MARRIAGE AS A METAPHOR OF COMMITMENT IN THE LONG POEMS OF ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

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ABSTRACT

MARRIAGE AS A METAPHOR OF COMMITMENT
IN THE LONG POEMS OF ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

By

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Arthur Hugh Clough was regarded, in his own century, as a failure, and has been variously considered by contemporary scholars as an interesting but troubled spirit, as a brilliant social satirist, and as a man ahead of his time. It is contended that Clough was too complex to be accurately described by any of these labels, and that, indeed, his works both treat and exemplify the characteristic problem of the Victorian Era: the conflict between the impulses toward intellectual integrity and social responsibility.

Clough's shorter poems reveal a salutary balance of tensions as he studiously avoids the extremes of withdrawal from the world and compromise with it, which would vitiate, respectively, meaningful activity and creative thought. It is in his long poems however that we find, in Clough's use of "marriage," both as a theme and as a pervasive metaphor, an attempt to state, if not necessarily to resolve, the most perplexing paradox in the Victorian mind: that knowledge, needed as the basis for social and moral commitment, is the very thing which makes commitment hard to achieve.

The theme of marriage is introduced in Adam and Eve where Adam is forced to renounce a life of philosophical speculation which is irreconcilable with his domestic obligations. "Marriage" becomes a full-blown metaphor of commitment in The Bothie of Tober na Vuolich, whose hero, Philip, finds in marriage a resolution of both his personal and political difficulties. He seeks, and finds, a wife with whom he will enjoy the spiritual rapport maintained as an ideal for the Victorian home, but in the choice of whom he bears witness to his democratic social views. Neither personal happiness nor political conviction has to be sacrificed in the interests of the other for they are mutually supportive in the great commitment which marriage represents in this poem.

Claude, the anti-hero of Amours de Voyage, fails to achieve a marital commitment and in so doing fails in all other commitments. Visiting Rome in 1849, Claude is sympathetic toward the short-lived Roman Republic. He is attracted to an English girl, but cannot justify, intellectually, his love for her, feeling that their relationship is a product of "juxtaposition" only, lacking any underlying "affinity." Neither can he justify overt actions on behalf of the Roman Republicans. Failing to recognize, as Philip does, that affinity is found in juxtaposition, he is too insecure in his personal life to trust his intellectual judgments, and too hesitating in his judgments to trust his emotions. Claude could have achieved self-realization in marriage, both in personal and social terms, but does not.

In the Dipsychus dialogues Clough carries the bifurcation of impulses into the soul itself. Dipsychus is tempted by "the Spirit" to compromise with the world through a nominal commitment to religious or

political belief or to professional obligations. In place of a true marital union, he is offered either the gratification of passion or a marriage of convenience. His final capitulation is seen as a "marriage" with the world of expediency and pragmatic values.

Clough's final long work, Mari Magno, depicts a series of imperfect marital commitments wherein his characters, lacking Philip's success, generally achieve greater rapport between the internal and external elements in their lives than does Claude. Edmund, the hero of one of the poems, concludes it with the observation that " . . . love is fellow-service . . . ," a cherished belief of Philip in the Bothie. Thus Mari Magno fittingly completes the cycle of Clough's long poems with the metaphor of marriage which is representative, in these works, not only of all types of human commitment but of the process by which commitments are made mutually supportive.

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INTRODUCTION

In the century which has elapsed since the death of Arthur Hugh Clough, critical opinion concerning both the poet and his work (and in Clough studies the two have seldom been divorced) has often affirmed, and sometimes denied, but has never ignored the belief expressed by Walter Bagehot. "Mr. Clough in his time," Bagehot commented in 1862, "felt more than most men the weight of the unintelligible world."[1] Clough is generally thought to have revealed, through the hesitation with which he approached both marriage and the choice of a career, through his inability to accept any doctrinaire set of religious beliefs, and through the frequent ambivalence of his poetry (with the perplexing antitheses of Easter Day, Naples, 1849 and Easter Day II, and the unresolved conflicts of the Dipsychus dialogues) that he lacked the ability to make decisions, practical or intellectual.

Lytton Strachey, in his treatment of Dr. Thomas Arnold, did not hesitate to exhibit Clough as an example of what too much moral earnestness, of the sort inculcated at Rugby, might produce: "Perhaps it was not surprising that a young man brought up in such an atmosphere should have fallen a prey, at Oxford, to the frenzies of religious controversy; that he should have been driven almost out of his wits by the ratiocinations of W. G. Ward; that he should have spent the rest of his existence lamenting that loss, both in prose and verse; and that

[1] Walter Bagehot, "Mr. Clough's Poems," Literary Studies, Vol. II (London, n.d.), p. 289.

he should have eventually succumbed, conscientiously doing up brown paper parcels for Florence Nightingale."[2]

Lady Chorley subtitles her biography of Clough The Uncommitted Mind.[3] and while her Freudian treatment of such poems as "Sweet streamlet bason" is rather extreme,[4] her picture of Clough, as driven ultimately into the role of a spectator in life by the agony of commitment which would necessarily have attended the adoption of any significant professional career, is not an unusual one. Clough's principal charm as a poet lies in his unwillingness to absolutize, as Walter Houghton has observed.[5] And this quality is a natural concomitant to his avoidance of commitment to party, creed, and calling. In Michael Timko's Innocent Victorian,[6] Clough is seen as withheld by his liberalism and his militant integrity from any compromise with the truth as he saw it. Such an approach is valid inasmuch as it identifies the moral and intellectual atmosphere in which Clough's decisions were made, or defaulted. But the net result is a minimizing of the inner tensions both in his life and his poetry. Take away his "poised skepticism," as Houghton calls it, and Clough is healthier, perhaps, but less interesting and ultimately less significant. For to regard him as

[2] Lytton Strachey, "Dr. Arnold," Eminent Victorians, (Garden City, N.Y., n.d.), pp. 235-236.

[3] Katherine Chorley, Arthur Hugh Clough: The Uncommitted Mind (Oxford, 1962).

[4] Chorley, p. 346, Clough is seen here as expressing a desire to return to the womb.

[5] Walter E. Houghton and E. Robert Stange, Victorian Poetry and Poetics, 2nd ed. (New York, 1968), p. 351.

[6] Michael Timko, Innocent Victorian (Athens, Ohio, 1966).

merely a liberal, capable of a "scientific" suspension of judgment, is to reduce the significance of his poetry. And it is no less a minimization of Clough's achievement to say, with the Uncle in the prose "Epilogue to Dipsychus," "It's all Arnold's doing . . . " and thus reduce the poet's peculiar genius, as Bagehot and Strachey virtually did, to an excess of moral scruple resulting from his Rugby education. There were many liberals, there were other Rugbians, but there was only one Clough.

Whether or not Clough wanted to "return to the womb," he did face decisions which he found difficult. But what is more important, he produced a body of work in which, more than in the poetry of any of his contemporaries, one sees the <u>subjective</u> aspect of one of the great problems of the Victorian Age: the conflict of value systems whose claims seem to be approximately equal. The "two worlds" of Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," the " . . . one dead, / The other powerless to be born," image the feelings of the period. Behind lay an age of largely unquestioned faith and of noble virtues; ahead loomed science, with its endless questions, and lower social classes demanding greater social equity. Conscientious minds envisioned a world which made the best of both: a religious faith, freed by science from myth and superstition and illuminated, as Clough says in his "Epi-Strauss-ium," by a light which, "Is, if less richly, more sincerely bright," and a social order in which the proletariat would receive not only the franchise, but the aristocratic tradition of rectitude and refinement as well. But this seemed difficult in a society dominated increasingly by a middle class which had everything backwards, clinging stolidly to traditional religion, but substituting the business ethic for the more

traditional moral values of noblesse oblige and social concern. Furthermore, many young men of the 40's, and not merely the pupils of Dr. Arnold, had acquired a sense of moral earnestness which made them eschew easy answers. If they saw little to cleave to in a game-keeping aristocracy, an avaricious bourgeoisie, or in the democratic rabble forming ranks below, and if they found little solace in the religion of "high and dry" churchmen of the eighteenth century variety, agnostic science, or the pronouncements of German liberal theologians who seemed gleefully to be throwing the baby out with the bath, it is little wonder that many felt confusion and despair.

One finds in Clough's poetry the dilemma of the individual who, having despaired of finding fixed values anywhere, approaches even such personal decisions as the choice of a mate with fear and trembling. Whether made with stoic resolution, scientific impassivity, or spiritual travail, choice is a recurrent theme in Clough's work. Seen in the light of a life whose very earnestness made it difficult by demanding certitude in a world where it is rarely found, the problem of choice, in Clough's poetry, becomes a major feature of Victorian sensibility.

A still persistent myth of Clough's "failure" grew out of the disappointment expressed by many of his associates at what he managed to accomplish during his 42 years. Obsession with this idea has led to excessive attention to his biography on the part of Clough scholars. The implication seems to be that little distinction is to be made between the man and the poet and that Clough's work is to be read largely as an autobiographical expression of his personal deficiencies. Indeed, such an approach is avowedly used by Katherine Chorley in the most recent and most complete Clough biography: "Clough wrings his criticism of life out

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of his own experience. And this brings us back to the enigma of his personality. His poetry cannot be fully understood until the solution of this enigma has been found."[7]

And even for Clough's most ardent twentieth century apologists, the myth of his failure as the key to his literary achievements remains very real, as can be seen by the reactions which it produces. Frederick Bowers, who questions the myth, makes a brilliant case for Clough's modernity, but in so doing seems to suggest that Clough was really too far ahead of his time to speak to it.[8] Timko, in emphasizing the liberal and positive elements in Clough's work, inevitably plays down the "troubled note" which Matthew Arnold found and lamented therein. And the resulting implication is that Clough's "problems" as well as the difficulties he might have faced in solving them, are also part of the myth.[9]

All these approaches, in one way or another, tend to deny Clough his rightful place: that of a poet of keen (if not morbid) sensibilities whose work speaks for itself to the major problems of his period. The question of his "success" or "failure" (as man, not as poet) is significant only in that his personal problems can be said to have prepared him to deal, with unique effectiveness, with the problems of his age.

E. D. H. Johnson has declared the salient feature of the Victorian

[7] Chorley, p. 7.

[8] Frederick Bowers, "Arthur Hugh Clough: The Modern Mond," Studies in English Literature, Vol. 6, pp. 709-16, Autumn, 1966.

[9] Timko, op. cit.

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literary mind to be " . . . a conflict, demonstrable within the work of the writers themselves, between the public conscience of the man of letters who comes forward as the accredited literary spokesman of his world, and the private conscience of the artist who conceives that his highest allegiance must be to his own aesthetic sensibilities."[10] This is a statement, in artistic terms, of something even broader: the general cleavage between personal integrity and social usefulness, between the private and communal aspects of one's life, which has characterized the last century and a half. These more comprehensive implications of Johnson's concept of "alienation" should be borne in mind as one reads further.

> At the core of the malaise which pervades so much that is best in Victorian literature lies a sense, often inarticulate, that modern society has originated tendencies inimical to the life of the creative imagination. By mid-century the circumstances of successful literary production had begun to make demands on writers which strained to the breaking point their often very considerable capacities for compromise . . . . A new generation . . . was to resolve the dilemma by an outspoken assertion of the artist's apartness; but for the writers who came of age in the 1830's and 1840's no such categorical disavowal of social commitment was admissible. As a result, there is recognizable in their work a kind of tension originating in the serious writer's desire to communicate, but to do so without betraying the purity of his creative motive . . . traces of the initiating conflict remain imbedded in what they wrote; and it is these constantly recurring evidences of a twofold awareness which, perhaps more than any other trait, give its distinctive quality to the writing of the Victorian Age.[11]

And in no other Victorian poet do we have so clear an example of the bifurcation of impulses as we discover in the work of Clough: toward faith or agnosticism, toward social involvement or detached

[10] E. D. H. Johnson, The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry, pp. ix, x.

[11] Johnson, p. xi.

objectivity, toward passionate love or intellectual solitude. For Clough was less "guilty" of the uneasy compromise which Johnson sees in the work of Browning, Tennyson and Arnold.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once said that " . . . the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still be able to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise."[12] Though recognized neither by Clough's contemporary detractors nor by some of his admirers today, this is the quality, characteristic in a degree of all the major mid-Victorian poets, which he most uniquely exemplifies. A. O. J. Cockshutt makes a distinction which, if somewhat precious, is nevertheless useful: "Many Victorians changed sides, experienced conversion to Christianity or a new form of it, or a kind of anti-conversion against it. But once the process was completed, though pain and anxiety often continued, doubt generally ended. Newman's words 'A thousand difficulties do not make one doubt' might have been echoed by Pusey, by Huxley, by Mill, by men of all schools of thought. The useful stock phrase 'Victorian doubt' is seen on examination to mean rather, spiritual anxiety, crises of conversion, pain of intellectual separation from friends.[13]

Yet there were exceptions, in whom doubt was an abiding quality. "Clough and Tennyson are the only eminent exceptions I can recall, and the fascination of each of these two cases is heightened by the fact

[12] F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up," Literature for Writing, ed. Martin Steinmann, Jr. and Gerald Willen (Belmont, California, 1962), p. 119.d

[13] A. O. J. Cockshutt, "Clough: The Real Doubter," The Unbelievers; English Agnostic Thought 1840-1890, (London, 1964), p. 32.

that they are complementary, Tennyson's doubt possessing a vague preponderance of Christianity, and Clough's an agnostic flavour."[14] To Cockshutt, Clough is "the real doubter," carrying his skepticism further than any of his contemporaries.

Indeed, one might rather say of Clough that he was _able_ to suspend judgments than that he was _unable_ to make decisions, however uncomfortable the process of living with doubt might have been. Clough possessed the ability to explore antithetical modes of human experience, both as artist and as critic, without rejecting either out of hand. In his review, "Recent English Poetry," Clough praises " . . . something substantive and lifelike, immediate and firsthand . . . " which he finds in Alexander Smith's _A Life Drama_, but expresses reservations about its "rude vigor." In the same essay he rejoices in the "hope, light and _persistence_" of Matthew Arnold's first two published volumes, but wonders if they be not, perhaps, the product of sensibilities so refined that they are "too delicate . . . for common service." Clough resolves this apparent ambivalence of critical judgment in a statement which affords a clue to his purpose not only as a reviewer but as a poet. "Individuals differ in character, capacity, and positions; and, according to their circumstances, will combine, in every possible variety of degree, the two elements of thoughtful discriminating selection and rejection, and frank and bold acceptance of what lies around them. Between the extremes of ascetic and timid self-culture, and of unquestioning, unhesitating confidence, we may consent to see and tolerate every kind and gradation of intermixture."[15]

[14] Cockshutt, pp. 32-34.

[15] Buckner B. Trawick, _Selected Prose Works of Arthur Hugh Clough_, (University, Alabama, 1964), p. 163.

Such a belief made Clough a sympathetic reader; taken as a keynote of his own literary efforts it establishes the polarity which marks all of his long poems: the need for social commitment as opposed to the need to preserve intellectual integrity. The agony of steering, through uncharted waters, a course equidistant from these two poles is the distinctive characteristic of Clough's heroes. They hang suspended in the middle of a dialectical pattern whose synthesis is not always forthcoming and hence may seem logically incomplete. But if Clough was a failure as a logician he was a good psychologist. Call it what one will, "anxiety" or "doubt," Clough makes the fullest statement of the dark night of the Victorian soul.

For what is ultimately to be discovered in Clough's work is an explicit statement of the implicit problem in much Victorian literature. How can the soul survive in a world whose empiricism denies its existence, whose pragmatic belief begs its most insistent questions, whose merely conventional ethics truncate its high moral aspirations, and whose vulgarity frustrates its esthetic sense? And <u>in</u> such a world it must survive, for withdrawal from it stultifies the very impulses which it seeks to keep pure. Clough was not prone to ask, with Arnold, for "toil unsevered from tranquility" but to recognize toil and tranquility as polar opposites, both potentially destructive, which can hopefully be maintained in a dynamic (never a static) balance. When Tennyson's soul, in "The Palace of Art" turns the key on what began as a museum but, bereft of relevance to the world outside, has become a chamber of horrors, <u>hoping nevertheless to return</u>, we have an example of the sort of ambivalence characteristic of Clough: the evidence is not yet all in and a position, <u>rejected in its extremity</u>, may not remain permanently untenable. Another example can be found in Browning's

"Bishop Blougram's Apology" where (as one might well read the poem) Gigadibs, without accepting the bishop's arguments, is forced to question the validity of his own liberal position, and emigrates to Australia (a prospect which Clough once entertained and which became a recurrent theme in his works) and will seek to complement intellectual pursuits with action.

The quality which made Clough eclectic in his criticism became, in his verse, both a structural and a rhetorical device. Isobel Armstrong, in her analysis of the popular "Say not the struggle naught availeth" shows it in action.

> The old, well-worn metaphor of battle could easily lead to facile optimism and superficial heroics, but there are none here. Instead, with a peculiarly firm diffidence, he states that fear, just as much as hope, can be deceptive. The very structure of the lines reflects an empirical balance in the thought and prevents attitudinising -- "If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars." "Say not" is Clough's celebration of a heroic ideal, and yet is rooted in common sense reality. Its strength is that it holds two moods in equipoise. There is a tension between the sense of achievement, and certain triumph, and the weariness of dogged, tired effort -- "For while the tired waves, vainly breaking.. . . " The emotional force of this image is just prevented from dominating the whole poem. It does not counteract the equally powerful rejection of defeat.[16]

Multiple examples of this "balance" can be found in Clough's shorter poems. The concluding lines of "Hope evermore and believe" present with equal force, and to an extent reconcile, the conflicting impulses toward satisfaction with one's role in society and toward aspiration to higher things: "This that I see is not all, and this that I do is but little; / Nevertheless it is good, though there is better than it. (25-26)

[16] Isobel Armstrong, Arthur Hugh Clough, (London, 1962), p. 16.

The opening quatrain of another poem, best known for its refrain, poses one of the many problems which Clough envisions as corollary to the central problem of meaningful commitment versus personal integrity. In this case it is the conflict between traditional wisdom and new insight:

> Old things need not be therefore true;
> O brother men, nor yet the new;
> Ah! still awhile the old thought retain,
> And yet consider it again!

And the only reconciliation in the poem is a reiterated appeal for reconsideration, in a world which is little inclined to reconsider.

The image employed in "Why should I say I see the things I see not" preserves the same balance of tensions. Here Clough sees life as a street dance. One must join the dancers because

> Who standeth in the street
> Shall be hustled and justled about;
> And he that stops i' the dance shall be spurned
> by the dancers' feet, -- (I, 5-7)

but there are "two musics unto men" and the "loud and bold and coarse" music to which the dancers move must not drown out "the other, soft and low," "the bare conscience of the better thing."

On a somewhat grander scale are Easter Day, Naples, 1849 and Easter Day II. The former, taking a "scientific" point of view and aware of the questionable historicity of the gospels, denies the resurrection:

No more with pleading eyes,
And sobs of strong desire,
Unto the empty vacant void aspire,
Seeking another and impossible birth
That is not of your own and only Mother Earth.
But if there is no other life for you,
Sit down and be content, since this must even do:
He is not risen. (29-36)

Easter Day II introduces the duality of "Why should I say I see the things I see not." "I with my secret self held communing of mine own," the poet says. In the previous poem he had listened to one voice, now "in a later hour I sat and heard / Another voice that spake another graver word." And this voice reveals that the truth of the gospel is, to use a twentieth century term, extra-historical and independent of empirical evidence. "In the true Creed / He is yet risen indeed" says the voice, and reminds the poet that "Life yet is Life and Man is Man."

It has been widely assumed that one or the other of these poems is "the real Clough" and that Easter Day II is (depending on how one feels about the poet) either (a) a rather mawkish attempt to salvage something from the orthodoxy demolished by the forthright unbelief in Easter Day, Naples, 1849 or (b) a courageous statement of faith reaffirmed on a new basis, the skepticism of the other poem being largely rhetorical. But the poems assume greater significance when neither is read as cancelling out the other. The poems, taken together, do not constitute a theological tract (a charge which might be made against Tennyson's "The Two Voices") but rather a study in the subjective feelings attendant upon a loss of faith and its reaffirmation. The conclusion arrived at seems almost irrelevant to the powerful qualitative sense of two moods, both common in the experience of modern man. One finds a similar quality in Hopkin's "The Leaden Echo and the

Golden Echo" where, again, the reader can join the poet in his exploration to two emotional states without necessarily accepting or rejecting, philosophically, his conclusion that one is more valid than the other.[17] It should further be noted that neither of Clough's two poems is untainted by the emotional atmosphere of the other. The former is as effective as it is because it actually deals with the will to believe, constrained by an inescapable positivism. The latter, hopeful but not jubilant, reveals a vague disappointment in a faith which, if ethically sound, lives only in the metaphors of its unhistorical "creed."

