May.1857:

> [...] that life at Oxford, the *freest* and most delightful part, perhaps of my life – when with you and Clough [...] I shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgotten Oxfordshire and Berkshire country. Did you ever read a poem of mine called 'The Scholar Gipsy?' It was meant to fix the remembrances of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner hills before they were quite effaced [...] [45].

Though Clough himself highly rated the poem: "I myself think that the Gipsy Scholar is best. It is so true to the Oxford Country" [46]. Arnold's own response was self–disparaging: "I am glad you like the Gipsy Scholar but what does it *do* for you? [...] the Gipsy Scholar at best awakens a *pleasing melancholy*. But this

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[44] *Ibid.*, p. 497.
[45] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 359.
[46] N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

is not what we want"[47] (italics mine). By this time, his confidence in the moral function of poetry, of its ability to animate and ennoble the spirit, was strong enough for a denunciation of what he thought *The Scholar-Gipsy* fell far short of performing.

The incipit of the poem underlines the recurrent Arnoldian preoccupation with flux in the description of a townscape marked by transformation in which an initial dysphoria underlines the obliterating effects of time on the memory:

> How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
> In the two Hinkeys nothing keeps the same;
> The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
> And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
> And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks –
> Are ye too changed, ye hills? [...] (*P*, p. 539)

The sense of loss induced by physical change is enhanced by the speaker's rhetorical questions in his initial struggle to recognise the features of a once familiar landscape: "Are ye too changed, ye hills [...] Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth farm [...] once I knew each field, each flower, each stick" (*P*, pp. 539–40). As is typical of his late verse, Arnold plots precisely named landmarks[48]: Childsworth Farm [...] The signal-elm [...] Ilsley Downs [...] The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames [...]" (*P*, p. 539). Topological exactness realistically confirms the extent to which the walk constituted a temporary escape from Oxford for the young men and shows how, although the speaker's visits to this location have become "too rare", its spatial boundaries are gradually re-appropriated in terms of the poetic and cultural ideals which allowed free

[47] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 282.

[48] Sir Francis Wylie, "The Scholar Gypsy Country" in C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 351–373. In an essay which retraces the walk, Sir Francis Wylie comes to the conclusion that the poet was truthful in almost every detail He notes in particular the fact that it takes in a region wholly to the west and south west of Oxford on the Berkshire side, rather than the Oxfordshire side of the Thames.

rein to his imagination[49]. For the rarity of the speaker's visits is synonymous of Arnold's own increasingly waning activity: "Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power/Befalls me wandering through this upland dim" (*P*, p. 539), so that the act of physically walking through the landscape is analogous to the recovery of his artistic inspiration. It is also significant that the mere recreation of the former scene revives the Keatsian diction and rhetoric with which *The Scholar-Gipsy* itself is permeated. Although the sensuous celebration of the natural world is atypical of Arnold's verse in general, the decade that separates the two poems has done nothing to eradicate his ability to adopt romantic rhetorical strategies. Stanza VII is highly illustrative of such features. Apart from the Arnoldian characteristics of verbal repetition and anaphora, there is a complex interweaving of sound patterning, assonance, alliteration and semantic connections to convey the over-abundance of ripeness and plenitude that recall Keats' ode *To Autumn*:

> Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
> Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
> Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
> Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
> Sweet-William with his homely cottage smell,
> And stocks in fragrant blow;
> Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
> And open jasmine-muffled lattices,
> And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
> And the full moon, and the white evening star
> (*P*, p. 541).

As in *Resignation*, the memory of the former walk is coloured by its opportunity for temporary escape from the fret of modern life. The landscape revisited by the older and wiser speaker is now perceived as the ideological locus for the reinterpretation and re-affirmation of a temporarily misplaced vision. Territorial recognition therefore connotes the reappropriation of his artistic imagination. Consequently, the ref-

[49] Cfr. A. D. Culler, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

erential features of the poem give way to an fictional space in which modern and ancient worlds converge, as in the imitation of Lament for Bion[50] in which the story of Corydon and Thyrsis simultaneously recalls the other two Arnoldian poet–figures Callicles and Empedocles:

> Alack, for Corydon no rival now!
> But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
> Some good survivor with his flute would go,
> Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate;
> And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
> And relax Pluto's brow,
> And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
> Of Proserpine among whose crownéd hair
> Are flowers first opened on Sicilian air,
> And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead
> (*P*, pp. 542–43).

