EDUCATED SPEECH: VICTORIAN PHILOLOGY AND THE LITERARY LANGUAGES OF MATTHEW ARNOLD AND ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

_Educated Speech: Victorian Philology and the Literary Languages of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough_ argues that Matthew Arnold’s and Arthur Hugh Clough’s poetry and its political and social resonances can be fruitfully illuminated by focusing on the extended encounter between the language of their poems and Victorian philology—the nineteenth-century discourse that brought together issues of language, history, class, culture, and nationalism.

This dissertation explores the ways that Clough’s and Arnold’s understanding of their medium was shaped by a sustained engagement with this complex and heterogeneous cluster of linguistic ideas including the persistence of eighteenth-century concepts of language, Romantic philology, and the emergence of historicist/comparativist orientations to language that all co-exist during the Victorian period. I argue that Arnold’s and Clough’s evolving understanding of language emerges from the ways in which Victorian philological insights are mediated through the Victorian educational establishment, and subsequently has such a mediated understanding is translated into specific and significant aesthetic features in their poetry such as the use of slang or the deployment of the simile. Further, because both Clough and Arnold subscribed to the central creed of Victorian philology—that language indexed cultural health—, the
grounding of such aesthetic and formal qualities of the poems in this discourse allows us to recover or foreground additional aspects of the political and cultural resonances of Arnold’s and Clough’s poetry. Finally, by highlighting the differences in their responses to Victorian philology, *Educated Speech* demonstrates that the combined oeuvres of the two poets constitute an extended and ultimately disconnected dialogue about the nature and function of language that stretches over four decades.
Dedicated to Marie
ἀγάπη
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“I merely mean,” said Will in an offhand way, “that the Germans have taken the lead in historical inquiries, and they laugh at results which are got by groping about the woods with a pocket-compass while they have made good roads.”

Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Are Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold two such amateur wanderers in the woods of philological error as Will Ladislaw describes? At some point between 1852 and 1853, Matthew Arnold, former fellow of Oriel College and recently appointed H.M. Inspector of Schools, found some spare moments in his busy schedule to compose a poem that was later given the title “Philomela.” The poem is a competent retelling of the popular Greek and Roman myth. The most memorable aspects of that myth are, of course, when Tereus, after raping Philomela, attempts to silence her by cutting out her tongue and later when Philomela, turned into a nightingale in order to escape Tereus’s wrath, sings mournfully of the fate that has befallen both her and her sister Procne. The ideas of silence and transformed song that are central to the Philomela story undoubtedly resonated with Arnold who at this period was in the midst of a serious crisis with regard to language. The poem, however, is noteworthy not just for what it says but for where its original draft was transcribed. The untitled first draft of the poem was composed on the flyleaf of Arnold’s copy of R.G. Latham’s *English Grammar* (1848). Latham’s name has
been eclipsed by those such as Richard Trench and F.D. Maurice, but he was a well-known and popular Victorian philologist, rising to the professorship of English Language and Literature at University College, London in 1839 (a position, coincidentally, that would be later held by Arnold’s friend and fellow poet, Arthur Hugh Clough). Latham’s contributions to Victorian philology included his well-known *English Language* (1841) and *An Elementary English Grammar for the Use of Schools* (1843). As both Hans Aarsleff and Richard Turley have pointed out, these texts and others were largely responsible for transmitting, promoting and popularizing the insights of the Continental philology of Rask, Grimm, Bopp and others to an educated English reading audience in the 1830s and 1840s.¹ I begin with this detail of textual provenance because the concrete image of a poet’s words physically situated in the midst of a philological text is a fitting emblem of the concerns of this study, which will explore the relationship between the language of Matthew Arnold’s and Arthur Hugh Clough’s poetry and the discourse of Victorian philology.

Despite the frequent appearance of the adjective “linguistic” in the following pages, this examination of the language of Arthur Hugh Clough’s and Matthew Arnold’s poetry is *not* a study in linguistics. There will, therefore, not be any discussion of topics from articulatoratory phonetics to zero affixes. Rather, this is a study of the evolving sets of ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and convictions about language that Clough and Arnold held throughout their poetic careers. That many of these same ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and convictions seem, from our post-Saussurean perspective, to be erroneous, inconsistent, and simplistic is not the point. What is important is that Clough and Arnold sincerely believed in these ideas to the extent that they were carried, adopted and translated, often
indirectly, into the poems that they composed. As Hans Aarsleff usefully reminds us, we must eschew the temptations of a retrospective teleological framework when we attempt to reconstruct the philological landscape of the nineteenth century where “Error is as influential as truth and a pseudo-science or theory may hold as much sway over what eventually is accepted as truth by later ages” (6). Further, Maurice Olender has noted the co-existence of rational and scientific with irrational and mythical with regard to the study of language in the nineteenth century (xvi). Given the evidence of the occasional misplaced faith in a faulty etymology or the idealistic belief in a kind of linguistic transparency, such comments seem particularly appropriate to the language of Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold. At various points in their respective careers they can be found both wandering in the woods as well as taking the well-made roads that Will Ladislaw mentions in the epigraph heading this introduction.

In many ways, this study was initiated by a cluster of related questions that arose from a reading of Clough’s and Arnold’s poetry. Among the most persistent were: Given that both poets had proceeded through Dr. Arnold’s Rugby School and Balliol and Oriel Colleges, how had they come to write such very different poetry employing such very different languages? Even given individual intellectual proclivities, how had these two products of the Public School and Oxbridge establishment produced poems with subjects and languages as wildly different as *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* and *Sohrab and Rustum*? Was there a linguistic dimension to the complicated and often ambivalent relationship between Arnold and Clough? More local questions also became pressing: why does the use of a terminal extended simile suddenly emerge and suddenly disappear from Arnold’s poetry? What is the significance of Clough’s ironic allusions to the King
James Bible in some of his major poems? Ultimately, I wondered how might we situate some of the more noteworthy aesthetic features of Clough’s and Arnold’s poetry more specifically in the Victorian period, particularly since Clough is often seen as a prototypical modern poet and Arnold is regarded as an anachronistic curiosity, often writing placid, classical verse in a multitudinous age. How might such grounding allow for a fuller understanding of the two poets’s oeuvres and the similarities and differences between them? The general argument of this study, pursued in more specific detail over the succeeding four chapters, is that the complex, multivalent discourse of Victorian philology informs, in ways previously unacknowledged, the language of Clough’s and Arnold’s poetry and in so doing illuminates that poetry in new and interesting ways.

I have entitled this study *Educated Speech: Victorian Philology and the Literary Languages of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough* and it can be asserted that every element of such a title is in need of further elucidation. Beginning with “Educated Speech,” it is one of the contentions of this study that more so than any other poets from the nineteenth century, Clough and Arnold and the language of their poetry are to a large extent products of the Victorian educational establishment. No two Victorian poets are more associated with Victorian education than Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough. Arnold was, of course, the eldest son of the period’s most famous headmaster, Dr. Thomas Arnold of the Rugby School, while Clough, along with Arthur Stanley, was the acknowledged star pupil and model schoolboy of Thomas Arnold’s great public school experiment. From Rugby, Clough and then Arnold, in 1837 and 1841 respectively, followed the traditional path to Balliol College where they disappointed family and friends with second class degrees which were only partially redeemed by election to Oriel
Fellowships. The years that both poets spent at Oxford, which coincided with the ascendancy, zenith and decline of the Tractarian Movement, were freely acknowledged later in life by both Clough and Arnold as crucial to their intellectual and artistic development. Arnold would memorialize his experience with Clough and the Oxford environs in his two major poems “The Scholar Gypsy” and “Thyrsis,” the latter of which contains Arnold’s eulogistic apostrophe to the city and the university “sweet city with her dreaming spires.” Clough’s experiences at Oxford were decidedly less pleasant at the time, or in retrospect, and the period witnessed Clough’s religious crisis which culminated in the resignation of his Oriel fellowship in the autumn of 1848.

If the 1830s and 1840s were largely spent as students, Clough and Arnold spent the 1850s (and beyond in Arnold’s case) as educators and bureaucrats. The first half of their careers were spent in the slowly reforming but still somewhat moribund Public School-Oxbridge establishment, the second half were spent in the midst of the frequently inefficient, often ineffective, but decidedly more progressive and democratic expansion of education in England during the Victorian period. Arnold, it is well known, spent over thirty years as an inspector of dissenting schools in and around London and the Midlands. He also undertook several lengthy European missions to inspect teaching methods and institutions on the Continent and produced a substantial body of writing on education. His daily experiences in the schoolrooms of the country also led to his vehement public opposition (to the detriment of his career advancement) to Robert Lowe’s Revised Code, a Victorian version of the “No Child Left Behind” initiative that tied school funding to test results. Arnold also maintained ties with Oxford, serving two terms as Professor of Poetry and making his own small contribution to Oxford reform by choosing to be the
first to lecture in English rather than Latin. Clough’s post-Oxford involvement in education was equally varied. He served as Principal of University Hall and Professor of English Language and Literature at University College from 1849-1852, but found the institution’s claims to religious tolerance a mere façade that masked just a different form of the unyielding orthodoxy that had driven him from Oxford. After unsuccessfully seeking employment in Australia, Clough traveled to New England with the hopes of establishing a school in America and spent much of his time there tutoring. Clough’s time in the United States was brief and within the year he returned to England. The efforts of Carlyle and Lady Ashburton allowed Clough the financial stability to marry by providing him with a position at the Education Office assessing the reports of school inspectors such as those submitted by his friend Matthew Arnold. It is true that both Clough and Arnold are products of the conservative traditions of the English public school and university system, but they spend much of their careers in the decades-long struggle to gradually extend education to the masses and to non-Anglicans. The same conservative-progressive tension is evident in the educated speech of their poems.

These somewhat parallel journeys through the institutional and bureaucratic landscape of Victorian education, however, are important in the context of this study in a specific sense. It was often through the Victorian education establishment that the ideas, theories, orientations and paradigms of language and language study were communicated to both Clough and Arnold. For example, the insights of German Romantic writers on language or the ideas of Wordsworth and Coleridge, which as Linda Dowling has demonstrated, were so important to the Victorian understanding of language, were communicated or mediated to the two poets through the ethos of Thomas Arnold’s Rugby
or Tractarian Oxford. While books such as those by Richard Trench, Maurice’s *The Friendship of Books* and Ruskin’s “Of King’s Treasuries” from *Sesame and Lilies* were decisive in disseminating ideas about language to a general educated readership, there were other venues, such as the schools and universities by which linguistic insights could be and were communicated. Unlike poets such as Tennyson or Hardy who appear to have been avid readers of philological texts, Clough and Arnold are often but not always initially introduced to this material through precisely such an institutional intermediary, so that when it reaches them it has already been interpreted and adapted to some degree.

What exactly is encompassed by the term “Victorian philology” that Clough and Arnold were approaching in this mediated way, specifically since the term will be invoked frequently throughout this study? The term “philology” despite its etymology conjures up little affection among modern readers. It is often associated with a dry antiquarianism of the kind that Cowper pithily expresses in “Retirement”:

> Philologists, who chase  
> A panting syllable through time and space,  
> Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,  
> To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's ark.  

(691-94)

Affixing the adjective “Victorian” tends to exacerbate the linkage of philology with scholastic dreariness. However, in actual fact, Victorian philology is a tremendously vital and vibrant nineteenth-century discourse that is imbricated with larger questions concerning history, class, national identity and culture. For the purposes of this study I am using an expanded sense of “philology” as a kind of umbrella term that encompasses the spectrum and diversity of nineteenth-century ideas, theories, and paradigms of language and language study, particularly since the Victorian period witnesses the co-
existence of multiple and often contradictory approaches to language. The most immediate and well-known aspect of Victorian philology is the historical and comparative approach (or “new philology” as it was called) that was imported to England from the Continent. This approach to language became well-known and wide-spread by the 1850s and 1860s through the efforts of figures such as Richard Trench whose bestsellers *The Study of Words* (1851) and *English Past and Present* (1855) leavened the possibilities of a historical study of words into the general public’s consciousness and helped prepare the field for the great monument of Victorian philology, *The Oxford English Dictionary*. The insights of the new philology, however, were known to educated readers, including Clough and Arnold, as they were gradually and somewhat haphazardly introduced over the preceding two decades.

The historical and comparative orientations of the new philology emerged from the “Romantic philology” of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As Linda Dowling has shown, writers such as Michaelis, Herder, Humboldt, and, in England, Coleridge, forwarded the idea, later accepted almost dogmatically by the majority of Victorians, that a language was the expression of the spirit of a people. In relocating the religiously orthodox view of language as logos, Dowling argues, these Romantic philologists made possible the close identification forged later in the century between language and culture, and more specifically linguistic health and cultural health. While the new philology had emerged from the earlier, lingering Romantic philology, the rigorousness of its historical and comparative methodologies laid the foundations of what would become modern, synchronic linguistics. Even at the height of the new philology’s
popularity in England, ideas about the autonomous operations of language that would be popularized by Neogrammarians such as Henry Sweet and W.D. Whitney were already intuited by more perceptive students of language.