As with Clough's poetry, so with his prose. A question like that of militarism versus pacifism takes the form of the standard Cloughian polarity.[18] The arguments for force and for "passive endurance" he states objectively, concluding (without arriving at an absolute ethical judgment) that, since society is as little likely to abandon all sorts of force as it is to abandon the exercise of political power of any kind, a purely defensive militia of citizens is a lesser evil than a permanent military establishment which stimulates enmity abroad and a bellicose spirit at home. Reduced to its simplest terms, the conflict here is one between individuals, who can at least <u>seek</u> to preserve their moral integrity by eschewing violence, and society, a collective entity which can only preserve its values by a mass application of

[17] Hopkins' simultaneous awareness of what it is like to be damned and not to be damned, as seen in the concluding lines of "I wake and feel the fell of dark," is also suggestive of Clough.

[18] Trawick, "The Militia," p. 214.

force. And Clough's rather tentative "conclusion" is merely the suggestion that force is less onerous when adopted, as a necessary evil, by individual moral choice than when it is institutionalized and even idealized by society. But the suggestion is strong that both the pacifistic and militaristic positions are self-defeating: the pacifist is in danger, in his attempt to preserve his moral values, of sacrificing not only his life but the society which led him to those values; the militarist, in his violent defense of his society's values, may find that he has lost the values in preserving the society.

And in Clough's prose, as in the Easter Day poems, we often find an argument curiously diluted by a lurking sense of the validity of the counter-argument. Always more sympathetic toward political radicalism than Matthew Arnold (his friends gave him such nicknames as "Yankee Clough" and "Citizen Clough") he could, in his Address on Socialism, question many of the premises of the Christian Socialists, then reveal that he had given them a resumé of the arguments that they should learn to refute, and finally sign himself, "Citoyen."[19] Or in the Oxford Retrenchment Pamphlet, one of the most spirited of Clough's prose pieces, while nominally listing his objections to the means employed by the Retrenchment Association in Raising money to ease the plight of Irish and English laborers, he could make such statements as " . . . whoever is born into the world has a just claim to demand therein and therefrom work and wages for work; is bound to do his part in the labour, and entitled to expect his proportion in the fruits . . . "[20] and "No such

[19] Trawick, p. 248.

[20] Trawick, p. 233.

thing can there be as a right to do what you will with your own."[21] The impression which the reader receives most strongly from these pieces is that Clough had a deep sense of the need for social equity yet an equally deep sense of the hazards which beset any attempt to institutionalize the drive toward social reform.

One always returns to the same underlying perplexity in Clough's work: to perceive the good, the true, and the beautiful is an individual matter; to make these perceptions fruitful is a social matter; and in the modern world, whose vast scientific and scholarly resources foster analytic thinking, the insights of the individual are more often than not in conflict with the conventional modes of thought and action prescribed by society. Clough was as anxious as Arnold to discover "the buried life" but saw the discovery not so much as a solution to the problem of nineteenth century man as the establishment of one of the terms of the problem. When Clough characterizes Arnold's Empedocles as " . . . weary of misdirected effort, weary of imperfect thought, impatient of a life which appears to him a miserable failure, and incapable, as he conceives, of doing any thing that shall be true to that proper interior self . . . "[22] he is stating the problem faced, in one way or another, by characters in all of his long poems. To have achieved some glimmerings of Truth with a capital "T" is, paradoxically, both a necessity and a liability in the realization of lower case "truths." Without vision there is no escape from the pragmatic belief, the ethics of expediency, and the unimaginative vulgarity of the world. But <u>with</u> vision can come

[21] Trawick, p. 237.

[22] Trawick, p. 153.

the fear of contamination through compromise, the sin of intellectual pride, and a sense of the obstacles which must be overcome which is so intense that it vitiates the will to act or even to live.

But for a fully developed view of the plight of the Victorian intellectual, neither Clough's prose, his shorter poems, nor his correspondence will suffice. The eclecticism recommended in the first Parepidemus letter ("The Evolution of Criteria in Art and Literature") and in "Notes on the Religious Tradition," wherein, respectively, open canons of secular and religious literature are envisioned as ways of simultaneously liberalizing tradition and enriching current intellectual activity, almost begs the question. How is it to be achieved? The shorter poems are restrained by their rhetorical balance from much display of an emotional imbalance which they imply might exist. And Clough's letters, often very helpful in revealing the origin of a poetic image, are, as Armstrong has observed, peculiarly impersonal and often reveal much less than we wish of the poet's inner tensions.[23]

It is in Clough's narrative and dramatic poems that we find not abstract antitheses, but convincing characters grappling with intensely felt perplexities and the perplexities are of such a sort that one cannot refrain from identifying them, to an extent, with those of the poet who, after leaving Oxford because of religious problems, spent years looking into unrewarding occupations and procrastinating in the matter of his marriage, as he pursued what obviously was a life-long quest for truth-in-action, whether it is to be regarded as a success or not.

[23] Armstrong, p. 11.

The two-fold problem of choice and "commitment" (a much-used term in Clough criticism) is of central importance in all of Clough's long poems. His heroes are faced with the choice of a mate, a belief, or a life-style: or of all three. Beyond mere choice lies commitment, with its implication of action, which transforms choice from the simple statement of preference or assent into a vital principle which governs conduct and subordinates some values to others. And it is precisely in the contraction of commitments that the intellectual isolation of the Victorian man of letters is felt most keenly. Marriage, the most ubiquitous of human commitments, is thematic in three of the four major long poems and a recurrent subject in Dipsychus. But, more than a mere theme, it emerges as the one pervasive metaphor in these works: a metaphor of commitment. That "marriage" is eminently suited for such employment can hardly be denied: the depiction of the Church as the bride of Christ is an outstanding example of this archetypal metaphor. But Clough's use of the metaphor makes it a peculiarly apt one for the representation of the commitment problems of nineteenth century man. For the marital commitment, as Clough and his contemporaries understood it, involves the fixing of one's deepest personal feelings in a locus outside the self (necessitating, perhaps, the sacrifice of certain private ambitions and enthusiasms) and, through commitment to the basic societal unit, a partial acceptance (at least) of the prescriptions of society.

What was one to do if he felt obliged to bear witness to his own unique perceptions of truth, longed to be sustained in his prophetic office by a loving companion and helpmate, but felt that the surrender of his vision was a prerequisite to the adoption of the generally held

pattern of marital happiness? Clough, whose capacity for doubt precluded his accepting the oversimplified views of either the mysoginist or the woman-worshipper, was peculiarly sensitive to the pathos of this problem.

The popular literature of the period presented marriage as the ultimate in human bliss. At a more belletristic level, Patmore and Rosetti celebrated, in verse, their "spiritualized" and "romanticized" views (respectively) of the marital relationship. Love stood high in the Victorian hierarchy of values and "love," as opposed to "lust," reached its fulfillment only in marriage. Walter Houghton has made a singularly lucid statement of a very complex matter: the peculiar fervor with which even the Victorian thinker sought love as an anodyne in what was (to borrow the cherished phrase of Joyce's Gabriel Conroy) " a thought-tormented age."

> Love is not associated normally with the intellectual life. The prophets might recommend it, as they did, to cure the evils of sensuality and the marriage market, but that they themselves should have made it an idol is not what we should have expected. Yet under the circumstances it was natural enough. In an age of transition in which crucial problems, both practical and theoretical, exercised the thinking mind at the expense of the sensibility and in which baffled thought so often issued in a feeling of impotence and a mood of despair, the thinker could find in love a resolution of psychological tensions, and a religion, naturalistic or Platonic, to take the place of Christianity. This is the source, primarily, to which we owe the major love poetry of the age, and Browning's in particular.
>
> The formation of Browning's ideas on the subject can be studied in the early philosophical poems. Paracelsus had subdued his life to one purpose, the aspiration to KNOW . . . . But knowledge attained had brought no happiness, and he . . . is ready enough to welcome Aprile, who has aspired only to LOVE, and to draw the conclusion that both aspirations are necessary for the full development of man . . . .

> For the intellectual burdened with a sense of weakness, stemming partly from the lack of "blood" and partly from the frustration of long analysis and reading and debate, the image of woman could take the character of a Phidian statue. She could become an incarnation of the simplicity and force of elemental nature, possessed of the very strength man lacks -- and to which he eagerly turns . . . .[24]

Houghton calls attention to "the attitude of worship and dependence" which characterized Browning's relationship to Elizabeth Barrett, an aspiration toward union of will and vision. He then adds:

> It would be foolish to push the argument too hard, either in Browning's own life or in the period. There are many psychological factors which lead to a masculine dependence on a strong feminine will, real or imagined, and turn a woman -- and a wife -- into a guardian angel. I only suggest that one of them was the weakness consequent upon a baffled search for truth.
>
> At its extreme, the intellectual struggle could result, as we know, in a sick state of skeptical negation. Without a theory of life or action to sustain the will to live, lost in a wasteland of loneliness and despair, the sensitive mind could only turn to love as the only value left to hold onto. Here at least was an anchor for the soul and a refuge from cosmic and social isolation.[25]

Clough, whose skepticism outstripped that of most of his contemporaries was uniquely susceptible to the appeal of marital love as an anchor in the seas of doubt. But so complete was his skepticism, so searching his analyses of all human emotions that he feared love because it <u>was</u> an escape from the thankless task of seeking intellectual commitment. He could write, to Emerson, that " . . . like the rest of

[24] Walter E. Houghton, <u>The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870</u> (New Haven, 1957), pp. 385-389.

[25] Houghton, <u>Victorian Frame of Mind</u>, pp. 388-389.

mankind, I wish to be married . . . . "[26] or to his fiancee, Blanche Smith, that "What I had looked forward to originally . . . was unmarried poverty and literary work . . . . But I find myself utterly reluctant to enter on that sort of career quite independently of you."[27] But he could also see that love, as an escape, was a delusion, and that the marital commitment, if faced honestly, was not a refuge from the struggle to perceive order in the universe, but rather a rededication (albeit a mutual one) to that struggle. And in such a mood he could write these rather startling lines to Miss Smith:

> Do you think that though you and all womankind together cast me off that Truth would not be true, earth beautiful, the sky bright, honour honour, and work work -- only a little harder. I tell you, yes; take it as you will. I ask no girl to be my friend that we may be a fond foolish couple together all in all each to the other. If one that has dreamt of such unreality will open her eyes and look about her and consent to be what alone in plain fact she can be, a helpmate -- that is a different thing. I will ask no one to put off her individuality for me; nor will I, weak and yielding as I am, if I can help it, put off mine for anyone. We are companions -- fellow-labourers -- to the end of our journey here, and then it will not have been in vain; we shall still be something, I think, to each other. But as for everlasting unions, and ties that no change can modify, do not dream of them -- God knows, he only; it is no evidence for them that the exacting hearts of girls would fain believe in them, and make their lovers (mostly) pretend to do so. There, that is my creed; expect no other of me, even though in my weakness I belie myself . . . . "[28]

The appeal of marriage as an escape was not limited to the Victorian man of letters. It was, in fact, strengthened for him by a generally accepted notion that family life was a refuge from extramural intellectual and moral perplexities. Widely held " . . . was the

[26] Frederick L. Mulhauser, The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough, (Oxford, 1957), p. 314.

[27] Mulhauser, p. 303.

[28] Mulhauser, p. 301.

conception of the home as a source of virtues and emotions which were nowhere else to be found, least of all in business and society."[29] To many a sensitive young intellectual, battling his way through to a personally acceptable position in matters of faith and politics, it must often have seemed strange that the deepest of all commitments, the one which was supposed to provide the foundation stone for his adult life, should be thus irrelevant to his other concerns. Should not marriage be contracted not only in accord with one's other beliefs, but in such a way as to enhance and vivify them? As the commitment of commitments, marriage becomes, for Clough's heroes, an index of their ability to achieve harmony between and within their lives and their views.

Clough's "success" in The Bothie of Toberna-Vuolich, Amours de Voyage, Dipsychus, and Mari Magno can be fairly assessed only on the basis of the logic inherent in Cloughian skepticism. To the extent that he is able to keep in balance commitment (epitomized by the marital union), as a desideratum, and the difficulties which seem, inevitably, to prevent its perfect realization, Clough must be regarded as highly successful -- on his own peculiar terms. It is to be contended that he does, through a skillful mutual reinforcement of matter and manner, maintain such a balance. At no point is the dynamic equilibrium of the poet's overview completely upset, even though the necessity for making visible the Ideal, its inevitable limitations, and ambiguities attendant upon its partial realization, make him appear to move from genial optimism to hopeless pessimism, and finally to facile compromise.

[29] Houghton, Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 343.

"Development" in the sequence of Clough's long poems largely, then, is a matter of the refinement of techniques for posing clearly the problem, in his own thought and that of his age, which had been there from the very beginning: commitment.

CHAPTER I

A point d'appui for the discussion of the marriage metaphor in Clough's long poems is the incomplete verse drama referred to variously as Adam and Eve, The Mystery of the Fall and Fragments of the Mystery of the Fall. Its original conception coincides approximately with that of The Bothie of Tober na Vuolich,[1] but for several reasons it must take priority over that poem in the present discussions. In the first place, marriage is used--twice--as a simple and obvious, but not insignificant, metaphor on the collection of scenes, but falls short of emerging as their theme. These metaphors can be examined more easily than can the broad metaphorical significance of marriage in the Bothie and, therefore, are valuable in understanding the unique force of the metaphor in this much more important poem. They further afford the simple evidence that marriage, as a metaphor of commitment, was, indeed, in Clough's mind at the time the Bothie was composed.

While Adam and Eve is undoubtedly indispensable in arriving at a full understanding of the philosophic "direction" of Clough's longer works, it has deservedly received little attention as poetry. Lines such as Adam's "How could I ever, ever, could I do it," (II, 2)[2] would seem to justify the low esteem in which the poem has been held; nor do its recent

[1] Katherine Chorley, Arthur Hugh Clough: The Uncommitted Mind (Oxford, 1962), p. 182.

[2] This, and all subsequent citations of Clough's poetry, are from The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. H. F. Lowry, A. L. P. Norrington, and F. L. Mulhauser, (Oxford, 1951).

defenders, Walter Houghton[3] and Lady Chorley,[4] praise it on stylistic grounds. It should not be startling, then, that what is to emerge as a major metaphor in his more sustained works appears only rather baldly in Adam and Eve, with little of the power which it later achieves.

Houghton has quite accurately observed that the title Adam and Eve is more appropriate than The Mystery of the Fall, because the emphasis is on the relationship between the two and what they symbolize, rather than upon the doctrine of the Fall per se.[5] It is perhaps needless to state that the poem is most un-Miltonic.[6] Certainly Adam and Eve never engage in mutual recriminations. In characteristic Cloughian fashion, Adam is not always certain that a fall has occurred, nor does he know exactly what he and Eve might be guilty of if it has. And to heighten the ambivalence still more, Clough's Adam makes a very explicit statement of the idea of "the fortunate fall":

> That which we were we could no more remain
> Than in the moist provocative vernal mould
> A seed its suckers close and rest a seed;
> We were to grow. (I, 13-16)

Eve occupies the role of temptress only to the extent that her preoccupation with a calamitous vision may have evoked in Adam a mere illusion of some transgression, the specific terms of which he cannot understand. It is not, then, as an espousal of sin, that Adam's

3 Walter E. Houghton, The Poetry of Clough: An Essay in Revaluation, (New Haven, 1963), p. 80, where Houghton calls it " . . . one of Clough's major poems, being the fullest expression he ever made of his religio-ethical philosophy . . . "

4 Chorley, p. 182, where Lady Chorley speaks of it as " . . . in some ways the most profound Poem Clough ever wrote."

5 Houghton, Poetry of Clough, p. 81.

6 Houghton, Poetry of Clough, p. 82.

relationship with Eve represents a commitment. It is when Adam experiences an epiphany, moving from guilt to God-like insight which takes him beyond the limits of self, that we see his marriage employed in a symbolic sense. For Adam cannot remain for life in the rarefied atmosphere of pure thought. He has obligations which preclude living such a life. Although he might be able to share this atmosphere with Eve, it would be detrimental to her for him to do so. Mundane, practical considerations, identified with marriage, force Adam away from the mysticism into which he might fall:

> Really now, had I only time and space
> And were not troubled with this wife of mine,
> And the necessity of meat and drink--
> I really do believe,
> With time and space and proper quietude,
> I could resolve the problem in my brain.
> But no; I scarce can stay one moment more
> To watch the curious seething process out.
> If I could only dare to let Eve see
> These operations, it is like enough
> Between us two we two could make it out.
> But she would be so frightened--think it proof
> Of all her own imaginings. 'Twill not do;
> So as it is
> I must e'en put a cheery face on it,
> Suppress the whole, rub off the unfinished thoughts
> for fear she read them . . . (II, 50-66)

We thus have, contrasted, the life of contemplation, painless because of its detachment, and the life of homely commitment which is placed in jeopardy by too much speculation. Houghton sees Adam as the representative of liberal ethical philosophy and Eve of Christian orthodoxy.[7] They undoubtedly do have these functions, but their symbolic roles are more complex than that. In Clough's poetry, orthodoxies,

[7] Houghton, Poetry of Clough, p. 81.

conventions, and belief itself possess a pragmatic value which must not be overlooked. Sometimes the pragmatic appeal is to be resisted as an unwarrantable compromise with truth. Such is the case with the appeal for nominal belief in Dipsychus, and such was frequently the case in Clough's own life. But the appeal remains and in other cases assumes the force of a moral imperative. Claude, the snobbish and indecisive hero of Amours de Voyage, can make compromises with neither bourgeois manners nor the realities of power politics and finds himself left with nothing but his own pallid integrity. This is not Adam's mistake. His acquiescence in Eve's vision of the fall is an acceptance of the values of involvement, with its inevitable taint of the sordid, as opposed to those of a lofty detachment. It is not wholly insignificant that the first acknowledgement of a commitment we encounter in Clough's long poems is made by the first man.

A second marriage metaphor, in this instance "metaphor" in the strictest sense of the term, appears in Adam's final speech to Cain. Abel, who as Houghton notes, has some irritating affinities with Browning's Johannes Agricola, is convinced of his own sanctity. He enjoys repentance so much that he would sin for the joy of repenting were it not that he knew

> . . . that Thou abhorr'st and hatest it,
> And will'st, for an example to the rest,
> That thine elect should keep themselves from it.
> (VI, 18-20)

Yet his hypocrisy he also repents, presumably deriving a full measure of satisfaction from this repentance! It is with some show of justice, then, that Cain defends his manhood against the oppressive piety of his brother. Cain believes he has achieved a victory, and justifies his

deed on the grounds of the principle of forceful self-affirmation that he has established:

> If we are wronged, why we can right ourselves;
> If we are plagued and pestered with a fool
> That will not let us be, nor leave us room
> To do our will and shape our path in peace,
> We can be rid of him . . . (IX, 7-11)

He regrets that Abel struggled so little, but never repents the act though Abel, considered as a person and apart from what he represents, he would gladly bring back. He substitutes for repentance an unwillingness ever to <u>forget</u> the enormous, but inevitable, cost of this manifestation of his own integrity. Requesting the curses of both father and mother, he goes out into the world possessing, at least, self-knowledge. He concludes his final speech by saying that " . . . when / I shall deny the thing that I have done, / I am a dream." (XIII, 61-63)

Adam, who would seem to recognize in Cain's self-manifesting "sin" an analogue of his own, falls back upon the marriage metaphor in terms of which he has charted his own course of compromise between immediate and ultimate reality. Cain is right in being reconciled to his own nature, yet his "Murderer" posture can itself become a basis for withdrawal and impractical speculation, the alternative to which is acceptance of the commitments one is ordinarily called upon to make in life. "My son, / What shall I say?" asks Adam.

> That which your soul, in marriage with the world,
> Inbreeds in you, accept;--how can I say
> Refuse the revelation of the soul?
> Yet be not overscrupulous my son,
> And be not over proud to put aside
> The due consolements of the circling years.
> (XIII, 64-69)

The interaction between world and soul is seen as a nuptial relationship and what is engendered thereby is of survival value, though it may not be God-like wisdom. If Clough " . . . was not content to gain a belief 'by going on living'"[8] as Bagehot comments, Clough's Adam certainly was, and the metaphor of his commitment to "living" is that of "marriage."

Although the reader is, in Adam and Eve, introduced to marriage as the image of commitment, it is not (nor can it have been intended to be) a metaphor of choice. The union of the only two people in the world would be a ludicrous symbol of choice, for obvious reasons, and the mutual decision, if any, which has caused them, as a couple, to fall, is treated so obliquely by Clough as not to represent choice effectively either. Adam's marriage to Eve has been inevitable: she constitutes an aspect of his own nature. The only choice which confronts him is whether or not to repudiate part of himself. The persuasive pragmatic arguments he uses on Cain are those with which he has already convinced himself. The impulses to understand life and to live life are both legitimate, and Adam has felt both: he will not wholly renounce either, nor should Cain. Both should try to be themselves.