Arnold attempts to mitigate the tensions and conflicts clouding the memory of his friend's death by symbolically transforming his present surroundings into a Classical world of serene detachment that is reminiscent of the songs of Callicles: "And relax Pluto's brow,/And make leap up with joy the beauteous head/Of Proserpine [...]" (underlinings mine). Initially, the identities of the speaker and Proserpine are interrelated though the theme of the quest in the following parallel phrases:

> For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
> She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
> She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
> Each rose with blushing face [...] (*P*, p. 502).

> I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
> I know the Fyfield tree,
> I know what white, what purple fritillaries
> The grassy harvest of the river fields,
> Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields
> [...]
> I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?

[50] See *P*, p. 542 note to lines 82–100.

(*P*, p. 543–44, underlinings mine).

Yet the insistence on the English place-names simultaneously exposes a recognition of the illusion of such imaginative identification: "But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!/Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirred [...] And we should tease her with our plaint in vain!" (*P*, p. 543). In a line that recalls Tennyson's: "And with no language but a cry"[51] from *In Memoriam* (another an elegy to a dead friend) the speaker acknowledges the impotency, but also the necessity, of artistic expression: "Well! Wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,/Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour [...]" (*P*, p. 543).

The transition from flux to stasis in the perceptual process from altered to familiar landscape is reverted and repeated in the final section of the poem. The speaker's grief for his friend suddenly gives way to an intense awareness of his own mortality in one of the most moving passages in Arnold's poetry:

> Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
> In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
> I see her veil draw soft across the day,
> I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
> The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
> I feel her finger light
> Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;
> The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
> The heart less bounding at emotion new,
> And hope, once crushed, less quick to spring again
> (*P*, p. 545).

Encroaching old age and death (though Arnold was barely 43 when he wrote the poem) is powerfully evoked in his passive submission to an invisible relentless force as it first enticingly

[51] Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks, Harlow, Longman, 1987 (1969), vol. II, p. 370: "So runs my dream: but what am I?/An infant crying in the night:/An infant crying for the light/And with no language but a cry".

then menacingly closes in upon him[52]. The inescapability of physical decay and ultimate disintegration of the individual is rendered by the appropriately estranging effect of definite articles in place of possessive adjectives: "The cheek [...] the brown hair [...] the foot [...] the heart [...]". Death, on the other hand, is personified by the third person feminine pronoun: " [...] weaves her shade [...]/I see her veil [...] /I feel her slowly chilling breath [...]/I feel her finger light/Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train [...] " (emphases mine), the latter image significantly conveying a thrill of anticipation that is almost sexually connotative. The obsolete lexeme "sprent" (a stain or mark) is a significant choice, since it also contains the adjective 'spent', which is connotative of an exhausted energy evidenced later in the typical Arnoldian understatement of: "The foot less prompt [...] / The heart less pounding [...] / And hope [...] less quick [...]". The deceptive calm that masks the threat of approaching death is further rendered on a phonological level through the insistence on soft-voiced consonants (particularly liquids and nasals) and open vowels: And *r*o*u*nd me *t*oo the n*i*ght/In ever-*n*e*a*r*i*ng circle we*a*ves her sh*a*de. I *s*ee her v*e*il draw soft across the d*a*y/I f*ee*l her sl*o*wly chilling breath *i*nv*a*de [...]". Although hope may have been "crushed", the fact that it is "less quick to spring again", nevertheless suggests the possibility that it may well do so. It is no accident, therefore, that this very word occurs prior to the eventual discovery of the tree.

The two representational levels – the referential empiric world and the self-referential pastoral world – finally culminate in the speaker's discovery of the elm-tree that has symbolised the object of his quest:

> But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
> Of quiet! – Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
> A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
> As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!

[52] See D. G. Riede, *op. cit.*, p. 151, for a view that lays stress on the essentially intertextual nature of Arnold's personal language.