Another layer of the palimpsestical discourse of Victorian philology was the dogged persistence (in part abetted by their entrenchment in the Victorian school and university system) of eighteenth-century empiricist views on language, popularized by Locke and others who viewed language study as a subsidiary branch of epistemology. Finally, the ongoing presence of religious ideas about language as a divine gift that was confused and diffused at Babel continued to exert an influence. Indeed, Cardinal Wiseman, as Hans Aarsleff points out, actually adopted the historical and comparative techniques of the new philology to argue for the unimpeachable veracity of the eleventh chapter of Genesis. It is in the midst of this vibrant, multitudinous environment of overlapping, at times complementary and at times contradictory paradigms of language and language study that we should situate Clough’s and Arnold’s language. Indeed, it is the very multitudinousness of Victorian philology that at least partially explains, I think, the remarkable idiomatic individuality and variety among the Victorian poets.

Yet another component, while perhaps somewhat obvious but worth commenting on and clarifying, is the term “literary languages.” One of the broader concerns of the following chapters is the relationship between the philological and the aesthetic. Just as the institutions and figures of Victorian education often play a large role in mediating for Clough and Arnold the ideas and approaches to language encompassed by Victorian philology, those mediated philological ideas are themselves subject to pressure and transformation in another direction as, in Clough’s and Arnold’s hands, they reappear as
aesthetic features in their respective poems. In the following chapters I am interested in exploring this two-stage movement. First, how did the institutions and figures of Victorian education and Clough’s and Arnold’s place in those institutions and relations with those figures mediate the transmission of linguistic ideas to the two poets? And second, and perhaps even more importantly, how were those mediated ideas themselves adopted, transformed, even transmuted in order to appear as aesthetic aspects of Clough’s and Arnold’s poetry? It is the story of the “fraught transmission of ideas” (Turley xvi) through institutions and interpreters to the individual minds of the two poets and subsequently into the act of poetic composition—an act that only appears to be free for the exercise of individual genius and an escape from the contingencies of history—that this study hopes to trace, if only in outline. For example, one of the contentions of the third chapter of this study is that Arnold did not simply transplant his understanding of Locke’s ambivalent attitude to figurative language into his own poems. Arnold’s approach to the simile is the culmination of an extended process that begins with Arnold’s exposure to Locke and proceeds through the poet’s struggle to accommodate Lockean, and other, insights into the language of his poetry and the resulting changes and adaptations that such a struggle both dictated and suggested. In a sense then, each chapter’s exploration of the indirect relationship between the philological and the aesthetic is engaged in exposing what Richard Turley has usefully termed “philological allusiveness” (xvi).

Finally, the last element of the title, “Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough” needs to be addressed. Clough and Arnold have been linked in literary history since the appearance of “Thyris.” The connection between the two was further solidified with the
publication of Arnold’s correspondence with Clough which provided readers with one half of a lively and, at times, heated debate about poetry, philosophy and politics.

Biographers seizing upon the epistolary record have construed the relationship between the two poets as one of youthful intimacy giving way to a more detached and estranged friendship as both men assumed the burdens and responsibilities of adulthood. Such an account is the standard narrative in biographies of both poets. And yet there is a sense that these accounts remain to some degree superficial and unsatisfying. We want to know more about this relationship in all of its complexity. One of the aims of this study is to add a greater sense of depth and detail to this relationship by exploring the divergence between the two poets in terms of language even though they emerge from virtually identical educational experiences. If the relationship is, as many critics claim, one of the most interesting and important of the nineteenth century, then a closer look at various aspects of it, including their respective views on the nature and potential of their medium seems warranted. I certainly do not wish to elevate the Arnold-Clough relationship to that of Wordsworth and Coleridge where there is active collaboration and evidence of an inter-poetic dialogue. Arnold and Clough commented only rarely in any direct way on each other’s poetry. But there is indeed an interest in juxtaposing their responses to their exposure to Victorian philology as it was meditated to them through the Victorian education establishment.

Prior to his friendship with Arnold, one of Clough’s closest friends at Balliol College was his mathematics tutor William George Ward. Increasingly uncomfortable
with Ward’s need for emotional intimacy yet also feeling guilty about his own abrupt withdrawal from Ward, Clough composed a valediction for this friendship in his poem “Qua Cursum Ventus”:

As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day
Are scarce long leagues apart descried;
When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side… (1-8)

This image of two ships departing from a home port but then each seemingly pursuing their own independent courses, only to arrive at the same final destination is, in many ways, emblematic of the parallel yet distinct linguistic quests that Clough and Arnold engage on and which are traced in the four chapters of this study.

The first chapter explores the beginnings of Clough’s and Arnold’s poetry and the language of that poetry in the context of Thomas Arnold’s Rugby school. Clough’s and Arnold’s ideas about language diverge almost immediately with Clough eagerly imbibing Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language. This approach to language in its inclusiveness and cautious progressive movement towards greater linguistic comprehensiveness parallels the ecumenical and inclusive spirit of denominational comprehension that is the hallmark of the Headmaster’s proposal for ecclesiastical reform in a rapidly transforming early Victorian England. Rugby’s Broad Church orientation to language finds poetic expression in the somewhat startling linguistic range of Clough’s Rugby juvenilia.
By way of contrast, Matthew Arnold, arriving at Rugby on the eve of Clough’s departure for Balliol and finding a changed Rugby ethos, turns not to the Broad Church orientation to language but, in an act of filial rebellion, to the High Church orientation to language communicated to him by the language of his godfather John Keble’s *The Christian Year* and a growing body of critical writing on poetry and aesthetics. In contrast with the Broad Church orientation to language, the High Church counterpart views language not with a quasi-democratic sense of inclusiveness and comprehension but rather as something exclusive and almost sacramental in nature and function as it is infused by the High Church/Tractarian concept of Reserve which stresses the veiling capacity and indirect, opaque effects of language. The decidedly more homogenous, traditional literary language of Arnold’s juvenilia speaks to the gap that opens between Clough’s and Arnold’s language as they adopt, from the outset, decidedly different approaches and attitudes to language.

Chapter Two follows the two poets through their years at Oxford, first at Balliol as undergraduates and then at Oriel College as fellows. Clough’s commitment to the Broad Church orientation to language’s comprehensiveness is briefly shaken by a period of interest in the High Church/Tractarian approach to language. The tortured lyricism of Clough’s Balliol poetry is connected to his sincere but doomed attempt to infuse the High Church/Tractarian principle of Reserve into his linguistic expression. In reaction and consonant with his emerging radical political views, the language of Clough’s Oriel poetry is characterized by a drive to employ words not to conceal but rather to expose and reveal, and the etymological impulse that governs much of the key diction in these poems is linked to this intertwined linguistic and political radicalism. In Clough’s brief flirtation
with the High Church/Tractarian Reserve we have one of those moments of near
connection between Arnold and Clough in terms of their approach to language. It is as if
the parallel voyaging ships of “Qua Cursum Ventus” tack and veer towards each other
before returning to their separate paths. The language of Arnold’s Oxford poetry is much
more consistent than Clough’s as he continues to test the possibilities of organizing his
idiom around the idea of Reserve in the midst of exploring possible poetic personas and
then, later at Oriel, questioning the relationship of poetry to readers and the world.

In Chapter Three I argue that both poets work through disappointed or frustrated
idealism in the form of key linguistic/aesthetic developments in their poetry. Clough’s
post-1848 disillusionment leads him to rethink the naïve optimism of a Broad Church
ideal of comprehension (whether ecclesiastical, political or linguistic). He abandons the
linguistic radicalism of his Oriel poetry and the Broad Church comprehensiveness of his
Rugby poetry, recently revisited and reaching apotheosis in The Bothie of Tober-na-
Vuolich. Through his distinctive practice of ironic and parodying allusion to the much-
celebrated language of the King James Bible, Clough announces himself as a reformer of
English rather than the coiner of a new idiom that might match the complexity of mid-
Victorian England. Such a position, explored most memorably in Amours de Voyage,
which is already a retreat from The Bothie withdraws further into a more detached almost
academic consideration of the composite nature of English in Dipsychus. Meanwhile,
Arnold’s engagement with the High Church/Tractarian principle of Reserve at Oxford
raises the issue of sincerity of expression and the problem of semantic idealism. In his
love poetry as well as a major text such as Empedocles on Etna, Arnold confronts the
problem of the referential inadequacy of language. Ironically Arnold attempts to solve
this dilemma through a revised understanding of figurative language forwarded by John Locke (the very thinker who had brought into relief the linguistic dilemma that so troubled Arnold during these years) that ultimately leads to Arnold’s introduction of the simile, with mixed results, in poems as varied as “Dover Beach” and *Sohrab and Rustum*.

The concluding chapter of this study of the two poets considers their oft-ignored or generally-maligned late poetry. Once again the two poets can be seen as sharing a general concern for the state of the language, but they are differentiated by their respective approaches to this problem—again pursuing parallel but independent paths to a similar terminus. In *Mari Magno*, Clough recovers, in a different key, the inclusive energies of Rugby and the Broad Church orientation to language. Clough’s late concern, in part inspired by his own academic writing and lecturing, with renovating English in a way that would unify its Saxon, Norman and Latin elements, is a variation on the hallmark of comprehension that is so characteristic of the Broad Church orientation. Like Clough, Arnold was, in the end, concerned with the future of the language. Exploiting the grief-consolation structure of the genre, Arnold uses his late elegies as vehicles to preserve and disseminate the best that has been known and thought *and said* in the world.

Because Victorian philology is often so closely tied to questions of culture and cultural health, attending to the philological allusiveness in the work of both poets is useful in allowing us to recover some of the more subtle or indirect cultural and political resonances in the work of both poets. For example, Clough’s etymological impulse in his Oriel poetry is rooted, at least partially, in the discourse of Victorian philology, and within that discourse etymology with its stripping away of the familiar to reveal an
original meaning might well be read as both a liberating and subversive activity. So, Clough’s decision to feature an etymological impulse prominently in his poetry resonates in highly specific ways.

Dennis Taylor suggested some time ago that “[t]he relationship between Victorian philology and Victorian literature is a rich and unexplored field” (16). As an exploration of the relationship between the literary languages of Clough and Arnold and the discourse of Victorian philology, this study seeks to situate itself in the midst of other studies that have sought to examine the same relationship with reference to other poets and therefore begin to respond to Taylor’s observation about this lacuna in the scholarship of the period. Donald Hair’s *Tennyson’s Language* and *Robert Browning’s Language*, Dennis Taylor’s *Hardy’s Literary Language and Victorian Philology*, and Cary Plotkin’s *The Tenth Muse: Victorian Philology and the Genesis of the Poetic Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* have all highlighted the ways in which the language of these different poets is informed by their varied and unique engagements with the complex and multivalent discourse of Victorian philology. Richard Marggraf Turley’s *The Politics of Language in Romantic Literature* also explores the relationship between the literary and the philological/linguistic but with reference to Romantic writers such as Wordsworth, Hunt and Keats.

As an exploration of Arnold and Clough, this study also seeks to contribute to the large amount of scholarly attention that has been devoted to both poets. Anybody writing on the language of Matthew Arnold is, at some level, writing in response to David Riede’s study of Arnold’s language, *Matthew Arnold and the Betrayal of Language*. The frequent reference to the specific arguments in that book in the following chapters speaks
to the importance and influence of Riede’s study. Beyond the specific insights on
individual poems, Riede’s exploration of Arnold’s language has been particularly useful
in establishing the parameters for further discussion of Arnold’s relationship to his
medium. My examination of Arnold’s view of language, in the end, seeks to complement
rather than contradict the general insights that Riede has forwarded with regard to
Arnold’s fundamental distrust and uncertainty with regard to language. In a recent essay
entitled “Why Clough? Why Now?” Vanessa Ryan suggests that recent studies of Clough
are symptomatic of a larger trend: “Part of what intrigues me about the recent work on
Clough, however, is that it suggests that a reconciliation between cultural criticism and a
renewed formalist approach is possible and is already taking place in Victorian poetry
studies” (505). Examining Clough through the discourse of Victorian philology seems to
promote a reading of his language that participates in the reconciliation between formalist
concerns and larger cultural criticism questions. There is, to date, no extended study of
Clough’s language that attempts to situate it within the philological landscape of the
nineteenth-century. As such, my examination of Clough’s language in this regard aims to
take some tentative steps in opening up such a critical discussion with regard to Clough.