But Adam's case is a special one. United with Eve in their mutual emergence as human beings in the fullest sense, he cannot abandon her to cultivate, in himself, the intellect which they have awakened in each other. Nor can he lead her with him in the furthest explorations of his own peculiar intellect. He can, however, imagine something he will never have: an Eve who could share his speculations so that his commitment to her happiness would demand, rather than preclude, his quest for a philosophic vision. Adam's compromise,

[8] Bagehot, "Mr. Clough's Poems," Literary Studies, Vol. II, p. 274.

however "right" it may be, is an uneasy one: in order to be himself he must settle for a narrower selfhood than, ideally, he might attain to. Clough's heroes, uncommitted but seeking commitment, will be haunted henceforward by Adam's dream of an Eve in whose person mundane and spiritual commitments coincide.

CHAPTER II

It is when one departs from the microcosmic society of Adam and Eve that commitment develops a new dimensionality. What if marriage represents not only the honoring of a commitment but also the choice, among many, of a commitment to honor? What if being oneself poses, in the face of conflicting demands, a question as to who the real self may be?

Such are the questions dealt with in The Bothie of Tober na Vuolich. For Philip Newson, the hero of the poem, the establishment of identity, the choice of a mate, and the adoption of an honest social and political posture constitute a vicious circle: the solution of any one of these problems seems almost to presuppose the solution of the other two. Somehow the problems are solved simultaneously. The poem is both more and less optimistic than Adam and Eve. Adam is forced to surrender part (but only a part) of his vision because it would be unacceptable to Eve, i.e., he has already defined himself in terms of a commitment which now precludes a pursuit of certain theoretical truths, seemingly lacking in pragmatic value. Philip, on the other hand, makes a choice, on the basis of his vision (which is refined thereby), of the woman who most nearly is a fulfillment of that vision and with whose aid he will hopefully find relatively little cleavage between theoretical and practical truth. To this extent is The Bothie optimistic. It is pessimistic in that it assumes that commitment is arrived at through the agony of choice, rather than, as in Adam's case, sparing one such an agony.

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"Which things are an allegory" is the cryptic admonition of Hobbes to Philip at the conclusion of The Bothie. He draws an analogy between the story of the wives of Jacob and any marriage. It is not the first time Rachael and Leah have been mentioned in the poem. Hobbes himself has, in the third Canto, employed the same story in a somewhat different way. But Rachel's beauty has been seen in the second Canto in that of highland girls at work. Though the hexameters and the mock heroics of The Bothie are classical, the poem's images are biblical, with scriptural couples such as Ruth ahd Boaz, or Jacob and Rachael, providing literary prototypes for the ever present metaphor of choice and commitment which the seeking and discovery of a mate become in this poem.

Yet it is the story of Jacob, in particular, that provides the scriptural analogue in The Bothie: Philip's quest is for his Rachael, the bride of his heart. Hobbes, who combines the wisdom of Adam, the tutor, with the cynicism of Lindsay, "the Piper," speculates that Philip may find that he has won Leah instead. When Philip has at last made a choice, founded upon hard-bought knowledge as well as desire, and has avoided Jacob's fate, Hobbes still reminds him that even the person who contracts the most perfect marriage finds that he has his Leah as well as his Rachael. Leah, the element of mundane imperfection which taints the ideal, must be accepted as Adam accepts Eve. Jacob contracted for one wife, but got two. He also paid for two. The Leahs in life must not only be accepted as part of the package, but paid for too, as part of life's cost.

But is Philip a Jacob? Clough was obviously interested in the story of Jacob, who, after working seven years to pay the bride-price

of his beautiful cousin Rachael, is tricked by his wily uncle, Laban, into marrying her unattractive older sister and, though he is allowed to marry Rachael also, must labor an additional seven years for her.[1] But Clough's two poems, Jacob's Wives, and Jacob, are of only moderate help here. In the former poem, a classic example of what Yvor Winters called Laforguian irony, Rachael and Leah tell their stories in alternating passages. There is no resolution of their conflicting claims upon Jacob. Jacob, in the poem which bears his name, has nothing to say about marriage. But he does decry the loss of that "antique pure simplicity" which existed prior to his generation in this age of conflict. He concludes by saying

> . . . I have striven all my days
> To do my duty to my house and hearth,
> And to the purpose of my father's race,
> Yet is my heart therewith not satisfied.
> (95-98)

Taken together, the two poems do tell us this much: Jacob lives in a world of conflicting social, political, and familial claims, and dies perplexed by his inability to reconcile them. An age of easy faith, the age of Abraham and Isaac (and of Adam!) is over. Jacob is, in fact, a nineteenth century man.

Philip Hewson, then, who seems to arrive at the end of The Bothie with at least the hope of a practical solution of Jacob's problems, appears not to be a Jacob. At any rate, he is a Jacob only to the extent that all men are: he lives in a world of difficult choices, involving commitments which are never wholly satisfactory.

[1] Genesis 29.

As previously noted, Philip's problem, seen in the broadest terms, is that of finding a comprehensive view of life in which his social philosophy, his patterns of practical conduct, and the tone of his most intimate personal relationships find mutual enhancement and reinforcement. He succeeds through intelligence and good will (both of these evidenced by himself and others) and no small measure of good luck. He suffers, and profits, from his several mistakes. If he ends happily and thoroughly "committed," it is because the critical part of his quest was aimed at finding and in fact creating his identity. Adam (of Adam and Eve) recognizes the necessity of being one's self, and he would have agreed with Philip that "Any way beautiful only to be the thing one is meant for." But Philip has yet to determine exactly what he is meant for. Adam eschews philosophical speculation because it might frighten the wife to whom he is committed; Philip must choose a wife in accordance with the dictates of his philosophy, but must also be committed to a wife in order for that philosophy to be fully meaningful. It is the timing, which permits all the pieces of Philip's puzzle to fall into place at once, which constitutes the element of good fortune.

Philip emerges rather gradually in the opening sections of the poem. He is not even "on stage" as the reader is introduced to other members of the Oxford reading party while they dress to attend a highland festivity, rich in tradition and bristling with class distinctions. Lindsay fears that his friend, "Philip Hewson a poet, / Hewson a radical hot" will embarrass the assemblage with some of "his eternal political humbug." For Philip hates lords and ladies and opposes violently "Feudal tenures, mercantile lords, competition and bishops, / Liveries, armorial bearings, amongst other matters the Game-laws." (I, 127-128) And, indeed,

if little offense is taken when Hewson ends his speech with a sarcastic innuendo about game preservation, it is only because hardly anyone has understood him. It is only in the second Canto that "Hewson, the Chartist" begins to materialize as that member of his group about whom we are to be particularly concerned. By that time, as we shall later see, other stones have been laid in the foundation of this beautifully structured work, for, almost without Philip's notice, two themes have been introduced that ultimately will mean more in his moral and intellectual development than does the rather doctrinaire egalitarianism which he expresses in the opening pages of the poem.

Philip prefers water to tea or coffee for breakfast. This may or may not brand him an eccentric liberal after the fashion of Francis Newman. But it suggests that possibly both his politics and his diet are faddish. Certainly he spends a great deal of time engaging in what later generations called "parlor socialism," and however much a twentieth century liberal may sympathize with his views they are, to begin with, largely untried. An orphan with a modest income, he has little invested in "the establishment." So it is not surprising that, as one of the most thoughtful and idealistic members of his group, he has been excited and inspired by new social views. But the real depth of his commitment is in considerable doubt, and that depth, significantly, is gauged by the particular nature of his relationship with the opposite sex. For we witness two abortive romances. The first romance is with Katie, to whom he is attracted, it almost appears, because he has decided to fall in love, on principle, with a working-class woman. And the second attraction is his brief infatuation with Lady Maria, an obvious reaction from the first. In justifying inequitable class

distinctions, he employs conspicuously faulty logic. The opinions do not, in any case, survive his removal from Lady M's presence.

Philip's Chartism is originally superficial and, as attested by his brief conversion to aristocratic modes of thought during his stay at Balloch, wavering. But the poem possesses an undercurrent of genuine equalitarianism which is eventually to converge with the flow of Philip's own thought. This undercurrent is manifested in conduct rather than theory and, even though Philip is able to appreciate the beauty and dignity of a highland lass digging potatoes, he will not fully understand it until near the end of the poem. If Philip is in love with the democratic ideal, he is also in love with love. And here, too, there runs through the poem (on a course straighter than Philip's, with its vagaries, but convergent with it) a series of almost prophetic anticipations of the mature love which he will come to feel for Elspie Mackaye when he reaches the Bothie of Tober na Vuolich. These undercurrents do not so much determine Philip's final commitment as they simply reveal to the reader what, if the commitment is to be made at all, it must be.

In Amours de Voyage, dramatic irony makes one aware of how essential a commitment, both to the Roman Republic and to Mary Trevellyn, is to Claude's "salvation." But he is capable of neither. In The Bothie (where a similar commitment, involving life in both its public and private aspects, is actually made), the non-dramatic character of the poem necessitates another means whereby the poet's own sense of the terms in which his hero's commitment will have to be made can be conveyed to the reader. To an extent one can, as in the case of Claude, learn about "the essential Philip" by reading between the lines of his speeches, e.g., his rather hysterical eulogy on Lady Maria. But the reader must

also rely on a number of strategically placed events and observations, whose function approaches the symbolic. It is through the cumulative power of these that we develop a sense of forces outside Philip with which he is in harmony--but not complete harmony--and which will pose for him a choice that will involve no little suffering.

Of the two "undercurrents" previously mentioned, that which is complementary to Philip's egalitarianism is the first to manifest itself. At the festive gathering which begins the poem, where "Highland peasants gave courteous answer to flattering nobles," one perceives, while Philip is still nothing more than a name to us, a pattern that pervades the entire poem: that in any actual juxtaposition of the representatives of different classes, the members of the higher classes may show themselves equal to, but never superior to those of the lower, in intelligence, sensitivity, or simply natural dignity.

Such is the case in the relationship between Philip and Katie which Philip breaks off partly out of a rather condescending sentimentality. Fascinated by the idea of a romance that cuts across class lines, he falls in love with a peasant girl. His pronouncements about the dignity of work have led all of his friends to expect something of the sort.

His speeches in Section II have left little doubt concerning his opinions.

> Oh, if our high-born girls knew only the grace, the attraction,
> Labour, and labour alone, can add to the beauty of women,
> Truly the milliner's trade would quickly, I think, be at discount,
> All the waste and loss in silk and satin be saved us,
> Saved for purposes truly and widely productive . . . (II, 25-29)

If only his fellows could appreciate the pathos felt by a man who sees a

lovely woman working, "toiling . . . for him, and the world" and is moved not to remove but to share her burden, to lighten it by love.

> Oh, could they feel at such moments how man's heart, as into Eden
> Carried anew, seems to see like the gardener of earth uncorrupted,
> Eve from the hand of her Maker advancing, an helpmeet for him,
> Eve from his own flesh taken, a spirit restored to his spirit,
> Spirit but not spirit only, himself whatever himself is,
> Unto the mystery's end sole helpmate meet to be with him; . . .
> Oh, if they saw it and knew it; we soon should see them abandon
> Boudoir, toilette, carriage, drawing-room, and ball room,
> Sandals of silk for clogs, for health lackadaisical fancies!
> So, feel women, not dolls; so feel the sap of existence
> Circulate up from the depths to the bud on the twig that is topmost!
> Yes, we should see them delighted, delighted ourselves in the seeing,
> Bending with blue cotton gown skirted-up over striped linsey woolsey,
> Milking the kine in the field, like Rachel, watering cattle,
> Rachel, when at the well the predestined beheld and kissed her,
> (II, 82-98)

When he finds himself in a rather deep emotional involvement with Katie, however, his reaction betrays the rather shaky foundation on which his feelings were based. He falls back, certainly, upon a stock conception of feminine fragility and, quite possibly, upon that of the relationship between the young gentleman and the peasant maid, when he feels guilty for having taken advantage of Katie's simplicity. Is there not, in Philip's outcry that " . . . she is purity; I am the lost one." and in his altogether spurious sense of having corrupted her, a condescension based on an implicit belief in an intellectual and moral superiority which obliges him to protect one who, not only by virtue of sex but also of class, is less than himself?

Elspie later reveals to him that he has not only greatly exaggerated Katie's frailty, but that he has, indeed, exploited her, though hardly in the way he imagines:

Katie is good and not silly; be comforted, Sir, about her;
Katie is good and not silly; tender, but not like many
Looking-up as in a cupboard the pleasure that any man gives them,
Keeping it out of sight, as a prize they need be ashamed of;
That is the way, I think, Sir, in England more than in Scotland;
No, she lives and takes pleasure in all as in beautiful weather,
Sorry to lose it but just as we would be to lose fine weather,
And she is strong to return to herself and feel undeserted.
Oh, she is strong, and not silly; she thinks no further about you;
She has had kerchiefs before from gentle, I know, as from simple.
Yes she is good and not silly; yet you were wrong, Mr. Philip,
Wrong for yourself more than for her. (VII, 8-19)

Philip's choice of Katie was wrong because it involved the impulsive application of a preconceived notion, and it had saddened Elspie (whom he was then not even aware of) because she " . . . thought it all a mistaking, / All a mere chance, you know, and accident,--not a proper choosing,--" (VII, 24-25) and this he recognizes to be true. Philip has taken advantage of Katie by falling in love with her, as it were, as a testimonial of his beliefs; but his external behavior has always remained that of a gentleman: if he has hurt anyone it has been himself by flattering his ego (though it took the form of self-accusation) with the thought that the simple rustic girl was more impressed with him than she was.

The same motif, that of actual equality which speaks more loudly than any mere professions of equalitarian belief, runs through Philip's early relations with Elspie. At the beginning of the eighth section of the poem, Elspie ruminates on Philip's "indefinable graces." In a rare and curious editorial intrusion, Clough asks not Elspie, but the hero of the poem, "Were they not hers too Philip?" The suggestion would seem to be that Philip still shares, to a degree at least, Elspie's fear that she is beneath him, and has not yet completely settled in his own mind the question of the relative merits of "natural" and "acquired" virtues.

But the poet obviously does not share these doubts. When, again, Elspie is forced to remind Philip that she is not unfamiliar with books, it is a gentle remonstrance for his excessive willingness to relegate her better qualities, which he does recognize, to feminine intuition. That she should even feel it necessary to appeal to her education can be taken as an indication that Philip has communicated something of the condescension which still lingers in his mind.

The note is sounded most clearly, perhaps, in the friendship which develops between Adam, the tutor, and David Mackaye. The affinities between these two wise and mature men are, if anything, strengthened--certainly not weakened--by the differences in their vocations and their experiences. This relationship is significant in the design of the poem, for it is upon Adam's arrival at the Bothie that Philip's love for Elspie takes on its final note of maturity. As the two pairs stroll in the evening, the Philip-Elspie relationship parallels the Adam-David relationship in mutual respect. To Elspie, Adam tells "Much of relations of rich and poor, and of true education." But it is Philip, also, who has finally come to understand these things fully. The reconciliation of refinement and simple goodness, as represented by Adam and David respectively, is one of the problems that must be solved to make possible Philip's personal commitment. David, considering Philip as a potential son-in-law, sees the inner man

> And the natural tune of his heart without misgiving
> Went to the words of that grand song of the Lowlands,
> Rank is the guinea stamp, but the man's a man for a' that.
> (VIII, 162-164)

But Philip, too, who has sought to learn this lesson, has mastered it as never before.

The second undercurrent which runs through the poem is less conceptual and more symbolic. It takes the form of a series of references to the Bothie and of brief appearances by its inhabitants. Five of the nine sections end with the name of, or someone's attempt to name, the cottage which gives the poem its title. Before the reader ever sees the Bothie, he has heard it recommended, made the subject of jest, and speculated about. He has also met, without knowing it, two members of the Mackaye family. So pervasive is the sense of the Bothie's "presence" that one is not as surprised as is Philip when it finally appears as the point of convergence of structural lines in the poem and heretofore unresolved tendencies in Philip's personal life. We do share his sense of something almost inexorable drawing him:

> Who would have guessed I should find my haven and end of my travel,
> Here, by accident too, in the bothie we laughed about so?
> Who would have guessed that here would be she whose glance at Rannoch
> Turned me in that mysterious way; yes, angels conspiring,
> Slowly drew me, conducted me, home, to herself; the needle
> Which in the shaken compass flew hither and thither, at last, long
> Quivering, poises to north. (VI, 49-53)

A few lines later, as Philip thinks about how he had twice danced with Elspie, before their portentous outdoor meeting at Rannoch, without even clearly remembering her later, he observes that

> I was as one that sleeps on the railway; one, who dreaming
> Hears thro' his dream the name of his home shouted out; hears and
> hears not.-- (VI, 60-61)

but eventually, though he abandons this particular simile, Philip does get off at the right station.

The "thin man clad as a Saxon" who, at the conclusion of the first section of the poem, volunteered directions to the Bothie, was none other

than its owner, David Mackaye. This we find out, of course, from Elspie much later, at the beginning of section seven. Why was the invitation made? Elspie was, from the first, attracted by the young Oxonian but, like Katie, she is "not silly." Nor is her father. But someone in the Mackaye family does recognize in the radical student a community of spirit with the Mackayes and what they represent: it is he and he alone to whom the Bothie is recommended by David. He is, in effect, being invited to the place where he can achieve spiritual fulfillment. He is being invited "home," but his homing instincts are not sufficiently well developed, for he finally gets to the Bothie largely by a lucky accident.

The cynical Hobbes, at the conclusion of the second section of the poem, speaks more wisely than he knows when he says that Philip has gone to "Study the question of sex at the Bothie of What-did-he-call-it." Philip is not at the Bothie, whose quaint name has captured the imagination of all the members of the reading party, but he has disappeared into the highlands to ponder questions of sex, politics, love, duty, self, and society, and to make some abortive attempts to combine action with belief, in a meaningful pattern of life. But it is, indeed, at the Bothie that the study is to be completed.

And, to cite a final example, it is the look cast by Elspie at Rannoch which drives him away from there and from his romance with Katie. Elspie, only half recognized as someone he had seen before at the dinner and even danced with more recently, appears as an epiphany to Philip. Her look brings to focus amorphous feelings that Philip already has: his quest for love and truth has gone astray. Despite her virtues, he could never find happiness and fulfillment with Katie, whose rustic charm has

fascinated him. He must leave her before he injures her. "Yes, there he is still in his fancy," Elspie's look seemed to say to Philip.

> Letting drop from him at random as things not worth considering
> All the benefits gathered and put in his hands by fortune,
> Loosing a hold with others, contented and unambitious,
> Trying down here to keep-up, know the value of better than he does.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Doesn't yet see we have here just the things he is used to elsewhere;
> People here too are people, and not as fairy-land creatures;
> He is in a trance and possessed; I wonder how long to continue;
> It is a shame and a pity--and no good likely to follow.
> (IV, 136-139, 141-144)

He will discover that what he saw in Elspie's look was close to what she felt at the time. For the time being, however, it is significant to Philip as the occasion of a prophetic insight into himself. It starts him on his quest once more. He has not yet "discovered" Elspie as a person, nor are his opinions yet very seasoned (his after-thoughts concerning Katie are tainted with some of the same condescension which he regrets having felt toward her in the first place, and he has still to begin, and end, his infatuation with Lady Maria) but he is on his way to the Bothie.

The converging motifs of equality and of the Bothie (as representative of mature love) form, of course, the background for the growth of Philip's own conscious attitudes, towards an enlightened commitment. Whatever one may think of Philip, he is never really guilty of intellectual arrogance. "We must live and learn," he tells Adam, "we can't know all things at twenty." (V, 89) His vices are those of youth and enthusiasm. He is ready for life: ready to choose both a creed and a mate. Yet, in his brief relationship with Katie, for example, something goes wrong. Convinced of the validity of his liberal

social ethic and physically attracted to the vivacious young woman, he suddenly realizes that even the recognition of Katie's beauty and of her worth as a human being do not provide a sufficient basis for the only intimate relationship that is thinkable to him: marriage. He would seem to have realized that his assisting Katie in building fires and doing laundry is a parody of the doctrine of "needful work" which he has expounded to his friends. He is playing at work and at love. The relationship has not been unwholesome, but it has been casual, and Philip is embarrassed at having thought it was something more.