From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.
Quick! Let me fly, and cross
Into yon farther field! – 'Tis done; and see,
Backed by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening–sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree! (*P*, p. 546)

The phrase "Quick! Let me fly" is a figurative enactment of the instructions reiterated in the final supplication in *The Scholar–Gipsy*: "[…] fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!" (*P*, p. 368). The physical urgency of the imperatives ("Hush […] look […] Quick […] Let me fly […] 'Tis done […] and see") gives way to imaginative recreation at the very point in which the poet, in a moment of emotional revelation intensified by the chromatic contrast of the orange And violet sky, recognises the same tree, ("that single elm-tree bright/Against the west –" *P*, p. 540) which he and Thyrsis/Clough had previously associated with the scholar gipsy's retreat from the world. The excitement of the poet's discovery is underlined by the long embedded clause which creates a crescendo separating main verb ("see") from object ("Tree"). The sudden invocation is all the more poignant when it is realised that the temporal coordinates of Clough's departure for the continent are deliberately confused with his actual death, as the reflections drift from the "rude Cumner ground" (*P*, p. 549) and the return to an evocation of the Classical world of Greek myth:

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!
Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
That lone, sky–pointing tree are not for him;
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air […]

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king
For thee the Lityerses–song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing […]
(*P*, p. 547).

The moment of reconciliation with Thyrsis depends on a deliberate eschewing of all past conflicts[53] and an exclusive recognition of a commonly shared quest: "Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound;/Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour" (*P*, p. 549). This is further consolidated by the definite adoption of the second person intimate pronoun 'Thou', (during the poem the speaker oscillates between the distant third and second person). Consequently, Arnold not only by-steps the problematical issue of his friend as an implicit critical presence working against the poem, but also expresses any possibility of hope through the direct discourse attributed to Thyrsis/Clough with which the poem concludes: "*Roam on! The light we sought is shining still* [...]" (*P*, p. 550, original italics). As with *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, the ultimate 'message' of hope is conceded to the addressee. Thyrsis' incitement to "*roam on*" may be seen on one level as reiterating the restlessness of the quest, but it also points to a possibility of future hope which leads, not so much to the reconciliation of an estranged relationship, but a reaffirmation of the moral function of poetical ideals, as is evident in the symbolic function of the "signal-tree", which though it cannot be reached by the speaker (it ultimately belongs to an irretrievable past), nevertheless remains as "a happy omen" (p. 547) of future hope.

Rugby Chapel, the poet's famous elegy to his father Thomas Arnold, is a poem for which few critics have a high regard[54]. Yet, it is a powerful display of poetic technique and im-

[53] Lawrence Kramer, "The 'Intimations Ode' and Victorian Romanticism", *Victorian Poetry*, 18, 4 (1980), p. 327. Kramer sees the compensatory image of the signal-tree as "creating a kind of threshold to the past without admitting access to it".

[54] Among the most recent commentators, A. Grob, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–19 dismisses both *Thyrsis* and *Rugby Chapel* as "highly contrived"; N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 150, likens the poem to *Haworth Churchyard* "in being a little too prosy and earnestly gravid and finding too little opportunity to take poetic flight in memorable images"; C. Machann, *op. cit.*, p. 7, does little more than define it cooingly as "that most 'Victorian' of poems; I. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 172, sees *Rugby Chapel* as "a poem which tells us more about the son's low

agery and a moving attempt to channel the discrepancies that hound the quest for stability and calm into a coherent vision of spiritual enlightenment. It is also a wonderful orchestration of moods, from the sad solemnity of its tentative incipit, to the determined tone of its victorious conclusion. Yet it may almost never have been written. For, if it had taken Arnold approximately five years to complete his elegy to Clough, he had to wait fifteen before he could even face the task of clarifying his thoughts about his father, let alone begin putting pen to paper for the first time to honour his memory. It was certainly no simple feat to write a poem about a man like Thomas Arnold. Not only, but as Tinker and Lowry observe: "He could hardly write of Dr. Arnold and omit all reference to his Christian faith; therefore, the poet fell inevitably into the traditional language of Christianity"[55]. However, Christian terminology is not exclusive to *Rugby Chapel*. Even the 'Christian' notion of the saving of souls, reiterated in the poems of 1867, is *the* recurrent Arnoldian preoccupation in his quest for the "buried life" and has its origins in *Empedocles on Etna*. As a result, his initial struggle against the fallacy of Romantic self-assertion, inevitably led him from the passive approach of Hinduism to the heroism of Christian activism. Re-embracing Christian metalanguage represents an important cultural step in Arnold's intellectual development because it provides the author with a language upon which he can deconstruct the superficial dogmas and superstitions that impede a genuine search for the spiritual self.