Isobel Armstrong has observed that “to read a Victorian poem is to be made
acutely aware of the fact that it is made of language” (11). Indeed, this is a study that
seeks to increase the reader’s awareness of the nature of Clough’s and Arnold’s language.
The best place to begin such a study is with that time and place when Clough and Arnold
were themselves made “acutely aware” of the problems and possibilities of language—
Thomas Arnold’s Rugby School in the early years of the 1830s.
CHAPTER 1
RUGBY

“For rigorous teachers seized my youth”
Arnold, “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse”

In the midst of the excitement generated by news of the July Days during the summer of 1830, the poetic career of Arthur Hugh Clough begins with an elegy. “O Muse of Britain,” occasioned by the death of George IV on June 26, 1830, is the dutiful if unremarkable homage of a Tory schoolboy, but it does expose, indirectly, a cluster of issues that will be germane to the discussion of the juvenilia of both Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold that follows. The poem begins with an invocation:

O Muse of Britain teach me now to sing
In verses sad of our late, noble King,
Teach me in notes of sorrow to proclaim
To all the world our noble Prince’s fame,
Teach me o Muse to tell in mournful strains,
Of all his deeds and all his dreadful pains. (1-6)

The conventionality of the poetic invocation from Homer and Milton to this example by Clough frequently masks its real anxiety, expressed with varying degrees of candidness, about poetic vocation. Similarly, in his next poem “Snowdon,” written the following summer, Clough wonders if the bardic and vatic roles of the ancient Welsh poets are tenable in a rapidly industrializing Britain, symbolized in the poem’s final images that juxtapose Snowdon (“the northern Parnassus”) with the “stupendous pile” that is the technological achievement of Telford’s recently erected Menai Bridge (the world’s first
iron suspension bridge). Vocational anxiety also informs one of Matthew Arnold’s earliest poetic essays, “The First Sight of Italy.” Here, Arnold transforms Italy into a precarious Shakespearean green world of the imagination that is threatened by invading northern barbarian armies. Although he rescues a consolation in the poem through a relocation of Italy’s imaginative possibilities to the Lake District, Arnold shares the same general concern that Clough expresses elsewhere in his juvenilia that “In these utilitarian days/Poetic fiction ne’er will answer” (“An Apology” 67-68).²

Clough’s general invocation in “O Muse of Britain” enfolds, however, a more specific concern. The anaphoric repetition of these opening lines (“Teach me”) draws attention to the phrases that follow (“to sing/In verses sad,” “in notes of sorrow to proclaim,” “to tell in mournful strains”), and Clough’s concern with the different means of expression that are available in the composition of his poem. This search for the proper mode of expression is the first articulation by either poet of what will become a career-long awareness of the problems and potential of language–its nature, its uses, its effects. Clough’s and Arnold’s juvenilia explore, both self-reflexively and in practice, not only the anxieties attendant upon the sense that one is unfit to be a poet or that the age is alternately indifferent or hostile to poetic achievement, but also that the very medium of poetic expression will be fraught with struggle.

“O Muse of Britain” raises one other topic by way of introduction, which is the circumstances and location where the aforementioned vocational and linguistic apprenticeship occurs. At the very center of the poem, both literally and figuratively, the speaker acknowledges the community of Eton schoolboys as among the King’s most devoted mourners: “At George’s death sure Eton will be sad/And sorrow mark the mien
of every lad” (13-14). Even though Clough himself had only recently embarked on his own formal academic career, he gestures here to the importance that the public school already held for him, and it was in this central Victorian institution that Clough’s and Arnold’s poetic and, specifically, linguistic apprenticeships were conducted. Clough seems to have been aware of the public school’s general formative role and something uniquely Rugbeian about his experience when he writes to his friend J.N. Simpkinson at Cambridge that “In the case of Etonians, their character is chiefly formed at College, at School nothing but Composition and gentlemanliness is taught; whereas our character is fixed before we go to College” (35). To what extent, however, were Clough’s and Arnold’s poetic and linguistic characters formed by Rugby? In many ways Clough and Arnold are unique among nineteenth-century poets by virtue of their extensive exposure to the public school ethos. Unlike their immediate poetic predecessors Clough’s and Arnold’s experiences at the public school were sustained, extensive and greatly influenced by the magnetic force of Thomas Arnold. Despite a certain degree of adult ambivalence about the virtues of a Public School education (most notably in *Dipsychus*), Clough’s and Arnold’s juvenilia is animated by the daily routines and rhythms of Rugby. Assigned readings on the Schmalkaldic League and the Holy Roman Empire in Heeren’s *Modern History* led to poems such as Clough’s “And he is in his dungeon deep”; debate between Rugby masters and students is captured in Arnold’s “Reply to a Declaration that he would not live by the Sea”; the death of a Rugby schoolboy is solemnly memorialized in Clough’s “Verses from the Schoolhouse.”

I am interested, however, in what is ultimately a more substantive, if less immediately perceivable, contribution that Rugby makes to the poetry of Clough and
Arnold—one that links the issues of poetic and linguistic apprenticeship mentioned above with the setting of the Public School and Thomas Arnold’s Rugby in particular. In *Wordsworth’s Classical Undersong*, Richard Clancey explores the connections between the environment, curriculum and pedagogy of the Hawkshead grammar school and Wordsworth’s poetic development that culminates in *The Prelude*. Clancey’s overarching project of assessing the impact of the public school environment on the poet’s aesthetic achievement is pertinent to my own interests here:

I wondered about the school, its teachers, its students, and especially its curriculum of Latin, Greek and mathematics. I wondered especially about how much of this school and its teaching had effected a lively, talented lad who was to become one of England’s greatest poets, a poet whose special genius was so particularly indebted to his earliest years, a poet whose youth had become the substance of some of the finest poetry of the English language. (Clancey xi)

Like Clancey, I am interested in a particular setting (Rugby in the 1830s rather than Hawkshead in the 1780s), but I also want to link this setting not to the culmination but rather the nascent moments of two poetic careers. The Rugby School, long acknowledged as a decisive factor in the psychological and moral development (or degeneration) of Arnold and Clough, has also long been neglected or summarily dismissed as a crucial context in examining their aesthetic development. Nonetheless, Robindra Biswas is correct when he writes that Clough’s Rugby poems “are significant mainly as early documents in *his search for an appropriate medium*, an appropriate subject, *and an appropriate manner*” (48, italics mine), and Rugby, where Arnold and Clough were first trained in the “arts of the word,” warrants re-examination as the terminus a quo of what would be a lifelong struggle with language for both poets.
The immediate problem that presents itself, however, is the fact of just how different the language of Clough’s Rugby poems is compared to that of Matthew Arnold’s. Where we might reasonably expect, given the similarity of their Rugby experiences and education, a similarity in their respective linguistic performances, we are instead presented with two sets of poems that manifest two very different types of awareness about language. Clough’s juvenilia is characterized by a striking variety of modes of linguistic expression that range from the distinctive diction and cadences of the Authorized Version and contemporary hymns to the classical oratory of the eponymous speaker of “The Old Man of Athens,” to the rhythmic chants of the Hyperborean Maidens; to the slang of the Rugby schoolboy. An allowance might be made for the experimental nature of juvenilia, but nonetheless, this early poetry is, linguistically, a Babel of conflicting voices and styles that portends Clough’s dexterous experiments with the linguistic spectrum in later, mature, poems such as *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*. Conversely, Arnold’s Rugby poems, although emerging from a very similar experience, take as their most salient expressive characteristic a consistent sense of quietness and even silence. In these poems the reader encounters the silent Alaric surveying conquered Rome, the Stoic quietness of the Greek girl in “Inspired by Julia Pardoe’s *The City of the Sultan,*” the hushed tones of the Holy Spirit as it withdraws from the noisy apostasy of Jerusalem. The prevailing expressive characteristic of Arnold’s poems is one of restraint. How does such expressive aloofness emerge from the same context as Clough’s great variety? How is it that such different attitudes to language emerge out of this shared Rugby environment?
Two posthumous assessments of Clough’s and Arnold’s work offer insights that can be used to address this basic difference. Early in his 1883 monograph on Clough, Samuel Waddington speculates on the similarity he detects between Clough’s poetry and the sermons of A.P. Stanley:

And, indeed, are not these in a measure but different pipes of the same organ stop,—are they not two fragrant flowers gathered from the same holy garden,—the work and wisdom of two scholars nurtured and trained under the fostering care of one and the same master, that great and good man the late Dr. Arnold? (17)

It is not surprising that the early readers of Clough detected the force of Thomas Arnold in the work of two of his most noteworthy disciples, as the Rugby school under Arnold’s surveillance was the setting in which Clough first addressed the questions of poetic vocation, language and so much else. However there were other voices and ideas circulating at Rugby that were, in part, enabled by Thomas Arnold’s forays into the political and ecclesiastical polemics of the 1830s. Thomas Arnold the Younger remembered one such important voice when discussing his elder brother Matthew’s poetry in an 1896 letter to his granddaughter:

I send the new volume of your uncle Matt’s poems...The prize poems are quite worth reprinting, particularly the Rugby one; of which the “Anklänge” with Byron are obvious, but people will not so readily notice how great the influence of Keble’s “Christian Year,” its phrases, its turns, its cadences, must have been on my brother at that time. (Brotherton MS)

It is the presence of these other voices, and particularly John Keble’s, that is important in attempting to account for the different languages of Clough’s and Arnold’s juvenilia.

In his magisterial study of the poet, Lionel Trilling reads Mathew Arnold’s baptism as symbolic of an emergent rift in British culture. Trilling writes: “Matthew Arnold, then, had his baptism between the ideals of ecclesiastical dogmatism and ecclesiastical democracy” (39). I would modify and extend Trilling’s observation to argue that Arnold and Clough receive their linguistic baptism between the two positions
represented by Dr. Thomas Arnold and John Keble. Arthur Hugh Clough’s and Matthew Arnold’s earliest experiments with poetic language are informed by the paradoxically distinct yet overlapping Broad Church and High Church orientations to language forwarded by Thomas Arnold and John Keble respectively. It is through these two figures and their work that the contested, complex and often contradictory heritage of Romantic linguistic thought, drawn from the kindred fields of philology and poetics, is communicated to the two apprentice poets. This mediated heritage consequently comes to assume an important place in the early evolution of their aesthetic and vocational sensibilities at Rugby and beyond.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to clarify some of the preceding terminology. “Orientation to language” is used instead of “theory of language” because the latter term implies a greater degree of codification than Thomas Arnold’s and John Keble’s thinking about language warrants. Their thinking is, rather, a set of attitudes, practices, recommendations and speculations scattered throughout their writing on other subjects—largely education and politics in the case of Thomas Arnold and aesthetics and religion with Keble. The terms “Broad” and “High” Church are appended to “orientation” because Thomas Arnold’s and John Keble’s ideas about language both mirror and emerge from the spirit of their competing ecclesiastical and theological positions, and they also serve to emphasize the distinctions I wish to draw between the Broad and High Church orientations and other inflections of liberal and conservative attitudes to language respectively. Further, Richard Sanders, Stephen Prickett and G.B. Tennyson have shown the connections between Romanticism and the early Victorian Church and, thus, “Broad” and “High” Church reinforce the sense that these orientations to language mediate a complicated Romantic linguistic heritage to Clough and Arnold. Finally, the term “Romantic linguistic thought/heritage” is chosen to encompass work in the multiple disciplines that address language issues (poetics, philology, philosophy)
including the ideas of conservative writers on language (carrying forward ideas articulated in the preceding century) and more progressive voices. The two seminal figures here are Wordsworth and Coleridge and much, but not exclusive, attention will be devoted to their ideas such as the notion of the “lingua communis” and the advocacy of the “real” language of men as they were adopted, adapted, paralleled, and interpreted by Thomas Arnold and John Keble and subsequently communicated to Clough and Arnold. An exploration of the specifics of these two orientations follows beginning with the position of Thomas Arnold as it was espoused and imparted to the Rugby community and found a receptive audience in Clough. This exploration will be followed by a consideration of Matthew Arnold’s juvenilia and its connection to the High Church orientation of John Keble. In both instances, I will assess how the intersection of these theories at Rugby in the language of the two poets helped establish an initial sense of vocational identity and set the parameters for their later poetic development and divergence.

“A True Son of Rugby”: Dr. Arnold and the Language of Clough’s Juvenilia

Two competing visions of Thomas Arnold’s Rugby have worked to either exaggerate or understate the accomplishments of his fourteen-year tenure at the school. The intensely selective purviews of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley’s and Thomas Hughes’s Victorian hagiographies of Thomas Arnold combined with Strachey’s satirical portrait in Eminent Victorians have combined to propagate the impression of a Rugby anti-intellectualism. Thomas Arnold helped to foster this belief himself when he once famously affirmed his conviction that intellectual ability was subordinate to other educative goals at Rugby—ranking scholarly achievement below gentlemanly conduct and moral and religious principles in his hierarchy of desired schoolboy qualities. Thus, the standard view of Rugby as a moral and religious hothouse has been persuasive and persistent, particularly among Clough’s and Matthew Arnold’s biographers. Yet it
was Matthew Arnold who later complained that most accounts of Rugby, including *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, gave “only one side, and that not the best side, of Rugby school life” and that they left “out a view, almost wholly, the intellectual purpose of the school” (Fitch 105). Rugby did not exist solely to produce Christian gentlemen and conscientious professionals. It was also an intellectual community where ideas on a variety of subjects circulated and were debated, all under the supervision of Thomas Arnold. Louise Merivale, the sister of a Rugby master, described Rugby society in 1838:

> Chief of all Rugbeian characters at that time stood forth the Doctor himself—the great + good Arnold—it was his spirit that pervaded the place, and gave the tone to everything of interest in our scholastic circle. Not alone with the boys in school hours, but with the masters also, + their seasons of relaxation and social intercourse, the words + opinions of Arnold were the constant theme of discussion and the incitement to action. With all over whom he had influence he encouraged in literature, religion and politics. (Balliol MS)