His reaction has a violence which is characteristic of youth, and it goes through two phases. First, beating a hasty retreat from Rannoch, Philip tries to compensate for the lack of spiritual rapport in his contacts with Katie by imagining a relationship of pure spirit. "Would I were dead," he keeps saying, "that so I could go and uphold her." (IV, 43) But "spiritual" relationships are evasions of practical problems rather than solutions to them, and Philip wants to live. He next bobs up at the castle of Balloch with a whole new set of values. If he brought, or risked bringing unhappiness, both to himself and to Katie, perhaps it was a mistake to repudiate too hastily the world of gentility with which he has been familiar. The need to venerate someone is still present, and now it is the lovely Lady Maria who takes Katie's place. Not only Philip, however, but everyone else must venerate Lady Maria as well! He asks " . . . shall hodmen in beer-shops complain of a glory denied them, / Which could not ever be theirs more than now it is theirs as spectators? / Which could not be, in all earth, if it were not for labour of hodmen?" (V, 60-62) The wealthy and the privileged, if not prolific either in works or offspring, at least contribute

quality to society

> Often I find myself saying, old faith and doctrine abjuring,[2]
> Into the crucible casting philosophies, facts, and convictions,
> Were it not well that the stem should be naked of leaf and of
> tendril,
> Poverty stricken, the barest, the dismallest stick of the garden;
> Flowerless, leafless, unlovely, for ninety and nine long summers,
> So in the hundredth, at last, were bloom for one day at the summit,
> So but that fleeting flower were lovely as Lady Maria. (V, 43-49)

In a Carlylian parody he argues for an aristocracy who will inspire the poor and in whom they can willingly live vicariously.

Philip, in writing of this to Adam, wonders if he is not, perhaps, being ironic. He is. What is happening is fairly clear. His beliefs exerted undue influence in his attachment to Katie, and now his infatuation with Lady Maria has caused him to alter his beliefs. This second stage is gotten through even more quickly than the first, and Philip is soon to repudiate his briefly held aristocratic notions. Though, it must be noted, he does not repudiate Lady Maria, whose qualities, like Katie's, he is even better able to appreciate when he can see them in a mature perspective.

Of primary importance, of course, is the mutual love of Philip and Elspie. Yet despite its many adumbrations, this love is not introduced into the poem until the sixth of the nine sections, and since section nine is, in fact, a sort of epilogue, relatively little space is devoted to the actual winning of Elspie. But it is here that the poem's rather remarkable economy is particularly in evidence. For Philip's actions, throughout, can be viewed as the winning of Elspie and, simultaneously, of himself. He must win his way through, past partial truths, to the wholeness of insight which attends the conquest of his

[2] That is, Philip's own liberal doctrines.

Rachael. If the way of true love seems not enormously difficult for Philip after his arrival at the Bothie, it is because (in addition to the fact that so few of the problems are external) he has already dealt with several painful difficulties.

Philip has desired a wife whom he can respect because she embodies all that his social ethics tell him is good. "Sick of the very names of Your Lady Augustas and Floras / Am I," (II, 19-20) he has told his friends. He wants a woman whose life is ennobled by meaningful effort. But he also feels a need for the kind of veneration excited by a lady of breeding and patrician bearing. He has felt genuine respect for Katie, as well as a sentimental tenderness, and has felt veneration for Lady Maria, along with a rather forced respect. In giving up each relationship (presumably--we know more about the former than the latter) he has suffered, because he seemed to be giving up something of himself. What he has given up, however, has been in either case a form of <u>partial</u> self-realization. Two types of lives, each somewhat true to his inner self, have been rejected. Choice, in this case the choice of a whole but yet unseen good rather than a partial but proximate one, has weighed heavily on Philip.

Though Philip's course, viewed in its totality, is fairly straight, he nevertheless engages (in his relationships with Katie and Maria) in a certain amount of dialectical "tacking" in order to reach his destination, in which we have an anticipation of Claude, in <u>Amours de Voyage</u>, whose brilliantly analytic but rarely synthetic mind is so keenly conscious of the polarities in life. Philip cannot remain with Katie because, though he is susceptible to her charms and admires her genuineness, she simply does not arouse in him the quality, approaching

reverence, that is an essential ingredient in the Victorian formula for marriage. When, in his antithetical reaction, he finds that he can begin to summon up this kind of feeling for Lady Maria, it is in a situation of outmoded usages and artificiality to which he cannot blind himself for long. The ultimate synthesis, which brings his course straight again, is his recognition, perhaps not fully conscious, that the woman he loves, and marries, must be one of "nature's aristocrats."

Philip has then, in a sense, chosen Elspie before ever arriving at the Bothie. But like Childe Roland who, after a lifetime of seeking the Dark Tower is almost on top of it before he recognizes it, Philip scarcely realizes the full significance of his love for Elspie, even as he begins to declare it. For Philip, in another sense, still has his most significant choice to make. When, by luck rather than by design, he arrives at the cottage of David Mackaye, he is still having problems establishing his own identity. And the solution of these problems is essential to his identifying himself with anyone else. As previously noted, both forms of identification occur at the same time.

Philip could, at the time of his arrival at the Bothie, still fail to achieve genuine commitment. He could, for example, simply be rejected by Elspie, on whom so much depends. And, indeed, he suffers agonizing anxiety that, because he has previously made a fool of himself, she will not accept him. The possibility also exists of his failing to bring his <u>personal</u> feelings for her and his <u>theoretical</u> beliefs into the kind of mutually supportive equilibrium that is necessary. In such a situation he would find himself in a relationship that shared some of the bad balance that characterized his two previous affections. And to the extent that essential elements were out of balance, he would have found

his Rachael to be a Leah. The danger of something like this is seen (along with the way in which the danger is averted) in the almost metaphysical images of mutual connection which constitute some of the most powerful and arresting passages in the poem. That many of these images are put into the mouth of Elspie is especially significant. Marriage, ideally conceived, involves a rapport so complete that "mine" and "thine" cease to be meaningful. Philip's commitment to Elspie and the practical commitment of his talents to his own best impulses should (again ideally) be two aspects of the same thing. It should not be surprising, then, that the two lovers begin to think in strangely coincident metaphors. It is not an oversight on Clough's part which allows one of the lovers to anticipate, or recall, the images used by the other. To the extent that their destinies are one, so are their minds, and the images which properly describe their relationship are the products, not of the isolated sensibilities of either, but of this unity. And Elspie speaks with the voice of Philip's own best self when she gives him the guidance he needs.

And Philip does need guidance. His compass needle may now be turning to the north, but it must remain there in order for him to chart a course through life. He still has, it has been observed, and in fact will always have, some identity problems. He has argued with Adam about the maxim that each person should do the duties of his station in life. To Philip, such a view of the various roles performed by mankind seems like an invention of the privileged classes--justifying their remaining complacently where they are. And, even after he has won Elspie and received the consent of David to their marriage, he still will be grappling with the problem of roles. Though he expounds to Adam his new

doctrine of work in accordance with one's talents, whatever one's station in life may be, he is nevertheless aware that these talents carry with them no specific indication as to exactly how and where they are to be employed. Adam would say that the indication is supplied by Providence, but Philip disagrees. "Though I mistrust the Field-Marshall, I bow to the duty of order / Yet is my feeling rather to ask, where is the battle? (XI, 56-57) Philip is willing to be himself, but is not absolutely certain who he is. His dogmatic Chartism has been subsumed by a broader but less specific view of social responsibility. But one level of difficulty is eliminated: he will at least not have to solve his problems alone.

In opening himself to Elspie, Philip accepts her problems. She, likewise, assumes his. When she tells him simply, "We will work together," it is a testimony of both that they will belong to the ranks of the usefully productive. What they will do and where they will do it has become a mutual problem: a function of their commitment to each other and to a way of life that is the basis for their fundamental accord.

Reference has been made to the power of the imagery in the concluding portions of the poem. There are three major images or image complexes which afford complementary metaphors of the marital relationship between Philip and Elspie. Each accommodates itself to, and illuminates, as will be seen, the "super metaphor" of marriage as a commitment. The least celebrated of these images would seem to take priority, because, though it is completed in the eighth section, it has come into the poem somewhat earlier. It is the rather curious image of a tree or plant that appears in connection with every one of Philip's

amours. It first is encountered when Philip, brooding over the largely imagined wrong he has done to Katie, has a fragmentary insight into the strength and prudence which Elspie is later to assure him that Katie really does possess. He sees her, however, as infused with his <u>own</u> strength so that " . . . vigor of joy shall sustain her, / Fill the brief winter o'er-past, her own true sap in the springtime, / Rise and the tree I have bared be verdurous e'en as aforetime." (IV, 69-71) But later on, still pondering the matter, he sees himself as having led Katie so near to the brink of impropriety that she will now (the modern expression is consonant with the spirit of Philip's metaphor) be a "push over." "Oh who saws through the trunk, though he leave the tree up in the forest, / When the wind casts it down;--is <u>his</u> not the hand that smote it?" (IV, 172-173)

In these passages, the common element is a sense of injury to the living plant: it has been denuded of foliage (considering the nature of Philip's unnecessary guilt feelings, one thinks of the word "defloration") and its molester <u>hopes</u> that its verdure will return; or, the plant is severed from its root and faces <u>inevitable</u>, though not necessarily immediate destruction. Philip's short-lived passion for Katie is predatory neither in fact nor in its intent, but in its potential. Though he has willed the good, he lacks the vital commitment which will make for good, and this is evidenced in the metaphors of defoliation and destruction of the tree.

When the metaphor is used for the last time, it is not by Philip but by Elspie. This is, again, indicative of the movement towards unity between them which is essential to full commitment. She has feared, she says

. . . that the one big tree might spread its roots and branches,
All the lesser about it must even be felled and perish.
No, I feel much more as if I, as well as you, were,
Somewhere, a leaf on the one great tree, that, up from old time
Growing, contains in itself the whole of the virtue and life of
Bygone days, drawing now to itself all kindreds and nations,
And must have for itself the whole world for its branches.
No, I belong to the tree, I shall not decay in the shadow;
Yes, and I feel the life-juices of all the world and the ages
Coming to me as to you, more slowly no doubt and poorer;
You are more near, but then you will help to convey them to me.
(VIII, 87-97)

Philip is invited to unite with Elspie as "members" of an organic whole which is nothing less than the human enterprise, for the betterment of which, through their mutual commitment, they will work.

Another metaphor, the most spectacular, is that of the uncompleted bridge over the burn. It is virtually standard in twentieth century Clough criticism to regard the image as highly Freudian, nor would anything be gained by trying to explain away what certainly appear to be blatantly sexual overtones. But it should be observed that the Freudian implications of the passage are much more noticeable when it is read out of context than when it is examined in the light of the previously quoted lines, which follow it. Elspie imagines herself as one half of an arch, reaching out toward her counterpart which likewise extends itself toward her.

Sometimes I dream of a great invisible hand coming down, and
Dropping the great key-stone in the middle: there in my dreaming

> There I feel the great key-stone coming in, and through it
> Feel the other part--all the other stones of the archway,
> Joined into mine with a strange happy sense of completeness . . . .
> (VII, 68-72)

To focus one's attention on the keystone is to miss most of the significance of the passage. It is an image of union, and not sexual union merely. Philip and Elspie will become part of the bridge of life as well as part of the tree of life. That the union has its physical dimension is undeniable, but the bridge metaphor should not be regarded as more erotic than the tree metaphor. "Oh, I see it," Philip exclaims, as he hears Elspie's words, "See the great key-stone coming down from the heaven of heavens." It is Philip's "moment of truth": in their vision of a life shared with each other and the world, he finds the commitment he seeks. But Elspie later warns that the keystone cannot be forced into place without injury to the archway. Her fear that they will "Damage all our own work that we wrought, our painful upbuilding," is obviously not exclusively sexual in its meaning. A false move on the part of either could jeopardize, at this point, the exquisitely wrought fabric of their relationship. Philip, who has rushed too eagerly into relationships before, can understand.

The third metaphor employs an idea which seems to have had a firm hold on Clough's imagination. In his most popular poem, "Say not the struggle naught availeth," there is a vivid contrast between the impressive inundation of a tidal estuary by a flood-tide and the way in which the waves of the same tide inch their way up a steep beach or escarpment. The same image of the power of the sea, as it moves inland through a low-lying channel, is used in this metaphor. Elspie, still

fearful of Philip's "strength," envisions this time a burnie (herself) flooded by the waters of the sea which retreat, leaving rubbish and contamination. But at Philip's entreaties she reconsiders. The sea is the burnie's goal, after all, and its destiny is to answer the call of the sea, with whose waters it is united. At the same time, the sea is dependent upon such tributary streams for its existence. If the sea represented one man, an invader of her private integrity, Elspie might well be fearful. But Philip is not, himself, the sea. They are being drawn, together in their hard-bought mutual commitment, into the sea of life.

That there is, in the process of image-making, a virtual fusion of the identities of Philip and Elspie is shown by a letter which Philip writes to Adam in Section II. Here Elspie's sea-image is employed by him in such a way as to incorporate both their lives and a sense of social commitment as well. Armstrong has called the passage " . . . one of the finest sustained pieces Clough ever wrote."[3]

> As at return of tide the total weight of ocean,
> Drawn by moon and sun from Labrador and Greenland,
> Sets-in amain, in the open space betwixt Mull and Scarba,
> Heaving, swelling, spreading, the might of the mighty Atlantic;
> There into cranny and slit of the rocky, cavernous bottom
> Settles down, and dimples huge the smooth sea-surface
> Eddies, coils, and whirls; by dangerous Corryvreckan:
> So in my soul of souls through its cells and secret recesses,

[3] Isobel Armstrong, Arthur Hugh Clough, (London, 1952), p. 34.

Comes back, swelling and spreading, the old democratic fervour.
But as the light of day enters some populous city,
Shaming away, ere it come, by the chilly day-streak signal,
High and low, the misusers of night, shaming out the gas lamps--
All the great empty streets are flooded with broadening clearness,
Which, withal, by inscrutable simultaneous access
Permeates far and pierces to the very cellars lying in
Narrow high back-lane, and court, and alley of alleys . . .
--Such-- in me, and to me, and on me the love of Elspie!
(IX, 73-88, 108)

It is significant that Philip and Elspie, in the concluding section of the poem, decide to establish a home in New Zealand. The decision suggests a similar one actually made by such sensitive and dedicated spirits as Alfred Domnet (Browning's "Waring") and Clough's life-long friend, Thomas Arnold. Pioneering in an antipodal world is appropriate for a couple dedicated to the vision of a new life.

The Bothie, then, tells the story of a man who, after a series of difficult choices, finds in marriage a commitment so complete and so perfect that it subsumes all other commitments, moral and intellectual. The Clough who could turn his back on Oxford and look for more vital work could imagine such a commitment. But though commitment continues to be a theme in the remaining long poems, and though marriage remains the vehicle of the metaphor, the optimistic note will not be heard again. Clough was never to write another Bothie.

CHAPTER III

Superficially, Clough's second major poem, Amours de Voyage is to be contrasted with the Bothie in almost every way. Its setting is urban and cosmopolitan rather than rural and British, or, if one prefers, Celtic. Its tone is realistic rather than idealistic, and, indeed, it is Clough's sardonic realism which gives the poem its tragi-comic character: lacking the happy ending of the Bothie while incorporating much cynical humor of the sort associated mainly with Hobbes in the earlier poem, the work is simply too candid to end on a note of high comedy or high tragedy.[1] It is a poem of defeat rather than victory, of loss rather than gain. Yet the hero's finally illuminating experience includes too much of the ludicrous to be genuine tragedy.

The story, told in epistolary form, is rather simple. Most of the letters are from Claude, a young Englishman vacationing in Italy, to his friend Eustace. The year is 1849 and Rome, under the leadership

[1] Houghton has summed up beautifully what it is in the poem which, though tragic, does not exactly constitute tragedy, when he says that " . . . something of supreme importance to Claude, and to Mary too, was denied them by a combination of circumstances. Claude's profound doubt, even of love, his fear of the factitious, his feeling of shame about sex, the long chain of circumstances that prevented him from finding Mary, and his dedication to the intellectual life, all unite to thwart the full growth of his nature, and therefore of hers. In the outcome we feel a deep sense of waste. Two lives that might have been enriched are left poorer and narrower. It must often be so, however. rarely recorded in art." Walter Houghton, The Poetry of Clough: An Essay in Revaluation, (New Haven, 1963), p. 154.

of Mazzini, has just declared itself a republic, independent of Papal authority. Claude is sympathetic to the Roman cause, but does little in its behalf. He has also been introduced to the Trevellyn family, to one of whose daughters, Mary, he is eventually attracted. Distrustful of any emotion which might compromise his integrity, Claude is a very unsuccessful lover. Only after the unsettled political conditions have forced the Trevellyns to leave Rome for the north does he realize the depth of his feelings for Mary. But it is too late, and after a frantic search for her, Claude resigns himself to his loss.

Other than Clough's flexible hexameters, the Amours and the Bothie seem to have little in common except that each is concerned with a young Oxonian involved in a quest for truth, and with Clough's touchstone of self-discovery through commitment: marriage. Yet the basic point of similitude serves as foundation for a series of contrasts which reveal the increasingly realistic way in which Clough presents the process of commitment: as achieved with less frequency, more difficulty, and at a higher price than in the Bothie.

Claude, the rather passive hero of the Amours de Voyage, has affinities which have been observed with Hamlet and with J. Alfred Prufrock.[2] He has the quality of non-involvement readily understandable to readers in the latter half of the twentieth century: one tends to regard him as an anti-hero. Having the temperament which humoral psychology labeled melancholic, Claude belongs to a select body of literary creations which include such varied figures as Hamlet and Sammy Rice in Nigel Balchin's The Small Back Room: a group of men

[2] Michael Timko, Innocent Victorian: The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough (University, Alabama, 1964), p. 168

whose fatal flaw is their bewilderingly keen awareness of so infinite a range of possible courses, each envisioned with a full complement of potential consequences, that impulsive action becomes a psychological, if not a practical, impossibility. This is not to say, of course, that the message which attaches itself to Claude is anti-intellectual in its import. The Amours, begun soon after the completion of the Bothie, envisions the ideal relationship between heart and head as one of balance and mutual support, as does the earlier poem. But a new idea is introduced, or, at any rate, an idea for which we must turn back to Adam and Eve.

Adam recognized that, in his own case at least, the life of the mind was irreconcilable with practical commitments. Perhaps the "fall" is actually the discovery that speculative thought, which, alone, allows human existence to transcend its physical aspects, is not an unalloyed blessing because it creates, or at least reveals, the dichotomy between feelings and ideas. The great good fortune of Philip Hewson in the Bothie, in managing to make the claims of the mind and heart complementary to each other, is not merely a rarity, it is the manifestation of an ideal. It is Clough's testimony to an order of truth which, if it can infrequently be realized, can at least be approached. Yet even in the Bothie lurks the portly figure of Hobbes with his warnings about Leah. In marriage, and in all commitments, one almost inevitably discovers that his Rachel is tainted with imperfection. We experience, at best, in all our commitments, the "good minute" of Browning's "Two in the Campagna": a transcendent moment during which the real and the ideal become identical, the memory or anticipation of which sustains us during the long stretches of mundane imperfection

which intervene.

Adam admonishes Cain to cherish the product of the interaction between the world and the soul, but is wary of an attempt, himself, to "understand" when understanding can be bought only by violating the commitments of the heart. For an analogue we might turn again to Browning, whose Grammarian has, if one assumes that there is a substantial element of dramatic irony in the poem, postponed the living of life until he knows all about it, and has therefore never lived. Commitments must be made, it would seem, somewhat blindly, and in the face of imperfections which are only occasionally transcended. In being subject to this condition, Adam is less atypical than Philip, who is able to make his concepts and his emotions mutually supportive so that, in yielding to the promptings of the heart, he is also making an enlightened choice. It would seem that the "good minute" will be the rule rather than the exception, in Philip's life with Elspie.

But suppose that an "uncommitted" Victorian were to see, in the marital commitment, not the intellectual fulfillment that accompanies Philip's emotional fulfillment, but rather a thwarting of the intellect, like that experienced by Adam. Though not the typical Victorian hero (let alone any sort of Everyman) Philip does hold to a very characteristic Victorian view of woman as man's helpmate, the source of his strength, and the custodian of his, and his society's highest virtue. This is why it is so important to Philip that the woman he chooses both understands and exemplifies his social views. But our hypothetical "uncommitted man," however, though he may share Philip's Utopian dreams, has less faith in the ability of any society to realize them. And he, being (also) Victorian in his concept of womanhood, will see woman as the epitome of a

bourgeois society of which he is a rather cynical member. Thus, not finding in love the confirmation of his nascent republican sentiments as does Philip, but seeing it as a concession to a social order which is generally inimical to his intellect, he hesitates to involve himself, and, in the process, misses whatever power love might have to vivify his intellectual life.

Such a man is Claude. If Philip's story is a rather improbable (albeit delightful) triumph of the ideal, Claude's story is the eminently credible account of love dying on the vine because the hero does not find, or finds only too late, the basis for a synthesis like Philip's, which is what he really demands if he is to experience deep commitment, but which, with an Adamite sense of the near irreconcilability of mundane commitment with pure truth, he tends to despair of. In short, Claude seems too busy observing life to live it, too fearful of getting a Leah to claim successfully his Rachel, too abundantly aware of the manifold hazards to any movement, to be able to take effective and resolute action.