The original impetus for *Rugby Chapel* seems to have derived not so much by the appearance in 1857 of Thomas Hughes' sympathetic portrait of the Rugby headmaster in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), but by Fitzjames Stephen's hostile criticism of Thomas Arnold in a review of the book in the *Edin-*

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sense of his own worth than it does about the father's excellence." Even P. Honan, *op. cit.*, p. 296, comments on the poem's "bolero–like rhythms" which he sees as being undoubtedly inspired by Arnold's marching with the Westminster Rifle Volunteers during a national crisis with Napoleon III twice a week!

[55] C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 240–41.

burgh Review. Stephen ridicules the headmaster's grave earnestness and lack of humour which led the Rugby boy to "[...] never tie his shoes without asserting a principle [...]"[56].

In a letter to his mother, Arnold reveals that it was Stephen's review which incited him to a definite vindication of his father's noble qualities[57]:

> I knew, my dearest mother, the Rugby Chapel Poem would give you pleasure: often and often it has been in my mind to say it to you, and I have foreborn because my own saying of my things does not please me. It was Fitzjames Stephen's thesis, maintained in the Edinburgh Review, of Papa's being a narrow bustling fanatic, which moved me first to the poem. I think I have done something to fix the true legend about Papa, as those who knew him best feel it ought to run [...][58].

The undercurrent of moral indignation that runs throughout the poem undoubtedly helped Arnold to transcend an inevitable compound of feelings for a man who had been such a strong presence in his early life, whose moral strength he admired, but whose religious beliefs he could not share. Besides offering his mother a concocted but well-meaning justification for the long delay of the poem, Arnold's letter presents the circumstances of its composition in the terms of a son's vindication of his father's memory, in this way instilling a sense of purpose more characteristic of his prose writings.

The poem is divided into twelve unrhymed sections whose irregular line divisions characterised by an alternation of iambic and trochaic-trimeters[59], progress in a series of advances and

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[56] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

[57] A. D. Culler, *op. cit.*, p. 272, who also suggests that Arnold's rethinking Clough in *Thyrsis* renewed his solidarity with his father. See also p. 264, where his general observation of the tripartite structure of Arnold's elegies, (death of subject – lamentation – recovery and reconciliation) may be seen as directly applicable to *Thyrsis* and *Rugby Chapel*.

[58] C. Y. Lang, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 168. From a letter dated 8 August, 1867.

[59] Jerrald Ranta, "The Metrics of 'Rugby Chapel'", Victorian Poetry, 10 (1972), pp. 333–49 is the most detailed metrical analysis of the poem I have come across. Ranta notes that although the "ideal" line of "Rugby Chapel" is a

retreats. The powerful opening lines depict a cold, comfortless autumn scene in which the features of a natural landscape suddenly dwindle away in the intensifying darkness:

> Coldly, sadly descends
> The autumn–evening. The field
> Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
> Of withered leaves, and the elms,
> Fade into dimness apace,
> Silent; hardly a shout
> From a few boys late at their play!
> The lights come out in the street,
> In the school–room windows; but cold,
> Solemn, unlighted, austere,
> Through the gathering darkness, arise
> The chapel–walls, in whose bound
> Thou, my father! art laid (*P*, p. 482).

The falling trochaic and rising iambic beats appropriately convey, on a metrical level, the faltering spirits of the mournful poetic voice and the profound sense of lethargy suggestive of the death–like atmosphere that invests the scene, is evoked in laconic phrases, void of active verbs. The despondency of the first descriptive sequence ("Coldly [...] windows") is rendered in lexemes connotative of lifelessness and apathy: "strewn", "dank" "yellow drifts", "withered", "fade", "dimness", "silent") which seem to be at the same time the external manifestations of a profound spiritual desolation. Yet, an underlying paradigmatic tension of Death vs Life is suggested in the adjective "dank" and the adverb "apace" which respectively connote resistance and speed. This sign of spiritual recovery is confirmed in the second sequence ("but cold [...] laid") which intimates the counter attitude of moral strength and purpose in "solemn" and "austere" embodied by the poet's father.

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variable line which contains three stresses and varies syllabically in its length. The critic notes fifteen different kinds of stress–lines, pp. 337–8.

In the second section, Wordsworthian mnemonic recollection provides a spiritual fortification that converts the present November gloom into past radiance:

> There dost thou lie, in the gloom
> Of the autumn evening. But ah!
> That word, *gloom*, to my mind
> Brings thee back, in the light
> Of thy radiant vigour, again;
> In the gloom of November we passed
> Days not dark at thy side;
> Seasons impaired not the ray
> Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear [...] (*P*, p. 483).