For the Sixth form, particularly, Thomas Arnold looked to inculcate moral principles, but also ideas and opinions on history, politics, literature, and as I will suggest, language. Clough was among Thomas Arnold’s most committed students, incorporating the headmaster’s Viconian insights and teaching on the cyclical and moral forces of history in poems such as “Count Egmont” and his Rugby prize poem “The Close of the Eighteenth Century” or rehearsing Arnold’s political and ecclesiastical arguments in letters home to South Carolina. Such was the intensity of Clough’s discipleship that his Tory parents grew wary of their son’s apparent proselytization by his liberal headmaster as: “In his veneration he adopted, almost completely, the chief Arnoldian positions, [and] one can watch the Master’s views percolating unadulterated into the letters that he wrote” (Biswas 33). One unexplored aspect of Dr. Arnold’s intellectual influence on the Rugby community, and Clough in particular, is his view of language—a view that was a Broad Church orientation commensurate with his interlocked political and ecclesiastical ideas and emerging from a complex engagement with Romantic linguistic thought and debate.
Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language cannot be understood without first elucidating the idea of the Broad Church itself; a tricky proposition given that the Broad Church Movement lacked the discipline and homogeneity of other ecclesiastical parties within the Victorian Church and “was more a mood towards the study of theology” (Copley 279). 11 We can draw parallels between the spirit and general theological and ecclesiastical principles of the Broad Church Movement and the more specific sense of a Broad Church orientation to language. To begin with the most general sense, the Broad Church Movement was, as Sanders puts it, “a type of liberalism within the Church of England” (9). Accordingly, at its most basic, the Broad Church orientation to language is a liberal tendency and attitude towards the understanding and study of language. This liberalism, which was nurtured by Thomas Arnold’s membership in the Oriel Noetics at Oxford, is characterized by sober consideration and a reasoned, questioning challenge to dogmatic authority, whether that authority is ecclesiastical or linguistic. Thomas Arnold’s conceptions of the Church parallel his views of language in that both are human institutions that develop over time and are not sacrosanct and unalterable. While not denying an eternal component to the Church, Arnold asserts in Fragment on the Church that it is its temporal, mutable aspects that warrant attention:

The Church is not a revelation concerning the unchangeable and an eternal God; but an institution to enable changeable man to apprehend the unchangeable. Because man is changeable, the church is also changeable; changeable not in its object which is forever one and the same, but in its means for affecting that object; changeable in its details, because the same treatment cannot suit various diseases, various climes, various constitutional peculiarities, various external influences. (Sanders 112)

Similarly, in the Preface to his scholarly edition of Thucydides, Arnold, like so many other Romantic and later nineteenth-century writers on language, avoids the question of the ultimate origin of language to emphasize the need for an empirical focus: “The origin of language in itself partakes of the same obscurity which surrounds the origin of society:
there is a point with both beyond which we cannot penetrate. Attempts to explain the phenomena of language a priori seem to me unwise” (386). Stephen Prickett and others have outlined the indebtedness of Broad Church theology to the insights of Romanticism, particularly those of Wordsworth and Coleridge. It is no different with regard to the Broad Church orientation to language, which attempts to reconcile the seemingly opposed Coleridgean and Wordsworthian constructs of the “lingua communis” and “real language of men” in order to propose a notion of language that offers a cautiously liberal critique and reform of the tenaciously persistent eighteenth-century hegemonic theory of language.

Thomas Arnold himself offers an effective introduction to the hegemonic theory of language that his own Broad Church orientation would seek to call into question and critique. In an essay entitled “The Use of the Classics” for the *Quarterly Journal of Education* (1834), Arnold acknowledges the validity of the charges leveled at the public schools for their adherence to increasingly outdated modes of language instruction, but, nonetheless, his defense of Greek and Latin appears to be entrenched in the logic and rhetoric of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century apologias for their continued study. This is partially tied to the traditional belief that study of Greek and Latin provided a key sense of continuity with the foundations of Western culture and that to eliminate or abridge them in the curriculum would be to “confine the views of the existing generation to themselves and their immediate predecessors” (349). More important, however, is Arnold’s defense of the classics on epistemological grounds, and in a telling passage from Stanley’s *Life* we learn:

That classical studies should be the basis of intellectual teaching, he maintained from the first. “The study of language,” he said, “seems to me as if it was given for the very purpose of forming the human mind in
By conceiving of the study of language as a branch of epistemological inquiry and by elevating the status of Latin and Greek, Thomas Arnold evokes an entire eighteenth-century ideology of language that persisted long into the nineteenth century and was rooted in “the presupposition that language revealed the mind” (Smith 2). This approach to language, building on and adapting Locke’s influential theory from Book III of An Essay concerning Human Understanding, argues that a study of the origins, development and workings of language is in effect a study of the origins, development and workings of the human mind.12 Elsewhere, Thomas Arnold intimates an endorsement of such a theory:

This evil, of positively bad reasoning, of concluding what cannot be justly concluded arises from a want of due acquaintance with the instrument used in every process of reasoning, namely language. And hence appears the importance of those two studies that teach us to analyze language, logic and grammar. Language is indeed a wonderful instrument, but the very facility of using it with a certain degree of effect, for we all talk and occasionally argue, is apt to conceal from us the difficulty of acquiring a perfect command of it. We constantly find persons both speaking and writing vaguely: using words in different senses, or in no well-defined sense at all, without being aware of it: and as never having analyzed the process of correct reasoning, arguing in a manner at random, and supposing that to be a proof, or an answer to an objection, which in reality is not so. These are faults for which the study of grammar and of logic is the appropriate remedy. In both we take language to pieces, examine its structure, and learn to appreciate and recognize those defects to which it is most liable...Logic and grammar then, as putting us on our guard against the fallacies of language, are the great means of cultivating our reasoning powers. (414-415)

Here, Arnold links the study and training of the powers of the human mind to language, and the study of Greek and Latin become crucial because, as he notes: “The grammatical forms of Greek and Latin are at once perfect and incapable of being understood without long and minute attention; that the study of them involves general principles of
grammar” (Fitch 35, italics mine). There is little, it seems, in these statements that intimates a progressive view of language.

Arnold, however, is uneasy with or unwilling to accept the ideologically charged, political corollary to the eighteenth-century epistemological approach to language that has been described by Olivia Smith, Richard Turley and others. As Smith points out, because language was so closely tied to the mind and its operations, the more refined one’s use of language (largely accomplished by how closely one emulated what were considered to be the most refined languages of Greek and Latin) the more refined, and consequently more fit for political participation, the user. This hegemonic theory of language, as Smith labels it, that ties language usage to mental capacity and consequently to political eligibility, was given not just philosophical support by writers such as James Harris, but also institutional and scholarly credibility through Robert Lowth’s influential grammar (and its numerous progenies including Lindley Murray’s which remained a standard school text into 1840s) as well as Samuel Johnson and his *Dictionary of the English Language*. Thomas Arnold, uneasy with these aspects of the eighteenth-century hegemonic theory of language, turns to the arguments of Romantics on language not to overturn it but to reform it for the changed circumstances of a rapidly industrializing and increasingly democratic England. The hegemonic theory of language rests upon two related assumptions or strategies: the subordination of the English language to what are perceived to be the more complex and refined languages of Greek and Latin and the elevation of the written word over speech. Thomas Arnold enlists and adapts Coleridge’s idea of the lingua communis and Wordsworth’s real language of men to challenge these two assumptions and forward a more liberal, inclusive idea of language in its place.
Arnold’s liberalism is largely informed by Coleridge’s work, to which he was introduced at Oxford by his friend and Coleridge’s nephew, John Taylor Coleridge. Arnold and Coleridge share a belief in a moderate approach to reform and a commitment to progress, in any field, based on a respect and understanding of the past. As Sanders notes:

Thus in the main, Arnold agreed with Coleridge in emphasizing the importance of understanding the past; in looking for the philosophical implications of history; in insisting that the principles thus discovered were of value only when they were brought to bear on the present and future; in welcoming progress when it destroyed what was worthless in the old; in attempting to reconcile the welfare of the individual with that of the group; and opposing all forces which threatened or ignored the welfare of either. (111)\(^4\)

This applies to Arnold’s views on language and his pedagogical approach to the classics more specifically, which is the most direct and persistent way that key aspects of his linguistic views are communicated to the Rugby community. The emphasis on Greek and Latin initially seems an odd foundation for a liberal tendency toward language that is the baseline of the Broad Church orientation. By the time that Arnold succeeded Wool as headmaster at Rugby, instruction in Greek and Latin was among the most obvious symbols of the stagnancy and anachronism that dominated the Public Schools. In particular, the methods of teaching Greek and Latin had become a favorite symptom in the reformers’s diagnoses of the ills of the Public Schools.\(^5\) Even Rugby itself appears not to have been immune from the excessively mechanical mode of instruction as Hughes points out in an apt image from *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* that offers a scene of the boys at work: “There scattered about on the benches, with dictionary and grammar, they hammered out their twenty lines of Virgil and Euripides in the midst of babel” (Hughes
Hughes did acknowledge that the novel’s representation of Rugby was an amalgam of the school under both Thomas Arnold and his predecessor, but, even more importantly, the novel is also the portrait of the general Rugby student—one who had infrequent contact with the headmaster and often did not even reach the Sixth form. For exceptional Rugbeians such as Clough, language instruction and the entire Rugby experience is quite different, most notably in that it is marked by daily contact with Thomas Arnold’s personality and pedagogy.

While the more egregious accounts of the follies of traditional instruction in the classics may not have included Thomas Arnold’s Rugby, study of Greek and Latin continued to monopolize the curriculum during the 1830s. The standard authors continued to dominate the daily lessons at Rugby, although Arnold, consistent with his own scholarly interests and involvement in the new Continental Alterumwissenschaft, steered a great deal of the curriculum increasingly toward the historians Herodotus, Thucyidides and Tacitus. Dr. Arnold’s cautious reaction against the conservative, hegemonic implications that were attached to the ascendancy of the classics and his advocacy of a view of classical language instruction that would harness it to a liberal tendency in language study is seen in his views on the three main methods of classical language instruction: composition, construing, and translation. Contrary to the practice of most of his contemporaries, Arnold discouraged Greek and Latin composition, and verse composition in particular. While not banishing it at Rugby, composition held minimal importance in the daily business of the school. Hughes’s image of the Rugby boys mechanically hammering out classical verse likely owes more to Arnold’s predecessor than Arnold himself. The same progressive position can be seen in Thomas
Arnold’s attitude to the second major mode of classical instruction, construing.

Construing, like composition in Arnold’s opinion, concerned itself too closely with details and resulted in an arid formalism. Further and more importantly, it actually damaged the student’s ability to use the English language as Arnold noted in “The Use of the Classics”:

But the system of construing, far from assisting, is positively injurious to our knowledge and use of English; it accustoms it to a tamed and involved arrangement of our words, and to the substitution of foreign idioms to such as are national; it obliges us to caricature every sentence that we render, by turning what is, in its original dress, beautiful and natural into something which is neither Greek nor English, stiff, obscure, and flat, exemplifying all the faults incident to language and excluding every excellence. The exercise of translation, on the other hand, meaning by translation the expressing of an entire sentence of a foreign language by an entire sentence of our own, as opposed to the rendering separately into English, either every separate word, or at most, only parts of the sentence, whether larger or smaller, is capable of furnishing improvement to students of every age according to the measure of their abilities and knowledge. (Fitch 44)

Here lies the crux of Arnold’s liberalization of the classics–their instrumentality to proficiency in English: the cultivation of national idioms. While assenting to the epistemological value of language study and the importance of Greek and Latin to that process, he sought to use these languages not as the paragons that English should slavishly imitate but rather as models worthy of emulation.19 Arnold proclaimed that every lesson in Greek and Latin was a lesson in English. The particular nature of that lesson and the relation between Greek and Latin with English is found in his views on translation, which simultaneously elucidate a general vision of language reminiscent of aspects of the Germano-Coleridgean tradition.
Arnold advocates the practice of idiomatic translation that recognizes the mutability of languages, including Greek and Latin whose current fixity as dead languages belies their earlier history of change and development. In an extended passage from “The Use of the Classics,” Arnold outlines the practice of idiomatic translation:

[T]he translation of the Greek and Roman writers is most useful in improving a boy’s knowledge of his own language. In the choice of his words, and in the style of his sentences he should be taught to follow the analogy required by the age and character of the writer whom he is translating. For instance, in translating Homer, hardly any words should be employed except Saxon, and the oldest and simplest of those which are of French origin; and the language should consist of a series of simple propositions connected with one another only by the most inartificial conjunctions. In translating the tragedians, the words should be principally Saxon, but mixed with many of French or foreign origin, like the language of Shakespeare, and the other dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth and James I. So also in translating the prose writers of Greece and Rome, Herodotus should be rendered in the style and language of the chroniclers; Thucydidies in that of Bacon or Hooker, while Demosthenes, Cicero, Caesar and Tacitus, require a style completely modern—the perfection of the English language such as we now speak and write it, varied only to suit the individual differences of the different writers, but in its range of words, and in its idioms, substantially the same...The term “words of French origin” is used purposely, to denote that large portion of our language which, although of Latin derivation comes to us immediately from the French of our Norman conquerors, and thus became a part of the natural spoken language of that mixed people, which grew out of the melting of the Saxon and Norman races into one another. But these are carefully to be distinguished from another class of words equally of Latin derivation, but which have been introduced by learned men at a much later period, directly from Latin books, and have never, properly speaking formed any part of the genuine national language. These truly foreign words, which Johnson used so largely, are carefully to be shunned in the translation of poetry, as being unnatural, and associated only with the most unpoetical period of our literature, the middle of the eighteenth century. (354-55)