The stultifying effect of an intellect which cannot act on the basis of a mere fifty-one percent of the evidence, but demands something approaching absolute assurance, was something Clough had occasion, undoubtedly, to observe in his own person. But what he had seen as a tendency in himself he had seen as a destructive force in such a man as Sidney Walker who, Clough wrote, " . . . passed fifty-one years, mostly in isolation and poverty, shivering upon the brink, trembling, and hesitating upon the threshold of life. Fearful to affirm any thing, lest it haply might be false, to do any thing, because so probably it might be a sin; to speak, lest he should lie; almost, we might say, to

feel, lest it should be a deception,--so he sat, crouching and cowering, in the dismal London backstreet lodging, over the embers of a wasting and dying fire, the true image of his own vitality."[3] This is not a picture of the Claude we see; it is a picture of what he might become.

Claude is, of course, like Adam in feeling the tension between thought and mundane obligation, but unlike him in that Claude has withheld himself from practical involvements which would be a liability in a quest for abstract truth. Adam, being already committed, can only contemplate, imaginatively, the making of such a quest. But they do share a sense of the isolation of the man who aspires to a life of uncommitted objectivity. And, indeed, the Adam image is effectively invoked several times in the Amours.

After castigating himself for his snobbish attitude toward the middle class Trevellyns, in Canto I, Claude sees himself in the role of Adam.

> Here in the Garden I walk, can freely concede to the Maker
> That the works of his hand are all very good: his creatures,
> Beast of the field and fowl, he brings them before me: I
> name them
> That which I name the, they are,--the bird, the beast, and
> the cattle.
> But for Adam,--alas, poor critical coxcomb Adam!
> But for Adam there is not found a help-meet for him. (I, 146-151)

This is an Adam without Eve, the archetypal taxonomist enjoying the process of putting phenomena into their proper categories. But with the brutally self-critical quality which characterizes the Claudes of this world, he also sees himself as ridiculous. He pursues the task which would have absorbed the intellect of a wifeless Adam, but to what

[3] Buckner B. Trawick, Selected Prose Works of Arthur Hugh Clough (University, Alabama, 1964), p. 168.

purpose? Claude is indeed free, as Clough's Adam was not, to engage in limitless speculation. But he is aware that the Edenic existence smacks strongly of solipsism, exclaiming " . . . how we walk a livelong day, Great Heaven, and watch our shadows! / What our shadows seem, forsooth, we will ourselves be." (I, 83-85)

The ambivalence of attitude which is so characteristic of Claude is the key to his personality. It is an ambivalence with which Philip Newson is not cursed. Philip does of course have two loves: the girl of his dreams and the society of his dreams, but it is not wholly correct to say that he feels a tension between these two loves. It is better seen as a situation in which his two motivations advance, along convergent courses, towards a mature view of life which will incorporate both. When one starts to dominate the other, the latter always shows signs of a falsity which is first perceived by the reader, certainly, but eventually by Philip himself. When he is too much dominated by theory, he falls in love with Katie not because of who, but because of what, she is. And reacting aginst this error, he is genuinely impressed by Lady Maria, but while under the influence of her charms he briefly espouses a political theory which is completely at variance with what he has believed before and will believe later. With much adjustment on his part, his two concerns merge; they are genuine and mutually complementary. For Claude, however, there is a real tension. His desire to preserve his intellectual integrity is his ruling passion. Although he is reluctant to voice what appears to him a diametrically opposed impulse: to involve himself deeply in mundane concerns to which he is emotionally drawn, he nevertheless reveals repeatedly that the impulse exists and that he is not really content to live solely in the

realm of ideas. His periodic attempts to retrench himself in this realm he recognizes as exactly what they are: retreats, and he is wont to regard himself as a rogue and peasant slave because of his inability to take effective action.

For Claude is not, at heart, a blandly noncommittal dillettante. Nor can his pathetic story be properly assigned the simplistic label that has been given to Hamlet's story: a "tragedy of intellect." Claude's problem is not merely that he sees too much to assimilate it all and to extract from it a fairly coherent system of values. It is rather that, Hamlet-like, he is broadly perceptive of values which are themselves in conflict. Both, indeed, the Elizabethan hero and the Victorian anti-hero, are eager for commitment. But since such men are agonizingly aware not only of alternative modes of action but also of the full range of values implicit in either alternative, the preservation of intellectual integrity, which heightens the ambivalence of their feelings, is (paradoxically) necessary if they are ever to achieve the one quality which will precipitate decisive action, and that quality is certitude.

Near the end of Canto V, having plumbed the depths of depression, Claude recognizes a profound truth about himself: "Ah, the key of our life, that passes all wards, opens all locks, / Is not I will, but I must. I must,--I must,--and I do it." (V, 154-155) What Claude needs, above all other things, is a sense of the imperative. But he can be given a coercive impetus only by knowledge. That is, he must effectively discredit all the vitiating alternatives to one compelling course of action, and in the presence of an absolute assurance of the essential "rightness" of his position he will not be hesitant in making

choices and assuming commitments. While such a sense of logical or moral imperative is unlikely, it is not impossible, and indeed he nearly achieves it. It is necessity, rather than caprice, inclination or preference, which will activate Claude's will. This is the quality which Claude shares with Hamlet and which makes the story of each, to the extent that it is a tragedy, a tragedy not of the intellect but of the will.

Dependence upon necessity to whet an easily blunted purpose becomes, for Hamlet, a heroic triumph wherein he surrenders his own life at the culmination of that complex process by which he provides the world with incontrovertible proof that Claudius is, categorically, a murderer, because he is Hamlet's murderer. Then and only then is he able to make what previously would have been a personal vendetta into an act of retributive justice. The claims of the will are thus satisfied, but since they have been reinforced by a hard-bought certitude, the hero's integrity is satisfied also. Hamlet's tragedy is that he will act only when he can do so on his own absolutistic terms, and their cost is high. Claude faces a problem which is posed in much the same fashion as Hamlet's. He is confronted by possible commitments (to Mary and to the Roman Republic) for and against each of which plausible cases can be made. In such a situation, Claude can only wait for the pressure of circumstances, or for logical necessity in the form of some insight not previously achieved, to precipitate an act of will. That the assurance comes too late for it to change Claude's life very much, either for good or ill, but merely sends him running rather pathetically around the countryside, is the difference between tragedy and tragi-comedy. He does, indeed, experience a measure of the

self-realization characteristic of the tragic hero, but returns thereafter to a pattern of life which is as devoid of commitment as it is of tragic dignity.

If Claude is " . . . not Prince Hamlet nor was meant to be," he is something more than J. Alfred Prufrock, to whom he has also been compared. This is quite appropriate, because Clough stands between Shakespeare and Eliot and the concepts of the human enterprise held in their respective centuries. Claude would like to squeeze the universe into a ball and, indeed, makes the attempt, but he requires some cohesive force outside his own will to hold the ball together, and as he rolls it toward the overwhelming question it disintegrates. His aborted commitment to Mary has at least a dash in it of Hamlet's tragic heroism, but when he fails and subsides into a state of rather stoical acceptance, he virtually accepts the Prufrockian answer that "That is not it, at all," Yet Claude is made of sterner stuff than Prufrock. He is not an effete courtier, but a man with an uncompromising passion for truth. He is not, like Prufrock, fearful of looking ridiculous, but knows that he and all men are ridiculous and tries, at least, to eschew the half-truths most men settle for.

The foregoing paragraphs have outlined an interpretation of Claude as he relates to the principal figures in the other Clough poems discussed thus far and to the two other literary creations to which he has been most often compared. It remains to demonstrate the appropriateness of Clough's choice of such a figure as representative of the problem which plagued both him and his age: the problem of making and abiding by a choice between (or among) alternatives whose claims press with equal validity. And it must further be shown that marriage,

closely connected with politics in the Amours, can be seen as metaphorically representative of political, personal, and religious commitments in the poem.

Canto I largely defines the terms of Claude's problem. "The first voice we hear" is that of the prologues and epilogues to the cantos. It is a voice which, while falling short of omniscience, knows Claude somewhat better than he usually knows himself. In the ten lines preceding the first epistle in Canto I, we find a statement suggestive of Emerson's famous "Traveling is the fool's paradise." This curious editorial presence, itself quoting a "whispering voice," observes that "'Tis but to prove limitation, and measure a cord, that we travel; / Let who would 'scape and be free go to his chamber and think; / 'Tis but to change idle fancies for memories willfully falser; / 'Tis but to go and have been . . . " (I, 7-10) At the outset, then, we find Claude embarked, not altogether blindly, on a sort of fool's errand. "Rome is better than London," he is to observe, "because it is other than London." (I, 27) Much later, in Canto III, Claude will make the very important distinction between "juxtaposition," about which he talks so much, and affinity. Claude's difficulty, it will become clear, with persons, with causes, and with places, is that he feels himself "juxtaposed" with them, not symbolically, as Faulkner was wont to use the term, but in the sense of mere proximity. Hungry for affinity, Claude is nevertheless reluctant to cultivate it in situations where his relationships seem merely fortuitous. Less than any of Clough's heroes up to this point, is Claude willing to gain a belief by living it.

Another contrast between Claude and Philip can be instructive: Philip is not in the Highlands because they are other than Oxford. He

is there to learn and can profit from travel because he need not "go to his chamber" to think and is engaged continuously in the process of seeking affinities. Claude, on the other hand, is frankly suspicious of whatever he comes into contact with. As ridiculous as "critical coxcomb Adam" may be, he is less ridiculous than he might become in his own eyes if his will were to become subservient to mere sentiment rather than to the inescapable, if seldom heard, voice of necessity. For to act on impulse is to ignore the inevitable objections which the critical judgment might raise against the position one has espoused, and thus awaken, as its own nemesis, the outraged intellect. For Claude, then, changes of scene seem to be little more than occasions for new modes of skepticism. And probably of a tougher skepticism, because the allure of the new is greater than that of the old. The concluding lines of the epilogue to Canto I reveal the direct ratio which seems to exist between Claude's attraction to a thing and his suspicion of it. Here is his reaction to the grandeur of either Christian or pagan Rome, already adroitly put down as "rubbish": "So through the city I wander, unsatisfied ever, / Reverent so I accept, doubtful because I revere." (I, 283-4) Travel is for Claude, then, not a resource for growth but rather a series of appeals to "factitious" emotion, to be resisted to just that extent to which they do threaten to charm or edify.

Almost his only favorable comment about the eternal city (in Canto I) is that he sees in its allegedly Christian art and architecture "a positive, calm, Stoic-Epicurean acceptance." This remark is interesting for at least two reasons. In the first place, it is an excellent example of what Houghton simply, but aptly, refers to as

Claude's "cleverness."[4] In seeing Catholic Rome as exemplifying not pagan superstition but classical virtue, Claude is expressing an opinion sufficiently "original," from the viewpoint of a Nineteenth Century Broad Churchman, as to fall more into the realm of wit than of conviction. The observation may appear intellectually daring, but like his off-hand dismissal of Luther as the perpetuator of theology in the western world, it really leads nowhere, and is emotionally safe. The comment is even more significant in that the "acceptance" which he reads into the Roman treasures, which have endured so much history, is a projection of his own willingness to "accept," rather than to risk involvement. And it is to a philosophy of acceptance that Claude has retreated again when he says, in the eighth epistle of Canto V "I will go where I am led, and will not dictate to the chances." (V, 179) Unless one, indeed, can believe that "it is better to have loved and lost" then his whole pathetic adventure ends up, having gone full circle, and he might well have simply gone to his chamber and thought rather than to undertake a physical journey which he was somehow never perfectly able to turn into a spiritual pilgrimage as well.[5] But Claude's desire, despite his fears, to root his intellectual honesty in a significant and sustaining human relationship is a redemptive quality which makes his ill-fated excursion meaningful.

[4] Houghton, The Poetry of Clough, p. 120.

[5] Clough's poem Peschiera, concerned also with the struggles of the Roman republic, ends with these lines: "' 'Tis better to have fought and lost, / Than never to have fought at all.'"

As we have observed, for two young men so similarly "circumstanced" and with philosophical inclinations so nearly in common, Claude and Philip abound in contrasts. Canto I is particularly illuminating when read in the light of these contrasts. Both men share an aversion to artificiality in relationships with the opposite sex. Philip's distaste for "the giggling, and toying and coying" of young ladies with whom one finds himself, "Dangling beside them and turning the leaves on the dreary piano, / Offering unneeded arms, performing dull farces of escort," (II, 57-58) surely finds its counterpart in Claude's categorization of his friend Vernon as " . . . one of those natures which have their perfect / Delight in the general tender domestic, / So that he trifles with Mary's shawl, ties Susan's bonnet, / Dances with all . . ." (I, 116-119) and in his reservations about Mrs. Trevellyn who "somewhat affecteth the blue." Yet here the similarity ends. For Philip's remark, just quoted, is part of a harangue on the dignity of labor as opposed to the "Utter removal from work, mother earth and the objects of living," (II, 61) while Claude is much more class-conscious, objecting to the Trevellyns mainly because they are "not wholly / Pure of the taint of the shop" (I, 125-126) and to Mrs. Trevellyn's pseudo-intellectuality because it is expressed in a "slightly mercantile accent."

Even here, however, the contrast is not exhausted. Philip, desiring involvement in what he regards as vital, is precipitated into a premature relationship (with Katie) which he prudently terminates when he realizes that it lacks the resources for permanent happiness for either of the participants. He is stricken with guilt, after the fact, when he realizes that he has fallen in love with the first genuine and uncomplicated girl who came along. Claude, as we see him in the first

canto of the Amours, resists involvement, but at the same time is emotionally drawn to the Trevellyn girls in spite of their offensive bourgeois qualities. His sense of guilt is simultaneous with the awakening of his need for relatedness to other human beings. He confides to Eustace that he enjoys the trivialities which his critical intellect condemns.

> Yet it is pleasant, I own it, to be in their company; pleasant,
> Whatever else it may be, to abide in the feminine presence.
> Pleasant, but wrong, will you say? But this happy, serene
> coexistence
> Is to some poor soft souls, I fear, a necessity simple,
> Meat and drink and life, and music, filling with sweetness,
> Thrilling with melody sweet, with harmonies strange overwhelming,
> All the long-silent strings of an awkward, meaningless fabric.
> (I, 168-174)

The "awkward, meaningless fabric" is the life of an Eveless Adam. One can scarcely help being moved by the pathos of Claude's urge to live and love. Yet he finds himself on the brink of commitment and immediately retreats. The remaining eleven lines of the epistle constitute an ingenious "cop out" wherein Claude sees himself in a "peaceful avuncular function." This is, of course, the fear of sex which Houghton has observed in Claude,[6] but it is more. As kindly old bachelor uncle Claude, he not only spares himself the embarrassment of a carnal union with a woman, but enjoys, more significantly, an oblique relationship with other people, affording just the right blend of intimacy and detachment. The responsibilities of the role are vaguely defined and its emotional commitments are insufficiently deep to be disturbing. And still the guilt remains. A page more and Claude appears, briefly, as his most snobbish self. "Is it contemptible," he asks Eustace, "the horrible pleasure of pleasing inferior people? / I am

[6] Houghton, The Poetry of Clough, p. 139.

ashamed my own self . . . " (I, 213-214). But he redeems himself for his snobbery, or at least reveals the strange interplay of forces within him, when he immediately tells Eustace that for the first time in his life he is "living and moving with freedom."

The irony in all this, to return to the contrast with Philip, is that Philip, certainly the more volitional of the two, first falls in love "on principle," his emotional life influenced by his precepts. Claude, however, who is apparently dominated by his intellect and who finds refuge in "the great massy strengths of abstraction," finds himself being drawn emotionally into a relationship which he does not find intellectually acceptable. Neither relationship matures, though Philip of course is able to advance beyond his, to a point where thoughts and feelings are complementary.

The key to this paradox is to be found in the very substantial difference in the conception of the two poems. It is a strength, and not a weakness, of the Bothie that it presents a rather simplistic view of life in general and of Nineteenth Century British society in particular. The view, after all, is Philip's, and the poem itself is unrealistic only to the extent that fortuitous events bring Philip and Elspie together. And, of course, there is something of the deus ex machina in the antipodal world, free from class distinctions, to which the pair can escape. But New Zealand is not wholly a figment of the poet's imagination either. The hopeful ending, in a poem whose pattern of relationship between action and meaning is as carefully worked out as the Bothie, does not tax our credence and Clough certainly will not abuse it through frequent use! It is easy to over-stress the "development" of Clough's thought from one poem to the other. They are,

in a sense, complementary: the one depicting a commitment made under something like laboratory conditions of innocence, single-mindedness, good faith and (it should not be forgotten) good luck, the other showing an attempt at deep commitment under the conditions which Clough knew only too well plagued sensitive and perceptive men in every age and were particularly manifest in his own.

The paradox is resolved, then, when we realize that in Philip's somewhat more structured world, where things tend to happen as they should, the intellect can lead toward emotional fulfillment, while in Claude's world (more complex and less rational) the intellect can lead one into emotional sterility and the emotions into intellectual decay.

Canto I brings Claude into juxtaposition with women; he is juxtaposed with politics in Canto II. Though avowedly apolitical he could, he says, shed a tear for the Roman Republic. Dulce et decorum est and all that, Claude says, but the Romans may not, themselves, fight for their new-found freedom, and besides it can be argued that he owes it to the world to preserve his unique personality: he is no Byron and will not take arms for a cause in which he does believe. Yet he dreams of a sword at his side and a battle horse underneath him. And here is the first movement in the dialectical pattern of this canto, and, indeed, of the rest of the poem, a pattern which polarizes Claude into intellect and emotion, a miniature Dipsychus that begins to explore the technique of interior dialogue which Clough will use so effectively in the later poem.

In Epistle IV, Claude poses for himself one of the most complex and amusing questions in the entire poem: "Am I prepared to lay down my life for the British female?" Superficially, it brings the question

of war nearer home. If Claude will not fight for the Romans, will he fight for the members of the English colony in Rome? But the question also involves Claude's ability to commit himself to the comfort and safety of womanhood, as in marriage. For Claude, this is that commitment to the unexamined life, to trivia, and to the factitious which is the price of connubial bliss. What follows reveals a strange pattern in Claude's thought: "Ah, for a child in the street I could strike; for a full-blown lady-- / Somehow, Eustace, alas! I have not felt the vocation." (II, 76) There is some indication that Claude believes concern for the immature is unlikely to be taken at more than face value, that it is simple humanity rather than commitment. In the avuncular role he imagined for himself in Canto I, he saw himself as befriending, but not begetting, children. Now he sees himself less compromised, less guilty of mock heroics, as a protector of infantile helplessness than of feminine dignity. And for what did he shed a tear? The "poor little Roman Republic," an embryonic nation. Yet his attitudes towards the British Empire would undoubtedly have been different: it is hard to imagine Claude as a chauvinist.

The epistle ends with a very clear statement of Claude's dilemma: his demand for certitude.

> Am I not free to attend for the ripe and indubious instinct?
> Am I forbidden to wait for the clear and lawful perception?
> Is it the calling of man to surrender his knowledge and insight
> For the mere venture of what may, perhaps, be the virtuous action?
> Must we, walking on earth, discerning a little, and hoping
> Some plain visible task shall yet for our hands be assigned us,--
> Must we abandon the future for fear of omitting the present,
> Quit our own fireside hopes at the alien call, of a neighbour,
> To the mere possible shadow of Diety offer the victim?
> And is this, my friend, but a weak and ignoble refining,
> Wholly unworthy the head or the heart of Your Own Correspondent?
> (II, 86-96)

The passage is of interest and not only because it so explicitly states Claude's fear of surrendering his objectivity for a merely possible good but because he is so objective that he suspects some subjective flaw in his own demand for an unquestionably clear sense of truth. Perhaps he is not god-like at all, but merely a coward. How characteristic of Claude it is that he continues not only to raise questions, but to question himself in the act of questioning! His will can be stirred only by a "plain visible task."

The fifth epistle shows Claude as the world's worst war correspondent. All that he really sees of the first French assault is smoke: black from a burning building, probably, and white, from the firing of artillery pieces, but he is not quite sure whose. He also sees what may have been the flash of a bayonet on a distant slope. His account of the fighting leaves much to be desired journalistically and historically, because it is a brilliant piece of impressionistic writing: he has seen exactly what an untrained and uncommitted observer would see. Claude, an eyewitness, is as surprised as anyone else when, in his next letter to Eustace, he is able to report a Roman victory. He is pleased, but it is a rather clandestine sort of pleasure which he feels, closely akin to his private bellicose dreams. Claude remains the bystander.