The adjective "gloom" becomes the paradigm of a potential evil which the poet's father easily overcame, so that its very mention paradoxically recalls his relentless cheerfulness. The emphatic negative phrases: "Days not of gloom [...] Seasons impaired not the ray [...]" (underlinings mine), give further rhetorical force to this resistance of negative influences. The opposition between gloom and cheerfulness is reversed in the following section which relates the death of the poet's father:

> Fifteen years have gone round
> Since thou arosest to tread,
> In the summer-morning, the road
> Of death, at a call unforeseen,
> Sudden [...] (*P*, p. 483).

The thematic transition from autumn evening (LIFE) to summer morning (DEATH) ironically underpins the temporal unpredictability of human existence accentuating the speaker's loss and vulnerability: "Bare, unshaded, alone,/Lacking the shelter of thee" (*P*, p. 483). Significantly, the three epithets "Bare, unshaded, alone" deliberately contrast with the structurally parallel epithets "Solemn, unlighted, austere" in the first section. However, the speaker immediately retracts from this momentary relapse into self-pity in the fourth section which hypothesises the after-life existence of his father:

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm! (*P*, pp. 483–84)

The image of the vast "labour-house/Of being" is a far cry from the "brazen prison" of *A Summer Night* in which men work languidly "at some unmeaning taskwork". The speaker's trust that his father's energies have not been spent in vain is conveyed in terms of an affecting rhetorical plea: "Surely [...] Somewhere, surely [...]", that somewhat blunts the euphoria of yet another third group of three positive epithets: "Zealous, beneficent, firm!" The selflessness with which the speaker imagines his father continuing to perform "the word/Of the spirit" (*P*, p. 484) is symptomatic of the alternative work ethic Arnold envisages against the purposelessness of the spiritually destroying "barren labour" of a materialistic society. Furthermore, his role as guide is essential in dispelling the doubts of those souls (the majority) that "with half-open eyes/Tread the border-land dim/'Twixt vice and virtue" (*P*, p. 484). At this point, appears the description, reiterated throughout Arnold's poetry but nowhere with quite the same ruthlessness, of a blind humanity struggling vainly towards an invisible and unknown goal:

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?
Most men eddy about
Here and there – eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die –
Perish; and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,

> In the moonlit solitudes mild
> Of the midmost Ocean, have swelled,
> Foamed for a moment, and gone (*P*, p. 485).

The initial question mirrors the final phrase of the previous section to set up an implicit contrast between the father's immortality and the mortality of the mass of men: "This was thy life upon earth … What is the course of the life/Of mortal men of the earth […]". Thus the enumeration of the concepts: "eat and drink/chatter and love and hate/Gather and squander […]" serves to underline, not so much their intrinsic evil (the inclusion of "eat", "drink" and "love" would otherwise be inexplicable) but their emptiness when pursued without purpose and moral direction. In contrast with most of Arnold's sympathetic depictions of the individual's futile journey towards an unknown goal, here there is an almost sardonic gloating in the emphasis of the stressed words in: "[…] achieving/Nothing; and then they diĕ – / Perish; and no one asks/ Who or what they have been […]" (underlinings mine). This harsh tone is in sharp contrast with the lyrical evocation of the natural elements in the lines immediately following, which, with their recurrence of nasals, liquids and the open–vowels poignantly convey the evanescence of the mortal being: "In the moonlit solitudes mild/Of the midmost *O*cean, have swelled,/F*o*amed for a m*o*ment, and gone" (emphases mine).

As in *A Summer Night* and *The Buried Life*, Arnold's postulates a third category of individual in the sixth section: those who refuse to follow the crowd and "to go round/In an eddy of purposeless dust/Effort unmeaning and vain" and determined: "Not without action to die/Fruitless […]" (*P*, p. 485). Although the path chosen presents a "clear–purposed goal", The journey is characterised by the steep uphill struggle "through sunk/Gorges, o'er mountains in snow" (*P*, p. 486)[60]. Commenc-

[60] Michael V. DiMassa, "'On to the City of God': The Influence of The Pilgrim's Progress on 'Rugby Chapel'", *English Language Notes*, 2 (1997), pp. 44–61, for interesting textual parallels between Arnold's poem and Bunyan's allegorical work.

ing with cheerful optimism it soon becomes a heroic enterprise in which, one by one, the members of the company are lost in the snow. This central section of the poem depicts a scene of adventurousness and daring that render the speaker's desperate pursuit of his goal all the more dramatic:

> Then, on the height, comes the storm.
> Thunder crashes from rock
> To rock, the cataracts reply,
> Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
> Roaring torrents have breached
> The track, the stream–bed descends
> In the place where the wayfarer once
> Planted his footstep – the spray
> Boils o'er its borders! aloft
> The unseen snow–beds dislodge
> Their hanging ruin; alas,
> Havoc is made in our train!
> Friends, who set forth at our side,
> Falter, are lost in the storm.
> We, we only are left!
> With frowning foreheads, with lips
> Sternly compressed, we strain on,
> On – and at nightfall at last
> Come to the end of our way,
> To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
> Where the gaunt and taciturn host
> Stands on the threshold, the wind,
> Shaking his thin white hairs – (*P*, p. 486).

The emergence of a marching rhythm that characterises the metrical beat of the latter sections of the poem can already be seen in the fact that fifteen of the twenty–two lines above contain initial stresses. The effect here, however is to reinforce the tension and struggle symbolically represented by the violent snowstorm, whose upsetting of the natural order, evident in the phrases: "breached the track": "Boils o'er its borders": "dislodge their hanging ruin": "Havoc is made" (underlinings mine), reflects the disorientations of the lost human soul that become the primal cause of its ultimate loneliness. Against the spiritual weakness of the soul that falters, the speaker posits the

earnestness of "frowning" foreheads and the sternness of his compressed lips (both signs being suggestive of moral disapproval as well as the fatigue of increasing effort). His ultimate 'victory' is mitigated by the irretrievable loss of human companionship and solidarity, which always constitute Arnold's underlying hope in humanity and that he senses as the natural impulse of the real "buried self" that lies beneath everyone ("The same heart beats in every human breast").

In *Rugby Chapel* Arnold finally discovers a means of overcoming the recurrent dilemma of the individual's isolation through the supreme moral qualities embodied by figures such as his father. The victorious tone of the rising crescendo that characterises the final sections do not necessarily endorse traditional Christian values so much as vindicate the moral strength and fervour of a man whose faith in goodness and solidarity is held as a beacon over a dark, miserable, selfish world of men who: "Bluster or cringe, and make life/Hideous, and arid and vile [...]" (*P*, p. 488). From this point onwards, the speaker is no longer alone in his quest, for the spiritual fortitude he feels in his father is similarly present in other great people of the past:

> And through thee I believe
> In the noble and great who are gone;
> Pure souls honoured and blest
> By former ages, who else –
> Such, so soulless, so poor,
> Is the race of men whom I see –
> Seemed but a dream of the heart,
> Seemed but a cry of desire (*P*, p. 488).

If, as Allot suggests, Arnold draws on the Carlyean notion of the hero in his portrait of his father[61], this is surely because he becomes one part in a chain of figures (not necessarily Christian) all equally important as examples of moral guidance: "[...] through thee I believe/In the noble and great who are gone [...]". In the speaker/Arnold's third and final representation of

[61] See *P*, p. 488 note to lines 145–208.

the weary journey of the soul, it is not his father as such who comes to their aid, but the angels with whom he has become an indivisible part:

> See! In the rocks of the world
> Marches the host of mankind,
> A feeble, wavering line.
> Where are they tending? – A God
> Marshalled them, gave them their goal.
> Ah, but the way is so long!
> Years they have been in the wild!
> Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
> Rising all round, overawe;
> Factions divide them, their host
> Threatens to break, to dissolve.
> – Ah, keep, keep them combined!
> Else, of the myriads who fill
> That army, not one shall arrive;
> Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
> Stagger for ever in vain,
> Die one by one in the waste (*P*, p. 489).

This final depiction of human endeavour marks a definite shift in attitude from moral indignation to sympathetic understanding and is touchingly rendered in the contrast between Arnold's recurrent military imagery ("Marches": "Marshalled": "Factions" and "army") and the frailty of the "feeble, wavering line" of mankind (which also recalls "the struggling files" of the incipit of *Resignation*). The reference to "*a* God" (italics mine) as in *Parting* and *To Marguerite – Continued*, again retracts from the idea of a single divinity to refer to a general power, thus undermining the idea, dominant among critics, that the poem (almost embarrassingly) articulates a forced Christian message[62]. At the

[62] C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *op. cit.*, p. 241, are representative of this view: "[...] therefore the poet fell inevitably into the traditional language of Christianity, and we read with a certain surprise the words of the author of 'Dover Beach' and the Chartreuse stanzas about the saving of souls, the journey to the city of God, and the future life". These comments are symptomatic of the critical tradition which interprets the poem exclusively in terms of

same time, the representation of loss and despair is countermined by the possibility of redemption, not through a God, but the angels of whom the speaker's father has become an anonymous entity. It is no accident that this eighteen-line stanza contains no less that fifteen lines which begin with an initial stress and that this metrical beat continues to characterise the positive, spirited note of the poem in contrast with the sad elegiac mood of the incipit[63].