Arnold’s comments here evoke several key ideas of the Germano-Coleridgean tradition of language study that challenges a great deal of eighteenth-century thinking about
language. First, in his recognition of the change and development of language (whether Greek, Latin or English) through different historical periods, Arnold, like Coleridge, and other Romantic philologists generally, acknowledges that language is inherently
governed by an organic process of growth and decay. A historical awareness about
language is developed as Arnold addresses English’s history of lexical appropriation,
combination and assimilation, purposely eschewing reactionary efforts to limit English to
neo-classical shibboleths and radical attempts to forward a Saxon purism. Second, the
passage also forges a connection between language and literature—one of the key
contributions of Romantic philology and Coleridge’s key linguistic bequest to the
Victorians. Arnold implies that one way to understand English is partially through study
of its greatest literary artists. Third, Arnold’s distinction here between those
contributions from Latin and French that resulted from the Conquest (and which are as
much a part of English as its original Saxon base) and the later importation of what
Renaissance writers on language decried as “inkhorn” terms displays a sensitivity and a
concern to distinguish what Arnold sees as “genuine” from “artificial” English—a quasi
Herderian impulse to view language as the specific voice of a specific culture. Finally, in
suggesting that the language of a writer is determined by the combination of “the age”
and “the character” of the writer, Arnold parallels Coleridge in exploring the competing
collective and individual impulses in the life of a language. Arnold comments that
language as the collective expression of a particular culture is forwarded by the efforts of
individual genius—an idea that Coleridge, as Dowling notes, subscribed to: “the idealist
conception of a national essence living beyond or beneath the lives of a nation’s
individual citizens is what allowed Coleridge to view language both as part of “the
collective Mind of a Country” and as “a magnificent History of the acts of individual minds” (Dowling 24). Indeed, one of the responsibilities given to Coleridge’s clerisy was the preservation and advancement of the nation’s language. As a nursery for a version of Coleridge’s clerisy, Arnold’s reforming approach to the classics at Rugby inculcated a similar sense of responsibility to the Sixth Form at Rugby. Interestingly, in “An Apology” Clough equates the roles of poet and gardener (“While bards and gardeners cry ‘hard times’/For blighted fruit and blighted rhymes,”) in lines that point to a passage from the popular Guesses at Truth where the Hares, in ways that recall the sentiments of Schlegel and other German philologists whom they helped popularize, equate the poet’s preservation and cultivation of the language to the work of a gardener.

Arnold’s comments here, and particularly his view that Greek and Latin as well as English changed over time, that aspects of language are historically conditioned, and that instruction in the classical languages had as one of its prime ends improvement of facility in English, move him some distance from the hegemonic theory of eighteenth century language study that had made a keystone of the reverence of Greek and Latin as static, unchanging monuments. Unlike eighteenth-century apologists of the classics, Arnold asserted that Greek and Latin, while providing worthwhile models by virtue of their complex, highly developed grammatical structures and their sense of permanence as static, unchanging linguistic/literary monuments are undoubtedly high points but not the zenith of humanity’s linguistic achievement. Further, this subtle but noticeable diminishment of the unqualified veneration of the classical languages is paralleled by an elevation in the status of English. Rather than outright disparagement or awkward attempts to reconcile the synthetic classical languages to the analytic realities of English,
Arnold asserts the value of the Greek and Latin while also positioning English as an increasingly worthy equal. To use the common metaphor of the period, English was increasingly seen as a sibling of Greek and Latin and not a daughter and thus Arnold displays a subdued but perceptible native pride in English and English writers. In Clough’s Rugby poem “An Apology” the speaker rethinks the classical heritage: “More potent thou than Grecian Muse/Or early Latium’s sweet Camena” (75-76)—and registers a sense of a newly discovered English literary and linguistic tradition:

Coleridge and Wordsworth then to take
And feel the feelings they have felt
And bid the living truth awake
That in their words unseen had dwelt. (57-60)

The image of the English language that Arnold draws in his comments on translation is that of an idealized, trans-historical, evolving, national idiom enshrined and advanced by its greatest writers—in short Arnold’s version of the lingua communis of Coleridge is encased in his Viconian analogical exercise of drawing parallels between English and the classical languages.

Aspects of Clough’s Rugby prize poem “The Close of the Eighteenth Century” also suggest the effect of Arnold’s thinking. The poem, composed in the first months of 1835, offers a panoramic, moralistic reading of European society and the growth of vice and sin throughout the eighteenth century that culminates with the inevitability of the French Revolution and the catastrophe of the Terror and the Napoleonic struggle that succeeded it. The poem, however, also offers insights into how Thomas Arnold’s historical and comparative views on language may have been received by the students at Rugby. The poem’s invocation, for example, argues against an atomistic approach to
history and that concentration on individual ages (the single strings on Clough’s 
metaphorical “Harp of the Ages”), while a natural impulse, will miss the overall effect 
and significance of the one harmonious whole. Later in the poem’s introductory stanzas, 
Clough intimates that in his own portrait of eighteenth-century European society (a 
period that Clough following his Rugby text on modern history dates as beginning with 
the Restoration):

I have but dared to catch the passing sound  
Of a few notes, and echoings which they  
Within the bosoms of the wise have found  
Yet theirs is beauty that may ne’er decay  
And theirs are tones full high to swell the kindling lay. (23-27)

These full, high tones are, not surprisingly, given the setting of the poem, those of John 
Milton. The sheer quantity of explicit allusions to *Paradise Lost* is noteworthy, even for 
juvenilia, such as: “Again your course of Vice and woe renew./Bid good be evil, evil 
good, and call/Hell heav’n and heaven hell” (131-133). However, there is more here than 
the usual poetic “lalling” of juvenilia (Riede 32). Much of Clough’s language in the 
poem patches together echoes of *Paradise Lost* in the manner of creative paraphrase such 
as the following example which draws on separate parts of Milton’s first invocation: “But 
fearful Times the mightiest themes have lent./Scarce may the compass of a human 
rhyme/Climb to the height of this great argument” (29-31). Clough draws on the 
foremost author of the historical period he is examining and uses Milton’s language 
allusively to “swell” his own “lay.” While Milton dominates Clough’s language in the 
poem, it is not to the exclusion of other voices that are also heard in, as in Milton’s case, 
varying degrees of amplitude. In other places in the poem, Clough’s language takes on a 
more current resonance. In the course of a roll call of European nations, the speaker
apostrophizes each nation with the same interjection: “Ho to the Land of many waters,” “Ho to the Land of Chivalry and War,” “Ho to the Land of Lance and Soft Guitar.” The interjection is a common enough one to students of English poetry, particularly Shakespeare, but its contemporary relevance for Rugby students was established by the concluding stanza of Thomas Babington Macaulay’s poem “The Battle of Ivry,” (1833) which as Clough intimated in a concurrent article for The Rugby Magazine was wildly popular in the school. Clough’s first substantial poetic effort at Rugby is one of his most self-consciously literary ones and displays in its adept use of the English literary tradition much of the awareness about the English language communicated by Thomas Arnold’s pedagogical practices, including a sense of the mutability of the character of the English language through different historical periods and the role of writers as the exemplars of the language.

By freeing the relationship between the classical languages and English from a strictly hierarchical and unidirectional influence and introducing aspects of comparative methodology and historical awareness, Arnold’s teaching of language to the boys at Rugby participated in the early nineteenth century shift in thinking about the status of English and its relation to Greek and Latin. By linking new philological insights with continued assertions of the value of classical philology, Arnold parallels aspects of the work of James Donaldson who also attempted to reconcile traditional classical philology with the insights of the new philology in The New Cratylus (1839) which, as Richard Turley notes:
[T]acitly acknowledges that classical philology can only be rescued from the threat of spreading neglect by incorporating into it the advances made in Germanic philology...Latin and Greek can no longer uphold their claims to linguistic patriarchy. (151)

Beyond Rugby, Arnold was also involved in the early days of the London Philological Association—the association that would eventually give rise to the *Oxford English Dictionary* project. While the Society at its outset was one of the first arenas in England to offer a full airing of the new philology, its earliest efforts sought to accommodate the insights of the new philology with the study of the classical languages. Arnold admires the classical languages for their permanence but recognizes that an uncritical adulation of them is misguided. In the face of the realities of the rise of modern languages, he advocates a reformed relationship with the classics, not their overthrow, so that what is valuable in them might be preserved for an age when everything seems in flux.

Arnold’s attempts to fuse a veneration for the classics with the emphases of the new philology which stressed, among other things, an elevated respect for the modern, vernacular European languages speaks to one further aspect of Thomas Arnold’s pedagogy, namely the place of modern languages at Rugby. More so than any other headmaster of his day, Arnold introduced a modicum of instruction in modern languages at Rugby. He noted that “Every additional language gained, is like an additional power” (Sanders 96), and the very presence of modern languages in the Rugby curriculum emphasized their elevated status alongside Greek and Latin. Clough seems to have imbibed the attitude that recognized the value of the classics but also noted the increased importance of the vernacular. In an 1834 letter to his brother George discussing the merits of classical and modern languages, Clough suggests that, if forced to choose, it is
better to study French despite the great importance of Greek. At the same time, however, Arnold’s particular form of cautious liberalism is revealed by his decision to teach these modern languages as dead languages, emphasizing their written rather than their spoken forms:

We can teach French and German as we do Latin and Greek and that I think is the great object as a matter of liberal education. Fluency in speaking is undoubtedly a great matter of convenience when a man goes abroad, but I do not think it should be our object here...But to most of our boys, to read it will be of far more use than to speak it; and if they learn it grammatically as a dead language. (McCrum 62)

For all of the reform that he brings to the instruction in the classical languages that elevates the status of English, Arnold still finds comfort in the permanent nature of Latin and Greek, as dead languages, and attempts to salvage something of that spirit even in modern languages by emphasizing their written rather than their spoken forms.

This interest in the permanence of language, especially its written manifestations, is vividly explored in Clough’s poem “Verses from the School House.” The poem was composed for the Rugby Magazine and begins with an introductory section where the speaker recounts his feelings six years earlier on the death of a fellow Rugbeian. Six years later, the speaker is leading the evening prayers in the Rugby Chapel when something catches his eye:

The book of prayer was in my hand, just opened, when by chance
Upon the table fronting me I dropt a passing glance
And lo! Carved out in letters clear upon the board I read
His name, who six short years ago was amongst us lying dead. (15-18)
The permanence of the written word carved into the table seems to give greater effect to and enhances the reading from the *Book of Common Prayer*—a monument in England’s *lingua communis*:

As I was reading through the prayers, the knowledge grew and spread Out of my eyes all through my soul, of that which I had read; And, one by one, past into all the chambers of my soul, Till that one sense alone was there, and filled alone the whole… (19-22)

In the end the permanence of the carved name and the permanence of the *lingua communis* come to be imbricated with each other with the latter instantiating itself into the speaker’s very language: “One, whose poor hand so late had traced these letters on the board/And should be after some short hours but dust to dust restored” (29-30). In this poem, which is structured around two distinct points in time—the death of the young Rugby boy and the evening prayers in the Rugby Chapel six years later—the combined effect of the name carved in the table and the familiar *lingua communis* of the Prayer Book, particularly the phrase from the “Burial of the Dead”—“we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;” serve to knit the two disparate experiences together.

Arnold’s Broad Church orientation, however, is more than a simple advocacy of a version of Coleridge’s *lingua communis* communicated by a reform of classical language instruction that sought to elevate the status of English via the insights of the new philology. There were other venues and other dimensions to Thomas Arnold’s thinking on language that the boys experienced and which brought further aspects of the headmaster’s liberal tendency to language into greater relief. It was noted earlier that the other main assumption of the conservative, hegemonic theory of language was the conviction that the spoken vernacular was the province of the illiterate and the politically ineligible. Olivia Smith suggests that “By stipulating that the value of languages depended on the mind or sensibility that they represented, universal grammar justified
ignoring the language as it was spoken in the attempt to make English resemble the more
perfect languages, Latin and Greek” (5). The desire to distinguish formal, written
language from spoken, colloquial English finds an influential advocate in Samuel
Johnson who “with his credentials as the compiler of the Dictionary, the founder of
literary criticism and the author of a widely read and imitated prose style did more than
anyone else perhaps to popularize the ideas that cemented the distinction between refined
and vulgar English (Smith 13). In the Preface to the Dictionary Johnson spreads
assumptions about class and its relation to language, distinguishes between the genuine
language of books and the corrupt language of the living and in so doing “gave the
conservative ideology of the 1750s an enduring and influential life,” (Smith 14). And yet
Thomas Arnold was uncomfortable with this persistent diminishment of colloquial
English and sought to raise its status in the Rugby community in a number of ways.

As eager consumers of Thomas Arnold’s scholarship (most notably his History of
Rome), the Rugby boys were aware of Arnold’s sensitivity to the importance of
languages as they were spoken and the enriching variety of dialects within a language.24
Arnold’s interest in dialects and the colloquial situates him, once again, in the larger
context of the insights of Romantic and new philology. Coleridge’s lingua communis
had, in the interests of stability, permanence and national unity (and to combat
Wordsworth’s view of language), inverted Romantic philology’s emphasis on the spoken
word—encapsulated in Herder’s notion of the Volkstimme. Arnold, however, shows a
greater receptivity than Coleridge to entertain the possibilities afforded by the spoken and
the colloquial.