This passive role is vividly shown in the seventh epistle, in which Claude relates to Eustace an incident which, significantly, he has not shared with the Trevellyn daughters: he has seen death close at hand. "Whom should I tell it to, else?--these girls?--the Heavens forbid it!--" (II, 201) Is it mere deference to feminine squeamishness or his own inability (akin to Adam's) to reconcile his awareness of the

eternal truths, such as Death, with his still condescending sense of female sensibilities? At any rate he has been shaken. The reality of war has come closer, but he is, if anything, less involved than before. His is still a bystander's view. "So, I have seen a man killed! An experience that among others!" (II, 164) (The understatement can be forgiven, for it is undoubtedly deliberate irony). But even the irony gives way before a characteristically Claudian qualification. He reports, more accurately that " . . . a man was killed, I am told, and I saw something." (II, 168) There are times when, if his diffidence were not so beautifully expressed, one might wish for Claude to be really sure of something. (Some fifty-five lines are spent in telling what may have happened.) But the wish, of course, is also Claude's. The person who may have been killed may have been a priest trying to join the besieging pro-Papal forces. Claude, dressed in black, does not tarry. If he is not willing to fight for the Republic, he is certainly unwilling to die by mistake at the hands of its partisans. What Claude actually saw is reduced to one potent image: " . . . I saw through the legs of the people the legs of a body." (II, 199) Again, Clough's impressionism is perfect and admirably suited to Claude's peculiar perceptions. The picture is an arresting one: a set of legs perpendicular to all the others. But with what the eye sees the report stops. One imagines Claude confounding his psychoanalyst by describing the actual geometrical configurations of the blots in a Rorschach test. Claude will not jump at conclusions, however strongly he may feel about some possible reading of the data.

As Houghton notes, Claude does appear on "the terrible thirtieth of April," if not for the protection of the British female, as a

"cause," at least because it is, as he puts it, "but common civility" to serve those who expect his aid.[7] But there is little in Claude's letters to suggest that he has developed a deep attachment to any of the Trevellyn girls. Epistle IX concludes with a eulogy on the Romans ("a nice and natural people"), their hopeless cause, and Guiseppe Mazzini--"this dreadful Mazzini," as Georgina Trevellyn has called him. And suddenly in Epistle X, we find Claude answering the charge that he is in love! Eustace must indeed be adept at reading between the lines: though Claude has confessed, ruefully, that he feels comfortable with the Trevellyns, he has not mentioned Mary, in his letters to Eustace, without mentioning Susan in the same breath. Are "those letters" to which Claude refers communications to Eustace which are not included in any version of the poem, or is the meddlesome George Vernon also in correspondence with Eustace? Or does Eustace really detect some subtle alteration of tone in the letters of his friend which he correctly attributes to an emotional change? In any case, the question of how Eustace got the idea is less important than Claude's reaction to it.

Claude does not think he is in love, "exactly." The rapport which he enjoys with Mary sounds impressive, coming from one as prone to qualified statements as he. "It is a pleasure to converse with this girl," Claude writes, because "she can talk in a rational way." And, withal, she can "in perfection retain her simplicity." (II, 256-258) Her qualities sound, indeed, much like those which Philip discovered in Elspie. Yet Claude is not sure that he is in love. One thinks again of the curious contrast between these two Cloughian heroes: Philip can think himself in love with Katie, when he is not, because it seems to him that he should be, while Claude does not think that he is in love

7 Houghton, The Poetry of Clough, p. 135.

with Mary (though he is) because he suspects that he should not be. Philip the doer acts prematurely through misapplication of a principle, Claude the thinker forbears action because of the distrust of an emotion. The need, in both cases, for a synthesis of will and idea, is obvious. And, as previously noted, the happy ending of the Bothie is, more than anything else, a statement of the terms of such a synthesis, in those happy situations in which it can be made.

Epistle XI returns to the plea for certitude made in Epistle IV, but it is now more specific. It is a sense of some essential "rightness" in love that Claude craves here, an assurance that his emotions constitute an extension, not a violation, of his integrity. This brief but enormously important section of the poem is worthy of quotation in full.

> There are two different kinds, I believe, of human attraction:
> One which simply disturbs, unsettles, and makes you uneasy,
> And another that poises, retains and fixes and holds you.
> I have no doubt, for myself, in giving voice for the latter.
> I do not wish to be moved, but growing where I was growing,
> There more truly to grow, to live where as yet I had languished.
> I do not like being moved: for the will is excited; and action
> Is a most dangerous thing; I tremble for something factitious,
> Some malpractice of heart and illegitimate process;
> We are so prone to these things with our terrible notions of duty.
> (II, 266-275)

The relevance of the passage to the rest of the poem and to the scheme of Clough's longer works, is manifold. The first four lines might well have been spoken to Philip by Adam, the tutor. The attraction that "poises, retains and fixes and holds," is the sort which comes to exist between Philip and Elspie, enhancing and unifying the best qualities of each. That Claude recognizes the possibility of such a commitment, and gives an affirmative vote for it, is an indication that

the essential nature of commitment, as it is viewed in the Bothie and in the Amours, is the same. What Claude would make the basis of the marital commitment, is just that assurance which Philip discovers in his relationship with Elspie. But the question of priority is vexing. Claude's gateway to happiness is no bigger than a needle's eye, if that large, for he very nearly sets up as a prerequisite for commitment the sense of certitude which comes to Philip as a result of his commitment. Epistle XII, which immediately follows the lines just quoted, makes even clearer Claude's reluctance to undertake anything other than a "plain visible task."

> Ah, let me look, let me watch, let me wait, unhurried, unprompted!
> Bid me not venture on aught that could alter or end what is present!
> Say not, Time flies, and Occasion, that never returns, is departing!
> Drive me not out, ye angels with fiery swords, from my Eden,
> Waiting, and watching and looking! Let love be its own inspiration!
> Shall not a voice, if a voice there must be, from the airs that environ,
> Yea, from the conscious heavens, without our knowledge or effort,
> Break into audible words? And love be its own inspiration?
> (II, 276-283)

Love, it would appear, must present itself to him with the proper credentials before he can fully accept it. Yet the presentation of the credentials would appear to Claude like the serving of a writ, and would threaten his personal dignity. Mary, wise in her simplicity, has a penetrating insight into this impossible situation. "He thinks," Mary will say in Canto III, "that women should woo him; / Yet if a girl should do so, would be but alarmed and disgusted." (III, 35-36)

There is, in Claude's rejection of the factitious, a nobility which partakes of that of the philosopher or the prophet. "Duty" here, as in Clough's famous poem on the subject, is compliance, mindless

compliance, to the dictates of society. At its best it causes one to do the right thing for the wrong reason. Duty, thus understood, is what Philip has rejected in resisting the appeals made to him on the basis of his learning or social status. The alternative to "duty" is the recognition of human dignity in others and the cultivation of it in oneself. But Claude's prophetic vision is tainted by his contention that "action / Is a most dangerous thing." It is statements such as this which have laid Claude open to the not wholly justified charge of cowardice. Action is, indeed, dangerous, because life itself is action and life is a dangerous thing. To act is to decide to act, and not to act is to decide not to act: Claude is at least partially aware of this. One can, of course, withhold oneself from action, Hamletlike, until he can fight with his own weapons. Probably this is what Claude feels that he is doing. But, in reality, he out-Hamlets Hamlet in his narrowing down of the acceptable alternatives. He professes himself unwilling, actually, to do anything but wait until such time as his will is set in motion by external forces so harmonious with his own nature that he can accept them as part of himself. "Let love be its own inspiration," he has begged, and has asked not to be driven out of Eden. But to stay in Eden one must forego committing himself to an Eve who might offer him a forbidden fruit!

What emerges in these lines, however, is not the whole Claude: what they do constitute is a statement of the preferences, however unrealistic, of a man who cherishes his intellectual integrity above all other things. At odds with this militant integrity, however, is the emotional Claude who, in his next letter to Eustace, despite his somewhat inaccurate suspicion that Mary dislikes him, his declaration

that (through no fault of hers) they are incompatible, and his sense of the hopelessness of the whole situation, declares his intention to follow her to Florence! Action may be dangerous, but Claude risks it when he announces that " . . . she moves--I move, not to lose her." (II, 291)

In Epistle XIV Claude moves through a bewildering series of postures: he is wooing Mary, though in an "unmanly" fashion, he is not in love at all, he has the sort of temperament which does not need love, and finally he hopes that Eustace can come to Florence to see Mary, presumably to verify Claude's high estimate of her charms! The contention that he is emotionally independent is most interesting, however:

> It is an easier matter for us contemplative creatures,
> Us, upon whom the pressure of action is laid so lightly;
> We, discontented indeed with things in particular, idle,
> Sickly, complaining, by faith in the vision of things in general
> Manage to hold our way without, like others around us,
> Seizing the nearest arm to comfort, help and support us.
> (II, 309-314)

Claude is not being completely honest here, though the statement is sufficiently plausible for him to be taken in by his own specious reasoning. He is selling himself short when he paints this picture of the easy-going, impractical dreamer who is fairly content with his own company. Claude is many things, including at times a really irritating prig, but he is never the person described in these lines, though they sum up fairly accurately the externals of his conduct. The pressure of action is <u>not</u> lightly laid on Claude and however much we may decry his unwillingness to commit himself, there is no questioning the spiritual travail which it costs him. The reason why he should thus

demean himself should be obvious: like many hypersensitive people he is seeking to forestall criticism by criticizing himself first. That he will not seize the nearest arm for support (the matter of juxtaposition again, dealt with at length in the next canto) is true, but this does not mean that he has no desire for support or for an arm to seize.

The editorial voice picks up the ambiguity of Claude's position in the epilogue to Canto II, and in the prologue to Canto III where it succeeds in piecing together, so skillfully that the seams scarcely show, the two tendencies now at conflict within Claude. We can, by contemplation of such things as the Roman antiquities "exclude what is meaner around us; / Yet, at the worst of the worst, books and chamber remain; / Yet may we think, and forget, and possess our souls in resistance.--" (III, 5-7) Surely this is the orthodox Claudian view. But gradually a new note is infused, as escape from "the worst" is seen not so much as the possession of one's soul in resistance but the sharing of it in love. The prologue ends with one of the few unabashedly romantic lines in the entire poem, as this voice which is wont to put words into Claude's mouth says for him that he envisions himself "Under the vine-trellis laid, O my beloved, with thee!" (III, 16).

And thus begins the third canto, in which the ambivalence of Claude's "position," both personal and intellectual reaches its greatest height. It is in the first epistle that Mary makes her very accurate assessment of the self-contradictory attitude toward love, previously alluded to: that he virtually requires wooing so as to be assured that his feelings are reciprocated, yet would react negatively to being pursued, because any union to come out of such a pursuit would appear

to be based on emotion only, on "the factitious," on the kind of attraction which Claude has said "disturbs, unsettles and makes you uneasy," and on the sort of fortuitous coming together which Claude is soon to condemn as mere "juxtaposition," in his most extended exegesis of that word.

In the second epistle, Claude reveals what might seem to be, for him, a new perspective. Yet one discovers, upon closer examination, that he has simply found an image, and possibly a dangerous one, for something whose existence he has always been cognizant of, but which has failed to move him deeply. The imagery of the Amours is somewhat less rich than that of the Bothie. This difference is, like so many of the other differences between the two poems, attributable largely to the difference in temperament of the two heroes. Philip, much more the romantic, is inclined to seek the appropriate metaphor to express the essential significance of a situation. Claude, more analytic than synthetic, is at pains to give a scientifically accurate account of what he sees, even when he is being introspective. His most arresting metaphor so far has been that of the "broad lofty spaces" (in Canto I) where his feet are planted firmly upon abstraction, from whence he may occasionally descend to the turbulent world below. This is a matter about which he has felt very strongly: Claude's intellectual integrity has been an elevated headland of austere grandeur from which he could avail himself of a more-than-human view of the land and of the wrinkled sea beneath him. He now feels, with sufficiant intensity that his metaphorical powers are stirred again, a different sort of appeal: that of life as it is lived at the lower altitudes.

The image is that of the seed in the furrow. It is quite

significant that at this point, when an image of natural vitality is called for, as opposed to an image appropriate for the sophisticated logical constructs which have been the mainstay of Claude's sensibilities, it is that of the living plant, used so variously and with such effect in the Bothie. For Claude, if not in love "exactly," is beginning to sense more and more strongly something that he finds it difficult to justify rationally, but which Philip Hewson knew intuitively. It is that life is fully meaningful only when the will and the critical intellect are functioning aspects of an organic whole; when knowledge is manifest in human relationships which simultaneously are informed by it and attest its validity.

Claude is not, however, able to find a place for the intellect in his picture of organic life. He is still too much the non-combatant and the bachelor uncle to attempt, without grave misgivings, any synthesis of the intellect with the vital will. For Claude, critical judgment remains a debilitating force and though growth and vitality have now begun to haunt his imagination he can only envision them as existing in a realm which is innocent of knowledge. If the seed were Claude, with his keen awareness of the manifold perils of life, it might never sprout at all! "Would it have force to develop and open its young cotyledons, / Could it compare, and reflect, and examine one thing with another? / Would it endure to accomplish the round of its natural functions, / Were it endowed with a sense of the general scheme of existence?" (III, 43-46).

On the surface, it would not appear that Claude has altered his bearings very much: there remain two worlds, that of vital instinctual involvement and that of lofty rational detachment. But one begins to wonder which of these worlds is serene and which troubled. In the lines

quoted above, Claude has very nearly suggested that ignorance is bliss. The notion is undoubtedly repugnant to him, but he has never before so directly addressed himself to a situation in which the skeptical intellect which he cherishes so much is seen as a palpable liability. Claude is so near, and yet so far from learning the lesson which Philip instinctively knew: Philip knew what he wanted, but had to learn how to get it; Claude does not hear, or will not obey, his instinct until it is too late.

So strong, and so evenly balanced are the tensions here, that the dialectical movement is scarcely discernible. But the strain on Claude is almost unbearable. He begins his next letter to Eustace (III) by forswearing politics eternally. "I cannot / Fight, you know; and to talk I am wholly ashamed." Without adopting the participant's role, he abjures that of the commentator. In terms of the polarities which he sees, this is of course an absolutely impossible position, but Claude is now trying much more desperately to <u>make</u> some sense out of the situation in which he finds himself than to <u>talk</u> sense.

In Epistle IV we return to Eden where, with the first man, all of Clough's heroes must, it appears, grapple with the curious contradictions of the human condition. Genesis is wrong, says Claude, there was only one tree in the Garden: the Tree of Life, at whose apex the <u>flower</u> of Knowledge blooms and withers fruitlessly. Being and knowing are intimately related, but their relationship appears to Claude to be a sterile one. It is worse than sterile, actually: it is systematically self-defeating. And here Clough, still employing the plant image, turns from Claude's unorthodox treatment of the Paradisal

trees to a classical story. Existence and awareness appear to Claude as analogues to the growth and ultimate blasting of the cypress branches in the myth of Laodamia. Men grow towards an inherent goal of self-and-world-consciousness, but end up "Withering still at the sight which still they grow up to encounter" (III, 90). At the conclusion of the Epistle, Claude reiterates his earlier plea (III, 59) that there be no more talk of growth. "Let us not, " Claude might say, "mature." Because we are still, like the seed, at a level of existence where knowledge, to which we can attain fairly readily, is nevertheless incompatible with our vitality. Thus growth, for humans who are neither brutes nor gods, is ultimately a self-stultifying process.

Claude has long been conscious of, in fact has aspired to, the life of disinterested intelligence. He is now, as a part of the dialectical movement going on inside him, beginning to conceptualize what he has (with misgivings) come to feel: the force of what is treated metaphorically as now vegetable, now animal vitality. The question, never quite posed by Claude himself because he is unable to balance thesis against antithesis in such a way as even to suggest a synthesis, is how to achieve an informed will, so that action, in prospect and in retrospect, will be at least to some degree acceptable to the intellect. In fact, Claude is far from this. He does not have the quality which Melville refers to as "trimming ship" by balancing the weights to starboard and to port. Philip of course does: his brief relationships with Katie and Lady Maria are instances of partially enlightened movements, in opposite directions, in accordance with a large but blurred vision. He achieves through them a higher enlightenment and a clearer vision.

But Claude can only fluctuate, reversing his polarities in a bewildering flow of alternating current. In Epistle VIII, Earth would be beautiful were it not for the demon, "craving." The world, in this letter, is Edenic, and Claude enjoys the Adamite role of contemplating it. He even sees, and approves, lovers, though he does not become one. The play of intellect over created things is, or would be, richly satisfying were it not for "craving." The attraction which makes one "uneasy," the lure of a vital involvement which might betray the integrity of the intellect, spoils his Eden. The only thing wrong with life is having to live it. The only other position which Claude can imagine is at the opposite pole of vitalism and anti-intellectualism. "Hang this thinking . . . " he exclaims in the first line of Epistle X. He will revert to a sub-human level where he will rid himself of the one thing which disturbs human happiness: the mind! He begs the Preserver of Men to "Take from me the regal knowledge; / Let me, contanted and mute, with the beasts of the field, my brothers, / Tranquilly, happily lie.--and eat grass, like Nebuchadnezzar!" (III, 211-213)

But we must return to the sixth and seventh letters for what may well be the most important concept in Claude's (and Clough's) treatment of the problem of commitment. It is in these two epistles that we find the most extended treatment of the word that looms so large in Claude's scheme of things: "juxtaposition." Nothing disturbs Claude more than the fact that so many commitments in life arise out of mere proximity. Men avail themselves of what is nearest at hand, be it in the sphere of faith, politics, or matrimony. They believe that they have made choices

when in actuality they have exercised as little selectivity as Adam had in his choice of a mate. Claude is discussing an issue which far transcends the problem of his own relationship with Mary. He might use any of a wide variety of fortuitous contacts as illustrations of juxtaposition. Yet the metaphor which he uses is that of marriage, doubly significant here because Claude is not only employed by Clough, as a character, in establishing the broad metaphorical implications of the Amours, but Claude himself, the principal voice within the poem, discovers the aptness of the metaphor. Suppose one were riding on a train and struck up an acquaintance with the girl sitting next to him. Would this merest of accidents constitute a basis for marriage? Yet it sometimes leads to marriage, as do many other equally accidental contacts. Surely such marriages are not made in heaven! They must arise from the will-exciting kind of attraction which Claude eschews. Yet in Clough's Natura Naturans he envisions just such a situation as awakening in the hearts of a young couple a primal Hymeneal urge which, though not Love, would someday be recognized by that name. Claude, however, can only wonder if eternal verity can be made manifest in an accident. He wonders how many marriages there would be if the tie were indissoluble even by death. Claude is a little confused by his own rhetoric here. He is not concerning himself with the scriptural assurance that the dead " . . . neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven." What he wants to say is that for the bulk of mankind, commitments are made in the context of Time rather than of Eternal Truth. Claude, of course, could commit himself only in terms of the latter. Can you imagine telling your bride that you love her because your paths happened to cross, because she was the

best you were likely to get? Yet the person who is ruled by juxtaposition would, if honest, have to say these things. It is little wonder that Claude, seeing mundane commitments as shallowly pragmatic, is prone to reject them.

Yet what is the alternative? Claude recognizes that humans " . . . as limited beings / Scarcely can hope to attain upon earth to an Actual Abstract" (III, 131-132). Theoretically, the possibility exists that love might "be its own inspiration," or that religious faith or political conviction so present themselves to one's sensibilities that they be free of "the factitious" and offer the certitude that Claude demands. But the likelihood is small. Eustace supplies the word which Claude needs: it is "affinity."

The distinction between the two almost synonymous words "juxtaposition" and "affinity" is quite clear to Claude: indeed he has been making it throughout the poem. As he understands the terms, juxtaposition would seem to involve only a spatial relationship, while affinity suggests another kind of "closeness": similarity and potential rapport. What Claude does not recognize (and what Philip Hewson--to say nothing of Clough himself--does) is that juxtaposition can be the basis for creating, or at any rate discovering, the affinity which Claude demands. Had he the assurance that in yielding to the inclination of the moment he was also bearing witness to Abstract Truth, he could act. If he knew that there was some inherent congruity between his social conscience and those of Mazzini and Garibaldi, if he were sure that he and Mary stood, in relation to each other, like the parts of an as yet unrealized whole, he could, in Rome, have become both warrior and lover. But such proofs are hard to come by. And the possibility

always exists that in Rome a war and a girl made a factitious appeal to Claude's emotions.

But shouldn't affinity at least be sought? Claude does, in fact seek it, with Mary, but in discussing the term he makes another of his characteristic evasions. There are all kinds of affinities, he says, but so mixed with juxtaposition, and so subject to its vicissitudes, as to confound any attempt to pursue them except in the broadest terms. Sounding very pantheistic, Claude affirms his affinity with the natural world. The affirmation is a safe one, because it entails no commitment. But the question of juxtaposition versus affinity is not resolved here, or even in the rest of the Amours: it will be raised, in one way or another, in both Dypsychus, where they appear as "chance" and "resolve," and Mari Magno.