The conclusion is all the more moving and powerful when it is realised that the speaker's mounting enthusiasm corresponds to his equally intense fear of loss and despair:

> Then, in such hour of need
> Of your fainting, dispirited race,
> Ye, like angels, appear,
> Radiant with ardour divine!
> Beacons of hope, ye appear!
> Languor is not in your heart,
> Weakness is not in your word,
> Weariness not on your brow.
> Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
> Panic, despair, flee away.
> Ye move through the ranks, recall
> The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
> Praise, re-inspire the brave!
> Order, courage, return.
> Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
> Follow your steps as ye go.
> Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
> Strengthen the wavering line,
> Stablish, continue our march,
> On, to the bound of the waste,
> On, to the City of God (*P*, p. 452).

Christian values. For *D. G. Riede, op. cit.*, pp. 159-60, the reference merely exposes the empty rhetoric that characterises the conclusion of the poem.

[63] Cf. Jerrald Ranta, *op. cit.*, pp. 346–7. D. G. Riede, op. cit., p. 156, sees the "forced march" as "the explicit subject of the poem, not a critical interpretation of what the poem enacts".

The characteristic Arnoldian litotes at the beginning of the final stanza ("Languor is not in your word,/Weariness not on your brow" (underlinings mine) give way to the euphoric diction of the finale of the poem, culminating in the fourth instance of a three-word epithet: "Order, courage, return". At the same time, the reiterated prefix re- of the verbs: "refresh", "re-inspire", "rekindling" suggest, as in *Dover Beach*, that loss and redemption are interdependent parts of a cyclic process. Thus, Arnold's deliberate juxtaposition in the final two lines of the poem: "the bound of the waste"/ "the City of God" is a reminder that the two states of perdition and salvation tread similar borders since they are essentially part of the same world. The alternating states of courage and despair may continue to characterise humanity's existential journey in its striving towards spiritual redemption, but if it follows the right guidance with the appropriate attitude of fortitude, there is no reason why the soul should stray from its path. It is precisely because Arnold can begin to imagine a possibility of redemption from the wasteland of spiritual despair that his poetry ceases to serve its primary function as a dramatic representation of philosophical and existential dilemmas. Yet, although the confident voice of the urban prose writer soon takes complete control over Arnold's ideological pronouncements, there is little doubt that the true buried self which cries out to us from the tormented consciousness of his poetic voice continues to exert its powerful influence.

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   a cura Leo Marchetti

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The Poetry of Matthew Arnold

The present study explores the development of Matthew Arnold's poetic vision through three specific stages. Close attention is particularly devoted to the poetic language and structure of representative texts in the attempt to stress the often neglected aspects of his prosodical and rhetorical skills. Although traditionally regarded as the third major poetic figure of his age after Tennyson and Browning, Arnold undeniably remains the most neglected poetic voice of the Victorian period. Yet, the existential angst and struggle that marks his poetical works, together with his essentially irresolvable world view, are factors which speak directly to the modern reader. Contradictory and fully Victorian though his thought may be, Arnold establishes a precise ideological line which connects him with our modern-day sensibility.

Renzo D'Agnillo teaches English language, English literature and translation at the "Gabriele d'Annunzio" University (Pescara). He has published articles on D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Hardy, W.B. Yeats, Desmond Egan, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Percy B. Shelley, Christina Rossetti and Dante. He is co-editor of *Percorsi di poesia irlandese*, with Francesco Marroni and Maria Concetta Costantini (Tracce, 1998) as well as co-author of the volume *Six Romantic Poets* with Adriana D'Angelo (Tracce, 1999). He has translated a book of poems by Enis Costantini, *La Coda della lucertola* (Solfanelli, 1995) and *Five One Act Plays* by Renzo Ricchi (University College Dublin, 1996). He is also the author of *Bruce Chatwin, Settlers, Nomads and Exiles* (Tracce, 2000).

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