Another aspect of Arnold’s elevation of the status of the colloquial at Rugby
emerges from his own linguistic performances in the various ecclesiastical and political
polemics that he participated in throughout the 1830s. Arnold’s writing was not
characterized by the sober, learned tones and cadences of the Greek and Latin authors
that he so admired. Rather, almost all who commented on Arnold’s language noted its
energy, its urgency and its vehemence. As one of his Tractarian adversaries, J.B. Mozley,
noted: “He wielded a pen...as if it were a ferrule” (Fitch 139). More often than not,
Arnold’s language inspired comments that identified it in similar terms as an almost
tangible force. Such accounts speak to the quality and quantity of emotion in Arnold’s
language, and for as much as he might advocate the lucid clarity and serenity of the
classics on the one hand, his own language was marked by a commitment to feeling and
emotion. However, the key venue in which the colloquial interests of Thomas Arnold, that
served to complement his cautious liberal reforms of the classical curriculum, were most
discernible was the Rugby Chapel. John Chandos, in what is generally a scathing
account of Thomas Arnold, views the rehabilitation of the chapel and weekly sermon to
the center of school life as one of Arnold’s few accomplishments. Arnold’s sermons
quickly became a central dimension of the Rugby experience as “[t]he pulpit was
Arnold’s special domain” (Chandos 277). In the language of his sermons, Arnold both
advocates and manifests his belief in the efficacy of living, earnest, and vehement speech
and an interest in the power and variety of the plain, “real” language of men. Arnold’s
sermons occasioned a great deal of comment from those who witnessed them on
precisely this point, and they lingered in the auditors’s memories long after his death.
Hughes remembers in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*:

More worthy pens than mine have described that scene:-the oak pulpit
standing out by itself above the school seats; the tall gallant form, the
kindling eye, the voice, now soft as the low notes of a flute, now clear and
stirring as the call of a light infantry bugle, of him who stood there Sunday
after Sunday, witnessing and pleading for his Lord, the king of
righteousness and love and glory, with whose spirit he was filled and in
whose power he spoke. (Hughes 141)
While Hughes’s encomium notes the variety of Arnold’s linguistic prowess, Stanley and others remembered the simplicity, directness and force of the Headmaster’s language: “Yet, though he spoke with almost conversational plainness on the peculiar condition of the public schools, his language never left an impression of familiarity, rarely of personal allusion” (Stanley 169). Arnold eschewed conventional pulpit jargon and phraseology in his sermons and as McCrum notes: “such fervour of delivery, such earnest seriousness of language, plain and unadorned by literary device, got through to all but the youngest of his audience” (47). In spite of the connections and parallels with German Romantic philology or Edmund Burke, Arnold’s advocacy of speech that is plain, direct, forceful, and rooted in emotion and feelings, ultimately, owes more to the poetics and linguistic thought of William Wordsworth than any other context.

Arnold had long been an admirer of Wordsworth before they became Cumberland neighbors in the 1830s, having been introduced to Wordsworth’s work as an undergraduate and finding that “Wordsworth’s poems did inspire him: he found the language beautiful and the philosophy uplifting” (Wymer 41). In later years Wordsworth and his poetry would become a familiar presence in the Arnold circle. While there was often little sympathy between Thomas Arnold’s liberalism and Wordsworth’s later conservatism, the headmaster admired the poet’s language and could still conclude to Matthew after a contentious political argument with the elderly poet: “What beautiful English the old man talks” (Williamson 43). Arnold’s interest in Wordsworth’s earlier advocacy of a plain, direct, “real” language of men is the important source in his own linguistic performances in print and in the Rugby Chapel.
It is not surprising, given this interest in Wordsworth and the importance of colloquial speech, that several of Clough’s early poems explore this topic, and particularly the relationship between the nature and efficacy of the spoken versus the written word that the Romantic philology, of which Wordsworth was a part, had raised.

In “The First of the Dead,” the speaker describes his initial encounter with the grief arising from the death of family member—indeed this case a sister. The literary accounts of death that once had the power to move the speaker are summarily dismissed: “Yes, I have read full often of the dying and the dead./And from mine eye a tear belike hath started as I read” (7-8). Earlier in the poem, the speaker notes the contrast between the words actually spoken by the dying sister and the formulaic, literary words of, again, the Book of Common Prayer: “And we have heard the dying word of hope and humble trust./And the hollow tones of the crumbling mould, that mutter dust to dust” (3-4). The spoken words, rooted in the experience itself, overwhelm the language of the lingua communis here. Whereas in “Verses from the School House” the same phrase from “The Burial of the Dead” had spanned time and added solemnity to the experience, here it is hollow, lifeless and ineffective. The “crumbling mould” can refer, I think, to the church where the service itself is performed but also to the very words of the Prayer Book itself. Elsewhere, in “An Answer to Memory,” Clough offers perhaps his most vehement defense of the virtues of speech. The poem is reminiscent of Wordsworth’s poems on a similar topic, “Expostulation and Reply” and “The Tables Turned” in Lyrical Ballads. Clough presents one side of a colloquy debating the respective merits of experience and memory. The speaker advocates for the former:

It was but an ignorant tongue that said
The Muses were Memory’s daughters,
And better I love the moon above
Than her picture in the waters.
Then talk not to me of the distant blue,
Or of Memory’s magical glasses,
And deem not her softer and milder hue,
The present bliss surpasses. (11-18)

In the course of his defense of the present and experience, the speaker raises the issue of language. The speaker posits that the language that emerges from experience and feeling is more genuine and legitimate than the language produced by memory and reflection:

That thus thou wouldst bridle man’s full heart,
Bid the eager tongue refuse its part,
And the new-winged spirit fly not?
The calmer soul in the day of its rest
Its thoughts to the past may carry,
But I love best the burning breast,
And the tongue that will not tarry.
Go thou to thy desk, and look to thy ink,
See the pen be nibbed anew;
But I will stand on the mountain’s brink
And gaze on the Ocean’s blue.
Yea, come thou too–and thou shalt know
By thy bosom’s strong and eager glow,
And the yearning heart within thee,
And thy tardy tongue unlocked and free,
And thy words that flow spontaneously,
That the Present too can win thee;
That there is a strain as vivid and true,
And a melody purer and sweeter,
Than the artful rhymes of after times,
And Memory’s polished metre. (22-42, italics mine)

Here, Clough advocates a version of the Wordsworthian “real” language of men with an emphasis on its immediacy, purity, vividness and truth—in short a genuine language opposed to the artificial language of reflection and memory. In the following section, Clough’s language attempts to capture this immediacy and spontaneity through a sudden irruption of conjunctions:
So fair a vision comes of trees,
And streams, and rocks, and mighty seas,
And pleasant sights, and sounds, and places,
And high desires, and aims awoken,
And high resolves still made, still broken,
And hopes, and loves, and loving faces,
And kindly looks, and kindest deeds,
And tears... (47-54)

“The First of the Dead” and “An Answer to Memory” explore Clough’s engagement with Thomas Arnold’s interest and advocacy of a Wordsworthian real language of men, just as “The Close of the Eighteenth Century” and “Verses from the School House” engage with aspects of the Coleridgean tradition. Arnold’s practice and advocacy of plain, direct, real language, rooted in feeling, in his polemical prose but mostly from the Rugby Chapel pulpit draws heavily on Wordsworth and raises the status of the spoken vernacular just as his revisions of the Rugby curriculum had raised the status of English as a whole.

This, then, is the specific liberalism that characterizes the Broad Church orientation to language. It offers a critique, not a rejection, of the hegemonic eighteenth-century theory of language by questioning and revising the assumptions upon which it is founded. In so doing Arnold is able to draw on what he perceives to be its real strengths while attempting to elide its reactionary political implications. While it is true that radicals such as Horne Tooke and Jeremy Bentham had attempted to harness the epistemological orientation of eighteenth-century language study to progressive political and social causes, Thomas Arnold equally deplored the extremes of “Red Jacobinism” and “White Jacobinism” and attempted to steer a middle course. Arnold challenged the hegemonic theory of language’s assumption of the inferiority of English to Greek and Latin by forwarding a version of Coleridge’s lingua communis through an infusion of
historical and comparative awareness into his pedagogical practices vis-a-vis the classical curriculum at Rugby. However, he also sought a space for a Wordsworthian view of language by simultaneously promoting the legitimacy (not the supremacy) of speech by his plain-spoken, direct colloquial sermons, his vehement language in public pamphlets and his scholarly interest in spoken language and dialects.

Thomas Arnold’s blending of Wordsworthian and Coleridgean ideas also informs his one extended piece of writing on poetics—a Preface commissioned for the volume The Poetry of Common Life. Arnold’s Preface is obviously indebted to Wordsworth and is as Biswas notes: “a simplified and condensed version of the major arguments in Wordsworth’s Preface to Lyrical Ballads” (49). Arnold does indeed echo Wordsworth in locating the origin and nature of poetry in the expression of emotion when he writes: “By poetry we mean certain feelings expressed in certain language. Poetical feelings are merely, all the highest and purest feelings of our nature—feelings therefore, which, considering what we generally are, cannot be but of rare occurrence” (252). Arnold also follows Wordsworth’s universalizing impulse by suggesting that these “certain feelings” are not exclusive to a refined and cultured segment of the population but are common to all. From there Arnold offers a definition of poetic language:

Our words, our style, nay, our very tone of voice, naturally vary according to the temper of our minds. When we are feeling any strong passion it instantly alters our manner of speaking from that which we practise on common occasion. It clears away all that is mean and vulgar, all that is dull and tiresome in our language; and renders it at once spirited, noble and pithy. The mind being highly excited, becomes more than usually active; it catches with great quickness every impression given by surrounding objects; it seize saply every point in which they may seem to express sympathy with its own feelings. Hence its language is full of images and comparisons; it is unusually rich and beautiful, that is, it crowds together a number of ideas in a short space, and expresses them in
the most lively manner, because its conception of them is keen and vivid. Again, the very tone of the voice is altered, it becomes more rapid and animated and the flow of our words is less broken and more measured and musical, than in common unexcited conversation...Poetical language is, in truth, the language of excited feeling; and this is what is meant by saying that as every man has been in a state of poetical mind at some time or other of his life, so every man must have in some degree, however imperfect, expressed himself at times in poetical language. (253-254)

While such a definition has the appearance of detail, it is in reality strategically general and abstract. Arnold never specifies, advocates or discourages particular choices of diction, syntax, metaphor and meter. All of these choices are contingent on the nature of the feeling to be expressed as well as the position of the speaker. It is a comprehensive and inclusive vision of poetic language by its lack of proscription and advocacy of any particular style. Tellingly, Arnold’s example of poetic language is not Wordsworthian despite the Preface’s overtones. Rather he turns to a monument from England’s literary past—a summit in the landscape of England’s lingua communis—the language of the Authorized Version in the Book of Job. While Arnold does admit with Wordsworth that the linguistic values of the previous century have appropriated the title of poetic language, he backs away from an endorsement of Wordsworthian poetic language, accepting Wordsworth’s ideas on poetic language while not necessarily rejecting the language of the eighteenth-century that Wordsworth attacked. Also, the volume is, significantly, entitled The Poetry of Common Life. There are distinct Coleridgean overtones implied by the use of “common” and Arnold wants to advocate for a common poetic language—something different but comprehensive of Wordsworth’s real language of men—a lingua communis that is broader in scope than Coleridge’s formulation.31
Arnold’s attempt, awkward or idealistic as it may be, to offer a comprehensive vision of language emerges from his own particular inflection and contribution to the Broad Church movement. That contribution was the stress that Arnold laid on the importance of the “comprehension” of denominations as a strategy to vitiate the dangers of the antagonistic relationship between the Anglican establishment and the Dissenting sects. He expressed his vision of a comprehensive National Church with a famous military metaphor in *Principles of Church Reform* where the different Protestant congregations are as “different tribes [that] should act together as it were in one army and under one command, yet should each retain the arms and manner of fighting with which habit has made them most familiar” (O’Connell 78). Arnold’s proposal for a kind of ecclesiastical pluralism to combat the self-destructive evils of sectarianism within the Church is reflected in an attitude to language that looks to comprehend under the banner of “English” the linguistic version of Disraeli’s “two nations” that had emerged in the preceding fifty years. Arnold’s view of the English language parallels his view of the English Church in that it is, among other things: “thoroughly national, thoroughly united...should allow great varieties of opinion, and of ceremonies, and of forms...according to the various knowledge, and habits, and tempers of its members” (Copley 212). The linguistic equivalents of these great varieties of “opinion,” “ceremonies” and “forms” are things such as “styles,” “registers,” and “vocabularies.” This comprehensiveness is not unique to Arnold and finds parallel expression, albeit in a different key, in the popular work of Thomas Arnold’s friends and fellow Broad Church pioneers, Julius and Augustus Hare’s *Guesses at Truth*. Although, largely remembered for its popularizing of the idea of the Volkstimme that was so central to Romantic
philology in the famous maxim that “languages are the barometers of national thought and character,” *Guesses at Truth* offers a comprehensive, moderately liberal approach to language reminiscent of Thomas Arnold’s views. Furthermore, Arnold’s comprehensive vision of English that would bring together the various registers and manifestations of the language is echoed in an interesting, if insensitive passage, that ends with Hare’s assertion that Arnold’s own language is a model of comprehension:

A sort of English has been very prevalent during the last hundred years, in which the sentences have a meaning, but the words have little or none. As in the middling landscape, the general outlines may be correct, and the forms distinguishable, while the details are indefinite, and hazy and confused. So here the abstract proposition designed to be expressed is so but hardly a word is used which half a dozen synonyms would have stood equally well;...This may be called Scotch English;...Their precedence in this respect is intimately connected with their having been our principal writers on metaphysical subjects since the days of Locke and Shaftesbury and Thomas Burnet and Berkeley and Butler...attaching little importance to anything but abstractions, and being almost without an eye for anything but colorless shadows, they merge whatever is individual with that which is generic, and let this living universe of infinite variety drop out of sight...Opposite to this, and almost the converse of it, is Irish English, in which every word taken by itself means, or is meant to mean something; but he who looks for any meaning in a sentence might as well look for a mountain in St. Giles’...no style is so well suited for scribblers in magazines and journals,...what then is English English? It is the combination of the two; not that vulgar combination in which they would neutralize, but that in which they would strengthen and give effect to each other; where the unity of the whole is not disturbed by the elaborate thrusting forward of the parts;...the exquisite purity of Wordsworth’s English has often been acknowledged. An author in whose pages the combination is almost always realized and many of whose sentences are like crystals, each separate word in them being a lucid crystal... Arnold’s style is worthy of his manly understanding and the noble simplicity of his character. (232)

*Guesses at Truth* tends to confirm much of the general spirit of Thomas Arnold’s teaching at Rugby and the text did indeed circulate among the students. Clough was
among its greatest admirers at the school, writing in one of his Rugby diaries: “O Julius Hare, thou are very good and wise” (Balliol MS).