Epistle IX touches upon a corollary to Claude's distinction between truth and action. Eustace has mentioned "Obligation" which to Claude, along with "duty," is a "terrible word." The attempt to apply moral truths to the affairs of men, reigned over as they are by juxtaposition, is a necessary evil, probably, but the result of such an application is much distortion and misunderstanding. Duty is less often the wholehearted response to a clear moral imperative than it is an ill-considered acceptance of catchwords or folkways. Claude is an intensely moral person, but he has striven to keep his ethical judgment pure by withholding himself from those situations in which it might become clouded. Now, as he feels himself being emotionally drawn towards a state which he cannot understand or justify rationally, any suggestion that he conform to a bourgeois ethic which is morally inferior to his own is infuriating. Mary, he says, has never talked about obligations:

"it was this above all things, / This that charmed me, ah, yes, even this, that she held me to nothing." (III, 196-197) For Mary, as Claude will come to realize, knows a great deal about affinity. She is unwilling to capitalize on juxtaposition and wants to make love its own inspiration. Before this realization comes, however, obligation is again invoked, and in such a way as to destroy even the shaky prospects which the relation between Claude and Mary enjoys.

If good timing is a significant factor in the happy ending of the Bothie, bad timing certainly does much to determine the unfortunate outcome of Claude's ill-starred romance. More, even, than the near misses and unclaimed letters which must have turned Claude's wanderings in northern Italy into a nightmare of frustrations, it is the meddling of George Vernon which is the pivotal piece of bad luck for Claude, a counterpart of the providentially lost horseshoe which brought together Philip Hewson and Elspie.

With the Trevellyns leaving for Florence and with Claude (whether or not in love exactly) ready to follow, Vernon, his own marriage to Georgina now approaching, demands to know Claude's "intentions." He is expected to "declare himself" and to embark on a conventional courtship. The prospect of a love which accords with the dictates of society rather than those of the soul is appalling to Claude. The vulgarity of a "permitted flirtation" produces a characteristic reaction in Claude: he hesitates, and is lost. Finding that George and Georgina, always a would-be match-maker, are, alone, responsible for this attempt to move him with loathsome conventional pressures, Claude again prepares, belatedly, to follow Mary to Florence. How late he is he does not realize, at the end of the third canto. Meanwhile (in Epistle XI) Rome's fall is imminent.

Claude has stood with the soldiers, still watching, as Hope was cheated. What Mary will refer to as their "poor little hope" has been cheated also.

The prologue to Canto IV, echoing the phrases of the Song of Solomon, is a lyrical love-poem. The lover will follow his love wherever she might be. Though Claude's comment, in the first line of the first letter in the Canto, that not finding Mary in Florence is "truly provoking," seems at the very least restrained, it is merely characteristic of Claude's capacity for ironic understatement. The marked contrast is not between this comment and the prologue, but between Claude's present movement and the elaborate rationalizations of his inertia which filled the third Canto. It was in Canto II that he announced to Eustace his intention to follow Mary, and the battle with himself that has filled Canto III must be understood in the light of this resolve.

Insofar as there is a supremely tragic moment in the Amours, it is found in Epistle III of Canto IV. It is here that, appropriately, Claude paraphrases Hamlet, as he says that

> There is a tide, at least in the love affairs of mortals,
> Which, when taken at flood, leads on to the happiestfortune,--
> Leads to the marriage-morn and the orange-flowers and the altar,
> And the long lawful line of crowned joys to crowned joys succeeding,--
> Ah, it has ebbed with me! Ye gods, and when it was flowing,
> Pitiful fool that I was, to stand fiddle-faddling in that way!
> (IV, 33-38)

Certainly this is the climactic point of the poem, and it appears also to be a point of tragic recognition, but is it really Claude's "moment of truth?" Apart from this passage the brief canto contains little of Claude's wonted speculation: he simply gives an account of his ill-fated quest for Mary in northern Italy and the tone of the canto is thus one

of rather feverish action. And it is action founded upon nothing more than the intuitions of the heart and upon a hope which Claude has always seen as probably a vain one. There is really no way to justify his pursuit of Mary, unless he can say with Tennyson "I have felt," and this is the kind of appeal to the emotions which he will not allow himself. So he in effect says nothing except that he has missed his chance, a chance taken under conditions, and at the prompting of feelings, which he has always looked at askance before. If, indeed, he were to attempt a rationale of what has befallen him, which would be in keeping with this obviously sincere outcry, he would virtually have to say that his fear of the factitious has led him to overlook the real and that, although love very nearly became its own inspiration, he was frightened away from the certitude he sought by what could best be termed a factitious fear of the factitious. But Claude does not say this, and we become aware just how little he has grasped in his moment of tragic realization when, in the fifth and concluding canto, he does begin his inevitable post mortem analysis of the affair.

Where do we go from here? This is the question asked by the prologue of Canto V. It suggests, among other possibilities, a return to England. (Is Rome, then, better, because "other," than London?) One has a sense of having gone full circle. At any rate, when Claude "speaks" it is in the tone of Canto III rather than of Canto IV. "Action will furnish belief,--but will the belief be a true one?" (V, 20) This is a problem he has put to Eustace before. "What one wants, I suppose, is to predetermine the action, / So as to make it entail, not a chance-belief, but the true one." (V, 22-23) This is the old paradox: the assurance of truth, that must be won through action, is a

prerequisite to that action. And it appears that Claude is castigating himself not so much for having failed to take more prompt or decisive action as for having taken any action at all! Yet he does express regret at having lost contact with the Ropers, his last link with Mary.

It is largely this reversion to his standard pattern of thought which keeps Claude from being the tragic figure (albeit a minor one) which he would have been had the poem been terminated at the end of Canto IV. He resumes his old dialectical sparring with himself, altered only by the addition, to his stock of conflicting values of the value of Mary herself, which he is keenly aware of but which leaves no residual commitment, not even that of the disappointed lover who is "carrying a torch." "Let me, then, bear to forget her. I will not cling to her falsely: / Nothing factitious or forced shall impair the old happy relation." (V, 51-52) Claude sees his hope of forgetting Mary in a return to objectivity. Yet therein will he feel some sense of faint rapport with her. Claude is inclined to entrench himself in a defensive monism where, equally related to everything, he is not particularly related to anything, and Mary can be worked into this pattern. "Yet if I do but aspire evermore to the Absolute only, / I shall be doing, I think, somehow, what she will be doing;-- / I shall be thine, O my child, some way, though I know not in what way. / Let me submit to forget her; / I must: I already forget her." (V, 59-62)

But the long fifth epistle begins, as we might expect, with a repudiation of the vow, so lately made, to pursue the Absolute.

> Utterly vain is, alas! the attempt at the Absolute,--wholly.
> I, who believed not in her, because I would fain believe nothing,
> Have to believe as I may, with a wilful unmeaning acceptance.
> I, who refused to enfasten the roots of my floating existance
> In the rich earth, cling now to the hard, naked rock that is left me.--

> Ah, she was worthy, Eustace,--and that, indeed, is my comfort,--
> Worthy a nobler heart than a fool such as I could have given.
> (V, 63-69)

The above passage is of particular interest for several reasons. First because it does involve one of Claude's frequent reversals of polarity; now the quest for the absolute is a vain one, and one almost hears echoes of his earlier "Hang this thinking." Of even greater immediate interest is what he says in the second and third lines. Here he makes one of the most candid and astute assessments of his problem that he is ever to make: his failure to "believe" in Mary is an aspect of his general unwillingness to believe. This is very close to what he might have said at the climax of Canto IV. One is tempted to say that in line 65 we should read "will-less" for wilful, but perhaps he is merely saying that when he does believe it must be a self-inducement of that excitation of the will which he abhors. Yet finally, in the concluding lines, we have an excellent example of Claude's uncanny ability to side-step the issue. Recognizing Mary's worth, he takes comfort in the thought that, after all, she deserves someone better than he. While this is undoubtedly what the psychologically minded call a defense mechanism, it is something more than a way of stating the situation so as to make it least unpalatable. It is also an assertion of what is implicit throughout the canto, even with its shifts of mood: that Claude's sin is not that he failed in love, but that he tried to love. "I am a coward, and know it. / Courage in me could be only factitious, unnatural, useless." (V, 84-85) This comment, at the end of the next section of the epistle, is Claude's ultimate extreme of self-criticism. The relationship with Mary would have been a true one, not mere juxtaposition. But Truth and Action achieve tangency only in a

dimensionless point, not subject to scrutiny, to be passed only by an assertion of the will or an exercise of "courage." Therefore not even truth, in its tangible manifestations, is accessible to "cowards" such as he, and must be sought only in its abstract forms.

Though Claude has previously spoken, in an offhand skeptical manner, about religion, he has dealt little with his personal religious problems. It is at first rather surprising, then, when we suddenly find him addressing himself to the question, not of love or of politics, but of faith. He enjoyed a brief period of self-confidence, he has said (just prior to the above quoted lines about courage and cowardice), and we now find that in those moments, though their intensity and duration may be exaggerated, Claude was on the verge of finding, within himself, a religious as well as an amorous and a soical commitment. "What with trusting myself and seeking support from within me, / Almost I could believe I had gained a religious assurance, / Found in my own poor soul a great moral basis to rest on. / Ah, but indeed I see, I feel it factitious entirely;" (V, 95-98). And now a wife, a cause, and a creed are all lost to Claude because of his own distrust of his desire for them; and not merely lost, but justly so. In the future, Claude says, he will deal with fact and fact alone, and he attempts to exorcise the force which would lure him away from Truth, addressed in the second person as "thou subtle, fanatical tempter!" (V, 103)

What follows is the most specific adumbration of Dipsychus in the entire poem. Claude will resist the temptation toward comforting but factitious belief throughout his life, but will welcome it when he lies on his deathbed. He thus anticipates the repeated assertion of the Spirit in Dipsychus that eventually one will fall prey to nominal

belief and pragmatic morality. But had Claude, at this point in his life, yielded to the impulse to act he would seem not to have been damned, but to have entered into the state of blessed assurance enjoyed by Philip Hewson!

Nor is Claude really unaware of this. As the cause he favored collapses, he grieves for Mary, in terms that are characteristically self-critical. "Rome is fallen; and fallen, or falling, heroical Venice. / I meanwhile, for the loss of a single small chit of a girl, sit/ Moping and mourning here,--for her, and myself much smaller." (V, 115-117)

It is after this that Claude vows to subordinate his will to necessity, though one wonders if it has ever really escaped this subordination! He will henceforth do what he "must" and will go where he is led. For the last time, he dedicates himself to Truth.

> Let us seek Knowledge;--the rest may come and go as it happens.
> Knowledge is hard to seek, and harder yet to adhere to.
> Knowledge is painful often; and yet when we know we are happy.
> Seek it, and leave more faith and love to come with the chances.
> (V, 199-202)

But one wonders if Knowledge, thus severed from all vital human concerns, can ever be a source of happiness and if, indeed, it can really be called Knowledge. With these questions, Clough is still to grapple, in Dipsychus.

CHAPTER IV

Written in 1850, during the brief period of years which saw the composition of all three of Clough's more important poems, Dipsychus is certainly the most confusing of the three. Its stylistic diversity, appropriate to its many changes of mood, includes the sprightly prose of the Prologue and Epilogue, quotations from and parodies of not only the hexameter lines of the earlier long poems, but also the "Easter Day" poems, blank verse, and heroic couplets, and, in many of the speeches of the Spirit, it equals the best English renderings of Goethe's Knüttelvers. Structurally, it consists of a series of scenes, dealing with a wide range of matter, and only exeptionally having a specific locale, so that it lacks the narrative continuity and the dramatic cohesiveness of the Bothie and the Amours, respectively. Its ambiguity admits, legitimately, a diversity of interpretations: one can see the Spirit as anything from the Mephistophelean tempter which Dipsychus calls him, to the alter-ego of the two-souled man who gives the poem its name. In terms of its relationship to the two earlier poems, too, Dipsychus is open to multiple readings. Is it part of a dialectical pattern in which Clough has explored first action, then contemplation, and now attempts, at least, a synthesis of the two in his man-with-two-souls? Or is it the conclusion of a straightforward movement in which Clough despairs increasingly of a fusion of will and intellect (through which, alone, any vital commitment is possible) and is finally reduced to dividing man within himself?

Definite answers to these questions can probably never be arrived at, however, and it is undoubtedly part of the poem's appeal, dealing as it does with the ambiguities of life, that it presents so many of its own. Our present purpose is merely to examine, in content, the marriage metaphor as it is used in Dipsychus: the conclusions will, of course, imply an overall view of the poem.

Dipsychus was written after Clough had found, in the hopefully liberal surroundings of University Hall, London, no greater solace than at Oxford, whose orthodoxy he had fled. As might be expected, the poem does not show a return even to the qualified optimism of the Bothie. Its hero, however, is not subject to exactly Claude's problems either, though his ambivalent temper and the Italian setting of the poem, recreate much of the atmosphere of the Amours.

Referring primarily to Dipsychus, Louis Cazamian has said, "No one in England has expressed more clearly than Clough the essential hesitation in modern thought, nor the conflict between the intellectualism of pure philosophy and the ever-ready adaptation which is the law of practical life."[1] It seems not unreasonable to say that, though Dipsychus has refined Claude's problems he has not necessarily solved them. His chief difference from Claude, whose intellectual and moral scruples he shares, is his recognition of the necessity for action, which Claude so fears. He dislikes the factitious, but wants to do something about it. "In terms of the natural as opposed to the artificial, Dipsychus is an example of one who, although unable to act immediately, has come to realize the full import of finding the proper

[1] Émile Legouis, Louis Cazamian, and Raymond Las Vergnas, A History of English Literature, trans. Helen Douglas Irvine (New York, 1964, p. 1186.

relationship between the two."[2] Since there is considerable question as to whether he does find this relationship he is, perhaps, not so different from Claude, after all. "Dipsychus is simply an older and more introspective Claude, concerned like him with the problems of independence or submission, only in a wider and more crucial area than love, and with Claude's double awareness intensified and made central to the character."[3] In a wider area, certainly. But the focus upon love and marriage in the other long poems suggests that even here, as we examine this mature and not completely inactive "Claude," we will find love to be not too far from "crucial" in our understanding of him.

The first problem one encounters in coming to grips with Dipsychus is in establishing, within limits at least, the identity of the only other character in this series of dialogues: the Spirit. Walter Houghton, with his usual keen insight, points out that he is neither Devil nor half of a schizoid personality, but merely Dipsychus' own anticipation of what the vulgar world would say to him were he in dialogue with it.[4] This view is borne out by Dipsychus' remark about the Spirit, in Scene VIII. "I commune with myself; / He speaks, I hear him and resume to myself; / Whatever I think, he adds his comments to; / Which yet not interrupts me." (VIII, 31-34) Houghton further suggests that Dipsychus is not called Dipsychus because he communes with the Spirit, but because, quite apart from his dialogue with the Spirit

[2] Michael Timko, Innocent Victorian: The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough (Athens, Ohio, 1966), p. 152.

[3] Walter Houghton, The Poetry of Clough: An Essay in Revaluation (New Haven, 1963), p. 161.

[4] Houghton, Poetry of Clough, p. 162.

he is engaged in a dialogue, much after Claude's fashion, with himself.[5] The only objection that one is moved to make to this suggestion is that perhaps it does not go far enough. Dipsychus' range is broader than Claude's: he can not only see both sides in a polarized argument but, through the course of the poem, explores many points of view and should perhaps be "Polypsychus"; At any rate, however large the cast, the drama can be quite adequately understood as taking place within the mind, whose doubts and moral perplexities render superfluous a "proper Devil."

A rather unconventional approach to Dipsychus is justified by its peculiar structure. There is a great deal of psychological realism in the generally circular motion of the poem, which, like the windmills of the mind, revolves around and around the same issues as Dipsychus mulls them over. It is quite possible, consequently, to select a series of illustrative passages which represent the logical but not the structural sequence of the poem.

The Spirit's appeal to Dipsychus--the world's appeal, which he must succumb to if he cannot summon the resources to resist it--is an invitation to a life lived pragmatically, in the most pejorative sense of that word. The Spirit recommends a life which is nominally but indifferently religious ("Take your religion as 'twas found you, / And say no more of it--confound you!") (VII, 64-65), discreetly amoral as to sex, and which employs personal relationships and professional duties

[5] Houghton, p. 157.

(the Spirit suggests both Law and the Church for Dipsychus) as means for advancement. Significantly, of these recommendations, the one most offensive to Dipsychus is that concerning sex, but an alternative is proposed. It is a politic marriage. "A virtuous attachment formed judiciously, / Would come, one sees, uncommonly propitiously." (III, 26-27) But this, too, fails to excite Dipsychus who, no less than Claude, aspires to heights of pure thought. "Oh, could I shoot my thought up to the sky, / A column of pure shape, for all to observe!" (IX, 139-140)

But Dipsychus, in some ways more like Philip than like Claude, sees his intellectual aspirations as incomplete if they do not, somehow, bear fruit in the form of some practical activity to which he is inspired by them. If he can consider making any concessions at all to "the world" it must be because the Spirit will offer him such activity in return.

> But action--look to that well, mind me;
> See that some not unworthy work you find me;
> If man I be, then give the man expression.
> (VIII, 106-108)

Dipsychus would like to hold out for genuine religious faith, true love, and noble actions, but he discusses, at length, in the ninth scene, the difficulty of maintaining the hope that he will really experience any of these. The ability to believe, in an age when the sea of faith is not at the full, is speedily if reluctantly dismissed when Dipsychus asks himself

> . . . if indeed it be in vain
> To expect to find in this more modern time
> That which the old world styled, in old-world phrase,
> Walking with God. It seems his newer will
> We should not think of him at all, but trudge it,
> And of the world he has assigned us make
> What best we can." (IX, 8-14)

Concerning love he is more detailed, obviously even more eager to maintain, despite contrary evidence, the hope that the union of hearts is more than an illusion.

> I scarce can think
> That these be-madding discords of the mind
> To pure melodious sequence could be changed,
> And all the vext conundrums of our life
> Prove to all time bucolically solved
> By a new Adam and a second Eve
> Set in a garden which no serpent seeks.
> And yet I hold heart can beat true to heart:
> And to hew down the tree which bears this fruit,
> To do a thing which cuts me off from hope,
> To falsify the movement of love's mind,
> To seat some alien trifler on the throne
> A queen may come to claim--that were ill done.
> (IX, 14-26)

These lines, and those which immediately follow (wherein Dipsychus defines love as " . . . the large repose / Restorative . . ."), deal more directly with love and marriage not only as a specific commitment problem, but as symbolic of the whole commitment process, than do any others in the poem. The images so frequently attendant upon the marriage metaphor in the Bothie and in the Amours, Eden and the living tree whose fruitfulness is subject to destruction, are both present. And we are, as it were, "brought up to date" on the development of the metaphor thus far in the long poems. Could one, like Philip, find himself in a serpentless garden, achieving so perfect a personal commitment that his Eve becomes a Rachel, he would have discovered the

point d'appui from which he could begin the solution of the other "vext conundrums of our life." Having learned to believe in someone, he would have established the basis for vivifying belief which makes work meaningful and commitment to a cause possible. Dipsychus feels in his heart that such a relationship can exist, but has observed, like Claude, the appalling unlikelihood of its ever being entered into.

> But love, the large repose
> Restorative, not to mere outside needs
> Skin-deep, but throughly to the total man,
> Exists, I will believe, but so, so rare,
> So doubtful, so exceptional, hard to guess;
> When guessed, so often counterfeit; in brief,
> A thing not possibly to be conceived
> An item in the reckonings of the wise.
> (XX, 30-37)

And the old Claudian fear of the factitious vitiates the impulse toward commitment.

It is worthy of note that the lines concerning the queen and her throne are equally applicable to either of the temptations, relating to love, which the Spirit offers to Dipsychus: sexual license and a marriage of expedience. In either case some aspect of the total marital commitment, amorous delight or domestic sanctity, are suggested as substitutes for "the real thing." In love, as in all other things, Dipsychus is tempted to settle for half. Philip was able to avoid this; Claude was so fearful of it that he got nothing; Dipsychus is so anxious for vital involvement (even at a cost) that he is willing to consider, at least, the possibility of meeting the world of the factitious on its own terms.

When Dipsychus comes to consider action he is "staggered." A dilemma implied in Amours de Voyage is stated explicitly here. Withdrawal

from the world might render him incapable of effective action when the call of truth came; absorption in trivial activity might deafen him to the call.