The difficulty of addressing the competing impulses comprehended under the Broad Church orientation to language is displayed in Clough’s poem “The Poacher of Dead Man’s Corner.” The poem relates the story of Edward Green, a local poacher, who witnesses the supernatural pageant of his own funeral procession late one evening as he returns home from a profitable night’s work. Unsettled and cursed in the manner of Coleridge’s Mariner to simply repeat his experience again and again, Green does indeed die a few days later. Not only is the poem’s subject matter reminiscent of *Lyrical Ballads*, the narrator announces at the outset a commitment to Wordsworthian linguistic and aesthetic values, as evidenced by the conspicuous repetition in the following lines: A lay to thee–a simple lay I bring;/A simple tale, as simply told, is here/.../Mine is a humbler muse, yet do not scorn her” (2-7). The central sections of the poem that tell the Poacher’s story embody many aspects of a Wordsworthian approach to language through the adoption of a more conversational tone and colloquial interjections such as “Well, then” (38) and “Pshaw” (76). The language of the middle sections of the poem is also characterized by persistent alliteration and the use of philologically charged words such as “strowed” (47) and “trow” (67, 86), all of which evokes, not strictly a Wordsworthian view of language, but an older model of English that advocates of the Romantic philology, of which Wordsworth was a part, claimed represented a more genuine incarnation of the language. Yet, all of the elements of Wordsworth and Romantic philology in the center of the poem are surrounded by a frame. The poem does not begin with the narrator announcing the “simple” lay that he is about to sing. That
announcement is a marker that distinguishes the largely Wordsworthian and Romantic center of the poem from the frame which addresses the “Reader” of this particular number of the *Rugby Magazine*. The frame also pokes fun at the ballad tradition:

No faery sprites have I whereof to sing
Nor headless dames, nor riders quaint and queer
Nor elves all dancing in the faery ring—

‘I can call spirits from the vasty deep,’
But they will come to none but Crofton Croker; (4-14)\(^3\)

At the end of the poem following the tale, the narrator resumes the frame by locating the tale in an older, oral tradition: “I tell the tale as one told to me” (207). The frame with its self-conscious literary language (including the poem’s one discernible allusion which is to Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*) and its ties to the written record as opposed to the tale’s oral status exposes Clough’s struggle to accommodate the comprehensive interests of Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language.

In a series of poems written towards the end of his Rugby career, Clough continues to work through, at different levels and in different keys, the theoretical implications and practical challenges posed by the expansiveness of the Broad Church orientation to language. In “Rosabel’s Dream”—a lengthy narrative poem set in an unspecified Medieval setting and detailing the series of unsettling dreams of the eponymous protagonist—Clough envisions a comprehensive, inclusive language characterized by the relatively tranquil and co-operative coexistence of the different social groups who are marked by their linguistic differences in the juxtaposed acts of naming Rosabel:

A sweeter maid than I may tell
Was the lovely lady Rosabel:
Never yet was a bright ladye
Named so oft or so kindly as she,
Were it by knights so comely and free,
Or barons bold of high degree
In tourney or in wassailry;
And Norman minstrels aye did use
To style her Stourton’s Fleur de Luce.
And Saxon churls and franklins bold
Her praises in the hostel told… (7-17)

The poem does not suggest a hierarchy of language communities but rather points to their
cooexistence at a macroscopic level as their various tributes in naming Lady Rosabel are
juxtaposed against each other.

On a different, more microscopic level, Clough offers a variation on the
exploration of the notion of comprehension in his poem “The Effusions of a School
Patriarch.” Once again, Thomas Arnold’s idea of the coexistence of different ways of
speaking finds expression in Clough’s poem. In this case it is not the Saxon and Norman
ways of naming and speaking but rather the widely separated registers of a specifically
Rugby and schoolboy argot versus high literary style. Two stanzas from the poem
demonstrate this:

When new boys on the pump were
Set to pelt at and to sing,
Or sent from the close to Pendred’s
For a penny-worth of string;
In the days when fags a long hour
In the passage had to stand,
In the days of happy night-fags,--
There were giants in the land!

When the Sixth and Fifth-Form fellows
Had all been duly ‘chaired’,
And he who told a falsehood
Was ‘cobbed” and never spared;
And we walked around the School-field
With our breakfast in our hand,
‘Ere the days of tea and coffee,--
There were giants in the land! (9-24)

The specialized language of the Rugby schoolboy slang (“fag”, “chaired”, “cobbed” etc.)
is juxta posed here with an almost direct quotation from the Authorized Version
describing the Ante-Diluvian race of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4: “There were giants in
the earth in those days.” The poem dramatizes a collision between the most ephemeral,
fleeting, colloquial elements of any language (slang) and its most permanent, enduring
elements (canonical literary language). Here, as Clough works through the challenges
posed by the inclusive nature of Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language,
we see in embryonic form the exploration of the relationship between different linguistic
registers that figures so prominently over a decade later in *The Bothie of Tober-Na-
Vuolich*.

In Clough’s final Rugby poem, we have yet another example of the exploratory
nature of Clough’s language. “A Stray Valentine” is a sonnet that is a meditation on the
nature of proper names. The octave groups a series of names according to various
criteria:

Oh, bright as Heavenly Love, as Heavenly Truth
Pure, and as Heavenly Beauty beautiful,
Art thou, blest ‘Mary’! And there is a cool
Violet-like fragrance in the name of ‘Ruth’.
How soft is ‘Rosamund’! And, though uncouth,
How lovely too ‘Rebecca’! Then again
‘Patty’ and ‘Susan’ meek home-flowers–and ‘Jane’
And ‘Janet, sober sounds, yet sweet in sooth. (1-8)

It appears that the names are placed in quotations here to draw attention to their status as
names. “Mary” and “Ruth” take on their power by virtue of their religious associations
with the Bible. On the other hand, “Rosamund” and “Rebecca” are assessed on the basis
of their onomatopoeic properties. “Patty,” “Susan,” “Jane” and “Janet” seem to be
judged by their common usage and familiarity to an English audience. The sestet
considers one final name that is assessed according to its literary associations:

But one dear name there is,—not all unknown
To Poet’s lofty strain—whose silver tone
Brings me the image of a fair bright bride
And makes my tingling blood beat fast and high,
Oh, all the rest may perish, so but I
In the soft light of Lucy’s love abide. (9-14)

The significance of the poem lies again in its attempt to comprehend a variety of types of
linguistic expression; in this case proper names whose effect is rooted in literary
association, common usage, the onomatopoeic quality of their pronunciation. Although
the logic of the sonnet’s structure does clearly suggest a preference for ‘Lucy,’ the poem
continues to display Clough’s attempts to explore the implications of the comprehensive
spirit of the Broad Church orientation to language.

Arnold’s broadening of Coleridge’s lingua communis to comprehend a Romantic
and particularly Wordsworthian elevation of the spoken, colloquial and plain language is
ironic in the sense that Coleridge’s concept of the lingua communis had been formulated
in the Biographia Literaria as part of his critique of Wordsworth’s rustic speech—his
stereoscopic lingua communis positing a response to the perceived myopia of a
Wordsworthian “real language of men.” Arnold, however, felt that a more inclusive
language (as well as a more inclusive National Church) was absolutely necessary for the
changed political and social circumstances of the day. Thus, this Broad Church
orientation to language emerges in a specific context as the Reform Act, for whatever it
had accomplished, had failed to change things radically and had also brought several problems into even greater relief. Thomas Arnold was acutely sensitive to the effects of England’s industrialization and the concomitant alienation between rich and poor that was further exacerbated by the growing prominence of the middle classes as his long letters to the Sheffield Courant and Hertford Reformer throughout the 1830s evidence. Uncomfortable with the solutions of ultra-radicalism and ultra-traditionalism, whether in politics, religion or language, Arnold was still faced with a deeply divided country—a division that extended to its very linguistic roots as he wrote in The Sheffield Courant: “The rich and poor have each a distinct language, the language of the rich being that of books and being full of French words derived from Roman ancestors, while that of the poor retains its Anglo-Saxon character” (Fitch 124). Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language, like his interpretation of the Church itself, is meant to serve as a reconciling force. Clough demonstrates a particular interest in Dr. Arnold’s idea of the co-existence in England and in English of the separate Norman/Latin and Anglo-Saxon dialects and how these two languages within the language might co-exist. In an essay from The Rugby Magazine on Macaulay’s “The Battle of Ivry,” Clough envisions the efficacy and co-operative effect of a poetic diction largely drawn from the Anglo-Saxon as a way of balancing the Latin and classical emphasis provided by the adoption of the Alexandrine:

Now, there are two very important rules that we may draw for our guidance in the writing of this metre, from a very slight examination. The first is an old and a good one, namely, to select words of Saxon origin in preference to those of French-Latin derivation. The rule has, perhaps, been applied in some cases with an almost affected scrupulousness; but none can hesitate a moment in pronouncing it absolutely necessary here. We must have strong and vivid words—‘words like pictures,’ to relieve the monotony caused by the lazy length to which this verse stretches itself out. The chaste simplicity of the Doric pillar may suit well to the polished
marble of Paros; but our ruder materials must be relieved by all the carving and chiseling with which the hand of the Gothic mason can cover it. “The pomp and prodigality of heaven,” with all its vague grandeur, suits not this metre; and though we must be grateful to the assisting influence of that other element in our language, it is not there that we must look for aid in composing a poem like the “Battle of Ivry.” (35)

In many ways the Broad Church orientation to language with its mediating and inclusive energies is an ideal language for the expanding middle classes and their aspirations. It also seems serendipitously appropriate for a young poet such as Clough who, as Biswas notes, was well aware of his divided social heritage: “from one angle [the Cloughs] were clearly gentry and could claim by social right the attitudes and values of that class; from another, their origins were as clearly mercantile. Socially their place was ambiguous” (10). Further, The Broad Church orientation also poses special problems and opportunities for the aspiring poet. As a version of Coleridge’s clerisy, the aspiring poet who subscribes to the Broad Church orientation to language is tied to both preserving and advancing the language and reconciling its heterogeneity in the context of early Victorian England’s changing social polity. Faced with the realities of a more diffused audience and a diminished role for poetry, but also armed with a more comprehensive view of language representative of a changing England, a poet such as Clough attempts to define an important and increasing modern role for poetry and the poet in the nineteenth century. This was Clough’s choice, but there were other options available to the aspiring poet, even at Rugby in the 1830s.

“A True Son of Hursley”: Keble and the Language of Matthew Arnold’s Juvenilia

Towards the end of August of 1837 as Clough prepared for his Oxford departure later that autumn he noted a significant new arrival in the School in a letter to J.N. Simpkinson: “Matt Arnold is in the School and the Upper 5th. His Compos. Tutor is Lee, his Mathematical, Price—a balance of favour, I suppose” (63). Clough’s and Arnold’s tenures at Rugby ran consecutively not concurrently (the remained acquaintances rather
than friends at this point), and so while Clough was establishing himself in his rooms at Balliol College in October 1837, Matthew Arnold was in the early stages of his own Rugby career, having previously spent time at his uncle John Buckland’s school in Laleham and a year at his father’s public school alma mater, Winchester. This detail of chronology and Matthew Arnold’s Winchester sojourn, to which I will return, are important, however, since the Rugby that Matthew Arnold passed through between 1837 and 1841 was, in many respects, markedly different from the one where Clough had excelled earlier in the decade. Matthew Arnold’s years at Rugby witness the zenith of the Tractarian ascendancy at Oxford and beyond. This ascendancy and subsequent decline was tied to the nadir of Thomas Arnold’s public reputation as a headmaster and ecclesiastical polemicist and the rehabilitation of his public image culminating with his appointment to the Oxford Chair in Modern History. Nonetheless, during the entire period of Matthew Arnold’s time at Rugby his father was bitterly engaged with the Tractarians at Oxford (through the Hampden Affair, the controversy over the Martyrs’s Memorial, the Poetry Professorship election and Newman’s *Tract 90*). Further, his godfather John Keble, the acknowledged if largely absent father of the Oxford Movement, was completing a second, highly successful term as Oxford Professor of Poetry and sales of his volume of devotional poetry *The Christian Year* continued at an astonishing pace. It is in this context of his father’s troubles with the Tractarians and his godfather’s increasing veneration as one of the age’s most popular poets and respected critics that Matthew Arnold grew increasingly interested in Keble’s work. Although he had always had a strong place in the Arnold family circle (as I will elucidate below) Keble now emerges more forcefully for Matthew Arnold in the early stages of his poetic apprenticeship. Like Clough, Arnold was also uneasy about his sense of poetic vocation and an appropriate medium. Language appears to have always been a troublesome
aspect of Matthew Arnold’s youth ever since his first Latin lesson in February 1828. But rather than turn to his father’s Broad Church orientation to language as Clough had in large part, Matthew Arnold added a linguistic aspect to his well-documented filial rebellion by turning to the High Church orientation to language of his godfather John Keble.