> Oh, in this narrow interspace, this moment,
> This list and selvage of a glorious time,
> To despair of the great and sell to the mean!
> O thou of little faith, what has thou done?
> Yet if the occasion coming should find <u>us</u>
> Undexterous, incapable?
> Oh what and if
> E'en now by lingering here I let them slip,
> Like an unpracticed spyer through a glass,
> Still pointing to the blank, too high! And yet,
> In dead details to smother vital ends
> Which should give life to them; in the deft trick
> Of prentice-handling to forget great art,
> To base mechanical adroitness yield
> The Inspiration and the Hope, a slave!
> Oh, and to blast that Innocence which, though
> Here it may seem a dull unopening bud,
> May yet bloom freely in celestial clime!
> Were it not better done, then, to keep off
> And see, not share, the strife; stand out the waltz
> Which fools whirl dizzy in? (X, 60-65, 70-84)

Dipsychus' position seems an impossible one, but his feeling grows, throughout the poem, that he might win out, yet, if he could make a compromise with reservations, keeping a foot in each of two worlds, doing the world's work but listening for the call of truth. Certainly he cannot refrain from action. Inactivity will weaken rather than strengthen his ability to resist the factitious. There is an echo of Claude's fear, that he may, in his lonely old age, succumb to a pragmatic belief, in the Spirit's suggestion that

> . . . almost every one when age,
> Disease, or sorrows strike him,
> Inclines to think there is a God,
> Or something very like him (V, 181-185)

And a failure to accept love that has some vestige of beauty or dignity about it may eventually result in a final, desperate, sordid capitulation to lust, wherein he will "Sink ere the end, most like the hapless prey / of some chance chambermaid, more sly than fair," (X, 134-135) and suffer greater degradation than would result from compromise.

But if inaction is unthinkable, what is there to provoke action? It might be Claude who cries out

> Oh, oh these qualms,
> And of these calls! And, oh! this woman's heart,
> Fain to be forced, incredulous of choice,
> And waiting a necessity for God.
> Yet I could think, indeed, the perfect call
> Should force the perfect answer." (X, 51-56)

But the call does not come and Necessity is seen more and more not as Divine imperative but as the pressure of the world, to compromise.

> This stern Necessity of things
> On every side our being rings;
> Our sallying eager actions fall
> Vainly against the iron wall.
> Where once the finger points the way,
> The wise think only to obey;
> Take life as she has ordered it,
> And come what may of it, submit,
> Submit, submit! (X, 87-95)

Dipsychus feels that, in his wavering, he is betraying both (or all) the aspects of his nature. "To thine own self be true, the wise man says. / Are then my fears myself? O double self! / And I untrue to both." (X, 62-64)

The old question of juxtaposition and affinity is raised again, with no suggestion that it can be resolved. "Chance and resolve, / Like two loose comets wandering wide in space, / Crossing each others

orbits time on time, / Meet never." (XI, 9-12) Dipsychus submits. He will accept the world as he finds it. The image is that of marriage, but it is an inversion of all that the marriage metaphor has meant before. "O man, behold thy wife, th' hard naked world; / Adam, accept thy Eve." (XII, 69-70) This is the nadir of despair in Clough's long poems.

And yet Dipsychus is holding something back. Knowledge which Claude so praises, the cognitive faculty, cannot be compromised. "I can but render of my will, / And behind it somewhat remaineth still." (XIII, 26-27) Dipsychus will maintain an underground fight against the world, even as he works in it. The Maria Magno tales will deal with the potentialities for success of such an unwilling compromise.

While they do not touch upon the marriage metaphor, the prologue and epilogue to Dipsychus cannot be ignored, even in this discussion of what is, after all, only one of many themes in the poem. We find in them not only Clough's most engaging prose style, but a notable example of the characteristic Cloughian ambivalence.

A delightfully crusty uncle, presumably a bachelor, listens without enthusiasm as his poet nephew reads his latest work. The uncle has a mind akin to that of Samuel Johnson; he decries the pernicious influence of Dr. Arnold on the younger generation. The pragmatic wisdom of Dipsychus' "devil" he would find acceptable " . . . if only it hand't been for the way he said it, and that it was he who said it . . . ." His view of education is essentially practical, it is "Simply to make plain to the young understanding the laws of the life they will have to enter." Too much tenderness of conscience he sees as a positive liability.

The nephew, on the other hand, favors the moral earnestness so characteristic of mid-nineteenth century education, though he is

cognizant of its occasional excesses. And here we begin to perceive the balance of tensions. The nephew regards a period of preoccupation with moral questions merely as a good thing " . . . to have passed through . . . " and the uncle is reminded that both men show a distaste for "idleness and listlessness," for "boorishness and vulgar tyranny," and for "brutish manners," qualities more in evidence since the older man's youth and against which the Arnoldian morality is a reaction. The views of the two are actually complementary, though they achieve no real meeting of minds except to the extent that the nephew concedes the validity of some of the uncle's claims. His poem, he observes, is about " . . . the conflict between the tender conscience and the world . . . ." The ambivalence of values which characterizes their discussion of the work is, indeed, the subject of the work itself. Dipsychus gropes, as Claude has groped, for a middle ground between Philistinism and what Clough, in Recent English Poetry, calls " . . . an over-educated weakness of purpose . . . ."

Yet a further note of ambivalence is achieved in the uncle's observations on the proper function of the poet. The nephew, it is contended, jeopardizes his poetic role by too much theorizing. His tendency to intellectualize could make a good poem bad and a bad poem worse. It is an oblique statement of the problem which E. D. H. Johnson has delineated: the difficulty of all the Victorians in trying to play the role of the social philospher without tainting their poetic gifts. The nephew, then, has himself been subject, in presenting the dilemma of Dipsychus, to a Dypsychian experience.

The discussion of Dipsychus is rendered even more complex by the fragment entitled "Dipsychus Continued." In it, an older Dipsychus, now

a respected magistrate, is confronted by a woman with whom he lost his innocence thirty years before. Apparently he is damned, but the implications of the brief dramatic episode as they relate to an interpretation of Dipsychus proper, have always been perplexing to critics.[6] But if Dipsychus is, indeed, damned for having yielded to the impulse toward moral compromise which he felt in the longer poem, it is certainly significant that the imagery used in "Dipsychus Continued" is sexual. Such a damnation can be seen as an unholy alliance with Eve the temptress rather than a true marriage to the Eve who is also one's Rachel.

[6] Houghton, p. 157.

CHAPTER V

As Adam and Eve is the prologue, so Mari Magno is the epilogue to the canon of Clough's long poems. Separated from Dipsychus by a decade which saw Clough's long postponed marriage but little poetic activity, it has always received "mixed reviews."[1] Like Adam and Eve it suffers from stylistic weaknesses, which vary from triteness to downright awkwardness of language. But these can perhaps be excused in a dying man trying, sometimes very successfully, to recover his long dormant creative powers. What would, if valid, be a much more serious charge is that Clough, having "submitted" to a conventional marriage and a mediocre occupation, reversed himself in the Mari Magno stories, with their frequent happy endings and their occasional touches of sentimentality; that he became the spokesman for the "orthodox" view of marriage as an idyllic escape from the realities of the world, as presented in the popular fiction of the day. While a superficial reading of the stories might seem to justify such a verdict, and external evidence to support it, a careful examination of the whole work shows it to be a fitting, if slightly flawed, concluding statement in the sequence of Clough's long works.

To be sure Mari Magno is concerned with the living of life rather than with theorizing about it. Michael Timko, who lays great stress on Clough's soundness of mind and essential practicality, notes

[1] Walter Houghton, The Poetry of Clough: An Essay in Revaluation (New Haven, 1963), p. 211.

its deep concern with "the practical problems connected with love and marriage."[2] But the stories are concerned with life as it is _really_ lived and if the characters enjoy a measure of happiness it is because some of the problems have been solved. Houghton has commented that ". . . on second scrutiny the happy endings are seen to be so accidental as to suggest the one-in-a-million, and they scarcely obliterate the previous suffering."[3] Actually one worries little about the probability of the stories. The sense of real pathos which they create, a sense of man's capacity for a positive response to suffering, keeps the generally "satisfactory" disposition of affairs at the conclusions of the stories from taxing the reader's credence.

With the exception of "My Tale" in which the narrator, a young poet, has almost nothing to say about the subject, these tales, told "on the great sea," are all concerned, specifically, with marriage. Each ends on a positive note: that is, their characters, while seldom ecstatically happy, are somehow _making_ the best of what is obviously not the best of all possible worlds. What is particularly striking is that four of the seven stories (the longest: the two tales apiece told by the Lawyer and the Clergyman) cover periods of time longer than those covered by the action in the _Bothie_, the _Amours_, or that in _Dipsychus_, which, if one can ignore "Dipsychus Continued" can be compressed into a moment of decision. The time which elapses in each of these stories is a period of growth, actual, symbolic, or both. The growth is never painless, yet always profitable. The marriage metaphor,

[2] Michael Timko, _Innocent Victorian: The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough_ (Athens, Ohio, 1966), pp. 54-55.

[3] Houghton, _Poetry of Clough_, p. 223.

no longer limited to a point in time, is now expanded to include a process of maturation wherein commitments are taken up belatedly, betrayed but reaffirmed, or simply recognized too late as things which might have been but whose absence, like Frost's choice of roads, "has made all the difference." The two shortest tales (the Mate's and the American's) deal with juxtaposition and suggest that even chance can produce happiness, at least among people of good will.

In three of the stories the problems lie either in a misplaced idealism or in a social ineptitude reminiscent of Claude's. The young man in "The Lawyer's First Tale" could have loved his third cousin Emily. But their childhood affection withers when, as a student, he embarrasses rather than impresses Emily, her sisters, and her conservative vicar father with the Claudian "cleverness" he has acquired through his studies. The "busy argufying brain / Of the prize schoolboy" (III, 37-38) has little in common with Emily's more intuitive approach to life.

> She had not studied, had not read,
> Seemed to have little in her head,
> Yet of herself the right and true,
> As of her own experience knew." (II, 46-49)

When as adults, they meet again with Emily a wife and then a mother, they achieve a partial recognition of what they were too immature to perceive in each other before. But each is still wary of the other's view of life. If Emily has, as he thinks, sought happiness in a compromise with life, his ambition to be a university don seems to her an escape from life. The resumption of their acquaintanceship awakens wistful feelings in each, a measure of salutary introspection, and no more.

Edmund and Emma, in "The Clergyman's First Tale" are a lucky Claude and Mary. Edmund aspires to pure truth, like Claude desires certitude, and says: "Would I could wish my wishes all to rest,/ And knew to wish the wish that were the best!" (50-51) He further believes that love should be its own inspiration:

> One love, one diety, one central sun.
> As he resistless brings the expanding day,
> So love, I held, on his victorious way. (98-100)

Claude's echoes are unmistakable here, his fear that Mary may not offer him the intellectual rapport he would desire in marriage, coexisting with the fear that he is, indeed, demanding too much.

> How charming to be with her! Yet indeed
> After a while I find a blank succeed;
> After a while she little has to say,
> I'm silent too, although I wish to stay;
> What would it be all day, day after day?
> Ah! but I ask, I do not doubt, too much;
> I think of love as if it should be such
> As to fulfil and occupy in whole
> The nought-else-seeking, nought-essaying soul.
> Therefore it is my mind with doubts I urge,
> Hence are these fears and shiverings on the verge;
> By books, not nature, thus have we been schooled,
> By poetry and novels been befooled;
> Wiser tradition says, the affections' claim
> Will be supplied, the rest will be the same.
> I think too much of love, 'tis true: I know
> It is not all, was ne'er intended so;
> Yet such a change, so entire, I feel, 'twould be,
> So potent, so omnipotent with me,
> My former self I never should recall,--
> Indeed I think it must be all in all. (131-151)

The fluctuations of opinion apparent in the above passage increase rapidly in magnitude and Edmund is soon saying: "I do not love, I want, I try to love! / This is not love, but lack of love instead!" (164-165) At which point Edmund goes out into the world to learn about life and

love from nature rather than from books.

And how much Emma sounds like the patient and perceptive Mary Trevellyn:

> Easy it were with such a mind to play
> And foolish not to do so, some would say;
> One almost smiles to look and see the way:
> But come what will, I will not play a part,
> Indeed I dare not condescend to art
> (174-178)

Like Mary, Emma refuses to apply even the most subtle of pressures upon her lover, and would accept him as he is.

> Easy 'twere not. perhaps, with him to live.
> He looks for more than anyone can give:
> So dulled at times and disappointed; still
> Expecting what depends not of my will:
> My inspiration comes not at my call,
> Seek me as I am, if seek you do at all
> (184-189)

When Edmund, after much travail, rediscovers Emma by a happy accident, he is prepared to seek her as she is. His idealism is not lost, but transformed by a new vision:

> Not to provide,--I scorn it, I disdain,--
> A kind, soft pillow for a wearying pain,
> Fatigues and cares to lighten, to relieve;
> But love is fellow-service, I believe.
>
> No, truly not, it was not to obtain,
> Though that perchance were happiness, were gain,
> A tender breast to fall upon and weep,
> A heart, the secrets of my heart to keep;
> To share my hopes, and in my griefs to grieve;
> Yet love is fellow-service, I believe.
>
> Yet in the eye of life's all-seeing sun
> We shall behold a something we have done,
> Shall of the work together we have wrought,
> Beyond our aspiration and our thought,
> Some not unworthy issue yet receive;
> For love is fellow-service I believe.
> (265-282)

This is in the spirit of Philip, whose Elspie told him simply, "We will do work together," and of Clough himself, who once wrote his fiancee:

> . . . What was the true apple? do you know? I believe its true name was 'Love is everything.' Women will believe so, and try and make men act as if they believed so, and straightway, behold, the Fall, and Paradise at an end etc., etc.
>
> Love is not everything, Blanche: don't believe it, nor try to make me pretend to believe it. 'Service' is everything. Let us be fellow-servants. There is no joy nor happiness, nor way nor name by which men may be saved but this . . . .[4]

Edward, in "The Clergyman's Second Tale" is unfaithful to his beloved wife Jane, during a period of forced separation. Confessing his sin, he refuses to return to her, because unworthy, though her happiness, and that of his family are at stake. The marital commitment is twofold: it involves the rule of fidelity and the union of hearts. Edward has violated both, but discovers in his penitential mood that he cannot do justice to both. He can render a sterile penitence to abstract truth or return in an attempt to fulfill anew his personal commitment to his forgiving wife. Wisely, he chooses the latter course.

Somewhat different is "The Lawyer's Second Tale" in which a commitment, honored in spirit though not in fact, is central to the lives of the parties involved. A sort of Bothie-where-everything-goes-wrong, the story has its hero, a young scholar vacationing in Scotland, leave his highland lass with child, only to return and find her embarked for Australia with her aunt and uncle. Years later, when he is happily married to a noblewoman, his former love returns to England. Though both are deeply moved the patterns of their lives remain unchanged: Lady Mary, who with supreme graciousness and understanding

[4] Frederick L. Mulhauser, ed., The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough, (Oxford, 1957), p. 300.

accepts the situation, has given him the genuineness he esteemed in his highland love, while Robert, the girl's husband, who has loved both her and her ellegitimate son, has shown himself capable of the gentility she revered in her high-born lover.

"The American's Tale" and "The Mate's Story," both merely anecdotal, are concerned with rather bizarre chance meetings which eventuate in marriage. The former, with all the potentialities of a farce, involves a couple who, through a confusion of hotel rooms, unwittingly share a bed for the night. Without becoming either ribald or mawkish, Clough allows the two innocent young people to meet again, under more conventional circumstances, and fall in love. In the latter, a kindly young sea captain saves a stranded French governess from "a life of shame" by a timely, but unexpected, proposal of marriage. In both stories juxtaposition, which has created the possibility of moral ugliness, is turned into something rather charming by the curious mixture of refined sensibilities and a salutary sense of humor which is possessed by the characters involved.

Far from being sentimental, Mari Magno exhibits a rather stern ordering of values. Without their moral idealism, the six tales just summarized would simply be the stories of one adulterer, one seducer, and two intellectual prigs, along with two rather coarse, or at any rate pointless, anecdotes. On the other hand, without the sense of mundane practicality shown by characters in all the stories, they and those associated with them would have endured greater suffering than they did, ranging from humiliation to tragic isolation and unintentional cruelty. The marital commitment is manifest in these stories as a recognition and gradual adjustment of theoretical and mundane values which, by its

very imperfection and incompleteness, reveals itself as something living, erring, but always at least potentially self-corrective.

The work resembles the Bothie in its optimism, but "optimism" here is a rather misleading term, meaning little more than a belief that life is possible. In two cases, the couples succeed in building only the abutments of the great bridge in Elspie's dream, but they (and the world) are slightly better, because wiser, for it.

As Dipsychus echoes the language of earlier poems, Mari Magno echoes the plots, themes, and even the philosophical problems which they pose. Will and intellect again seek resolution, but they are now seen to meet in a mark which is more readily discernible than a dimensionless point, and if it is still difficult to hit the bull's eye, few people miss the target completely. Knowledge, given priority by Claude at the conclusion of Amours de Voyage, is sought by the characters, unintentionally sometimes, as they go through the maturation process, and they often find that faith and love do "come with the chances." "Necessity," sought by Claude as Divine imperative and acknowledged by Dipsychus as the crushing weight of worldly usage, becomes, in Mari Magno, simply the stage: a set of limitations within which the players exercise some powers of self determination, suggesting that life, like politics, is "the art of the possible." Juxtaposition, too, is seen as what it has always been, even though Claude did not realize it. It is potentiality for commitment. It may or may not be gravely limited by the absence of "affinity."

The inappropriateness of the tendency of critics to employ the terms "optimistic" and "pessimistic" in reference to Mari Magno can be seen if we examine carefully the charge that the work is too optimistic.

Since this charge necessarily involves the assertion that happy endings result from the abandonment of the quest for truth in favor of the pursuit of more pragmatic values (in short, a triumph of the Spirit of Dipsychus) this is a pessimistic view of the poem and of the conclusion of Clough's career! It is more fruitful to think in terms of tough-mindedness and tender-mindedness, the latter of which Clough is seldom guilty. Mari Magno is never in serious violation of the rather stern formula which governs the conceptual content of all Clough's works. It would run something like this. "Meaningful life is impossible without vital commitment. Total commitment involves a harmonious relationship between will and intellect, between the practical and the theoretical. Since these two are reconciled only with difficulty, and never perfectly, commitment is never easily achieved and often involves a measure of compromise. All this takes place under perilous conditions, in a world of chance and accident which, conditions permitting, can be rendered tolerable by moral and intellectual aspiration."

* * * * * *

The metaphor of marriage-as-commitment binds together all of Clough's long poems, and does so in adherence with the formula above. Marriage is present, of course, as a theme, but it also lends itself perfectly to the representation of commitment of all kinds. Marriage involves both a spiritual union and a practical commitment to "fellow-service." It thus necessitates, literally and metaphorically, the harmonization of the theoretical and the practical. It is never perfect, as no commitment is, and the warning is sounded, as early as the Bothie, that every man finds a Leah in his Rachael. The marital

commitment can go by default (like all commitments) when one demands to enter it with greater assurance of success than this world ever allows, as is the case with Claude, or it can become, through an excess of compromise, a form without substance, which is the pervading danger to marital (and other) commitments in Dipsychus.

Seen in terms of the marriage metaphor, Clough's long poems constitute a well-unified totality, both as to concepts and images. Though they undoubtedly reflect an increasingly mature view of the problem of commitment, the consistent use of the metaphor strongly suggests that there was less change in Clough's overall view than is often assumed. The theme of marital commitment is stated in Adam and Eve, presented in a rather "absolute" form in The Bothie of Tober na Vuolich, tested under conditions of internal and external stress in Amours de Voyage and in Dipsychus, and finally depicted as a necessary if not always triumphant factor in existential living, in Mari Magno. Embracing but going beyond this theme is the metaphor of marriage which extends the implications of the poems into the social, political and religious aspects of human commitment, rather than limiting them merely to the domestic.

Theme and form are complementary in the poems and in each one formal elements hold the personal and social needs of the characters in a different kind of balance. In the Bothie, the narrative pattern moves toward a union of the two lovers which is symbolic of the sense of unity which underlies the entire work: unity between classes of men, unity of the contemplative and the active, even unity between social and natural forces as suggested by the poem's singularly rich metaphors. In the Amours, the epistolary form itself underscores a dearth of fruitful

contact between the characters. Conflicting pressures are conceptualized but seldom responded to. The poem is analytic rather than synthetic, and antitheses which are brilliantly stated are never resolved. There is no marriage, there is no reconciliation, between Claude and his beloved or between the tensions Claude feels within himself. The marriage metaphor, as such, becomes peripheral in Dipsychus, because the tensions are wholly internalized and an object for marital commitment exists only in theory. The poem is really concerned with a divorce within man himself and the dialogues between halves of what should be an entity never arrive at a genuine rapprochement. The episodic character of Mari Magno finally reveals no grand formula for commitment, yet shows in several instances that "love is fellow service" and that the marital commitment (a "type" of all commitments) can be achieved through a never perfect balance-in-tension of the claims of heart and intellect, of soul and society.

In seeking a key to the meaning of Clough's long poems, we might well follow the advice of Hobbes, in the Bothie, when he admonishes Philip to concern himself with "Which things are an allegory." Clough is not merely preoccupied with marriage as subject matter, but employed it with consummate effectiveness as the "allegory" of the problem he perceived most keenly in the life of his own century: commitment.

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