Matthew Arnold’s exposure to the ideas of John Keble is both typical and unique among nineteenth-century readers. For the Arnolds, like so many other Victorian families, Keble was known as the author of the most popular volume of poetry of the day. *The Christian Year* went through a remarkable ninety-two editions in Keble’s lifetime and G.B. Tennyson notes its broadly ecumenical appeal:

> Letters, autobiographies, reminiscences and novels for the rest of the century teem with testimony to the way in which *The Christian Year* became part of the fabric of Victorian life. Not only the Tractarians and their circle, not only the High Churchmen and the upper middle classes generally, but also Low Churchmen, Evangelicals, Dissenters and non Churchmen came to know and value *The Christian Year*. (Tennyson 228)

Keble’s poems insinuated themselves into the daily lives of the Arnold family and were quite literally on everyone’s lips. Various biographers of members of the Arnold family have related stories of Thomas Arnold memorizing and reciting passages from *The Christian Year* while he worked in his garden or a young Matthew Arnold facing the task of memorizing one of Keble’s hymns before the leg braces that he wore as a young child to treat a case of the rickets were removed: “The braces were removed in the evening, when with the dreadful fetters standing by in the large sleeping nursery the boy learned to ‘repeat’ Keble’s lyrics in exchange for his mother’s ardent attention” (Honan 12). Years later, Thomas Arnold’s granddaughter, Mary Ward, imaginatively recreated the Fox How
household with “its strong religious atmosphere, its daily Psalms and lessons, its love for
‘The Christian Year’” (Ward 37). Such a portrait is echoed by A.P. Stanley who
describes a typical Sunday evening at Rugby as including: “The common reading of a
chapter in the Bible every Sunday evening, with repetition of hymns or parts of Scripture,
by every member of the family” and highlighted by “the devotion with which he [Thomas
Arnold] would himself repeat his favourite poems from the Christian Year, or his
favourite passages from the Gospels” (Arnold 236).

Clearly Keble’s poems were well-known to the Arnold family and their Rugby
circle, and critics have pointed to the echoes of The Christian Year in Matthew Arnold’s
early poem “On First Leaving Home for a Public School”:

One of the first things that Matthew did on arrival at Winchester was to
write another poem, Lines written on first leaving home for a Public
School. It bears the mark of his enforced rote learning of his godfather
John Keble’s The Christian Year (1827) and is a rather lugubrious
production which shows that entry to his father’s old school did not fill
Matthew with any eager anticipation. (Murray 25)

Clearly this is at least part of what Tom Arnold had in mind when he noted the presence
of The Christian Year in his brother’s prize poem. Clough was not immune to this either.
Keble’s collection provided a resource of images, tropes and lines that were echoed and
reechoed in much of Clough’s juvenilia. For example, in the poem “An Apology”
Clough writes:

Yea, thou hast come, and in the morn
I quickly leave my slothful bed,
Ere scattered are the mists of dawn
Or the hot sun is overhead.
The dew is bright, and in the trees
The leaves are singing to the breeze
And oh! my heart is in me stirred. (41-48)
This echoes the first poem in *The Christian Year*, “Morning”:

Thou rustling breeze so fresh and gay  
That dancest forth at opening day,  
And brushing by with joyous wing,  
Wakenest each little leaf to sing…(4-8)

Elsewhere, in the contemporaneous poem “Lines” the speaker is unable to respond sympathetically and imaginatively to the natural world:

For I am sure as I can be,  
That they who have been wont to look  
On all in Nature’s face they see,  
Even as in the Holy Book;  
They who with pure and humble eyes  
Have gazed, and read her lessons high,  
And taught their spirits to be wise  
In love and human sympathy,  
That they can soon and surely tell  
When aught has gone amiss within,  
When the mind is not sound and well,  
Nor the soul free from taint and sin. (17-28)

Clough echoes the famous opening lines of Keble’s poem for “Septuagesima Sunday”

There is a book, who runs may read,  
Which heavenly truth imparts,  
And all the lore its scholars need,  
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.  
The works of God above, below,  
Within us and around,  
Are pages in that book, to shew  
How God himself is found. (1-8)

These “Anklänge” are also not surprising given that figures such as Wordsworth, John Ruskin, Florence Nightingale, George Eliot, A.E. Houseman and William Ewart Gladstone among others all left positive testimonials to *The Christian Year*. It is true that Houseman’s claim that “there are things in *The Christian Year* that can be admired by atheists” or Bishop Westcott’s assertion that “one verse of Keble was worth volumes of
Tennyson” (Cruse 48) are misguided hyperbole but they do indicate the relative symbolic capital that was attached to Keble’s name and work. An example of this can be found in Matthew Arnold’s second place entry in the Rugby Latin prose competition of autumn 1837, shortly after his arrival at the school from the Tractarian stronghold of Winchester. Arnold’s entry that autumn was ultimately unsuccessful but his essay is noteworthy not so much for the quality of its Latin but for the fact that among the English epigraphs and quotations, which included selections from Byron, Pope and Southey, that Arnold sprinkled liberally throughout the text is one from Keble’s *The Christian Year*:

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E’en round the Death bed of the good
Such dear Remembrances will hover
And haunt us with no rescuing mood
When all the Cares of Life are over.
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To endorse Keble’s work by such an appropriation is certainly somewhat daring but also indicative of the high regard with which his work was held even at Rugby as one of the headmaster’s ecclesiastical opponents.

For as much as Matthew Arnold’s exposure to and admiration of Keble was typical of many Victorians, it was also unique by virtue of the fact that Keble was an erstwhile family friend as well as his godfather. Thomas Arnold had first met Keble at Corpus Christi just as the latter was finishing an undergraduate career in which he would be among the first to take a Double First under Oxford’s newly implemented Honours system. Thomas Arnold followed Keble to Oriel for his fellowship where he came under the influence of the Oriel Noetics—a group with which Keble had little sympathy. Nevertheless, the two remained close and Keble counseled Arnold through a period of doubt preceding ordination. The strengthening bond was cemented by Arnold’s 1823
invitation to Keble to serve as godfather to his eldest son, Matthew. The friendship remained strong until Arnold’s support for Roman Catholic Emancipation at the end of the decade, which initiated a gradual and eventually deep estrangement. In happier days, however, Thomas Arnold’s friendship with John Keble afforded Matthew Arnold a more intensive exposure to Keble’s ideas, beyond admiration for *The Christian Year*, that became the foundation for the more substantive connection that exists between Keble and Matthew Arnold. This more extensive exposure to Keble involves an immersion in Keble’s aesthetic thinking that, while fully articulated in the *Lectures on Poetry*, was first elucidated in shorter pieces including Keble’s Oxford prize essay on translation, his periodical review essay “Sacred Poetry” in the *Quarterly Review* of which Thomas Arnold wrote: “How pure and beautiful was J. Keble’s article on Sacred Poetry in the Quarterly, and how glad am I that he was prevailed on to write it. It seems to me to sanctify in a manner the whole number” (Stanley 80) and other pieces. Keble’s High Church aesthetic ideas were available and accessible to the Arnold circle and circulating within these aesthetic ideas was an attitude to language. It was through this more extended and specialized exposure to Keble’s occasional aesthetic writing along with *The Christian Year* and the *Lectures on Poetry* that Matthew Arnold came to intuit a High Church orientation to language which was equally indebted to Romantic aesthetic and linguistic debate, but which held dramatically different implications for an apprentice poet than Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language. This attitude to language, remains like the ideas of Thomas Arnold, an orientation rather than a fully developed and articulated theory. Keble’s ideas about language, however, emerge from a
narrower range of texts than those of Thomas Arnold, namely his writing on aesthetic
topics as well as the poems of The Christian Year.

Because Keble’s views on language emerge and are best approached from his
aesthetic theory, a brief overview of its basic tenets is necessary before turning to his
specific views on language and their importance for the early poetry of Matthew Arnold.
Keble’s aesthetic theory remained remarkably consistent over the course of his career. It
received its fullest articulation in the forty lectures he delivered over two terms as Oxford
Professor of Poetry, later published under the title De Poetica via Medica, which
consolidated a poetics that had been developing since 1814. Given the extensive network
of communication and connection between the Oxford colleges and Rugby, it is likely
that reports of these lectures filtered north to the school. Even if this is not the case,
Keble’s ideas in the lectures were expressed elsewhere, often in condensed form and
using different terminology, in the Advertisement to The Christian Year, the
aforementioned essay “Sacred Poetry” and his review of Lockhart’s Life of Scott.

While the lectures offer the fullest articulation of Keble’s theory and address
auxiliary concerns such as the relationship between poetry and religion and the
classification of primary and secondary poets, Keble’s theory of poetry ultimately rests
upon two linked principles that he stated and restated throughout all of his writing. In the
lectures, Keble offers his most famous definition of poetry and suggests that it is “a kind
of medicine, divinely bestowed on man, which gives healing relief to secret mental
emotion or overpowering sorrow, yet without detriment to modest reserve, and while
giving scope to enthusiasm yet rules it with order and due control” (qtd. Warren 65) The
essay on Lockhart’s Life of Scott (1838) was particularly important in offering a succinct,
published restatement of ideas that Keble had been developing in his lectures. Here he offers a variation on his central definition of poetry: “Poetry is the indirect expression in words, most appropriately in metrical words of some overpowering emotion or ruling taste or feeling, the direct indulgence whereof is somehow repressed” (6). Keble’s qualified expressivist position was thus aired in numerous venues throughout the 1830s.

Keble’s central idea about poetry is that it is the expression of overwhelming emotion and provides a measure of relief to the poet overcome by passion. The genesis of poetry occurs when the poet finds her/himself overburdened:

The mind indeed, oppressed and overcome by a crowd of great thought, pressing in upon it at one and the same time, knew not where to turn, and sought for some such relief and solace for itself as tears give to the worn out body. (21)

Poetry is the act of unburdening the mind of those emotions in the expressive act. Like many other expressivist theorists of poetry, Keble conceives of poetry as a process and one that can be applied to a variety of media or contexts, so that it is legitimate to speak of a poetry of painting, of sculpture, of music, even of landscape (God’s act of expression) or religion. While Keble’s lectures forward the basic idea of poetry as the expression of the poet’s emotion or passion, Keble does not ignore the other, more rhetorical, implications and possibilities of his central tenet. The relief felt by the poet in the relief granted by the expression of emotion can be experienced by readers or audiences who can enjoy a similarly cathartic experience, by proxy, in the consumption of poetry. As Keble noted in his “Advertisement” to The Christian Year, it was his hope that the poems would soothe the readers just as the composition of the poems had soothed
the poet. It is in the idea that poetry can provide a healing relief by unburdening (and presumably uplifting) the overwrought mind through the expressive act that allows Keble to forge an analogy between poetry and religion, which performs similar work on a grander and wider scale with poetry acting as the handmaiden to religion. Clough himself seems to have briefly flirted with adopting some of Keble’s ideas. In a series of poems written in the spring and early summer of 1836, a time when Dr. Arnold’s popularity had reached new lows because of “The Oxford Malignants” essay of which many, including Clough, disapproved, Clough displays a stronger interest in the poetry and poetic theory of John Keble. In “The Exordium of a Very Long Poem,” Clough offers a distinctively Kebleian theory of poetry as something of a divine origin that provides healing relief. In the humorous “An Apology” for The Rugby Magazine, Clough enfold a version of Keble’s theory of poetry in the midst of a light account of his procrastination and writer’s block:

Least, of all forget I thee
Thou gentle power of poesy
...
I have not lost (oh first come death!)
The gentle thoughts that spring at even,
The love and hope and humble faith,
The ‘angel’s food’ that falls from heaven;
Deep feelings yet my bosom fill (4-12)

The infatuation was, however, brief, and Clough soon returned to exploring the possibilities and problems of Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language.

Keble’s central poetic principle while linked to both Plato’s Ion (the idea of the overburdened and oppressed poet) and Aristotle’s Poetics (expression as relief/catharsis) parallels Wordsworth’s central idea that poetry is the “spontaneous overflow of powerful
feelings” and is even broadly similar to Thomas Arnold’s expressivist definition in his Preface to *The Poetry of Common Life*. However, Keble’s relationship with Wordsworth is problematic at best. In many ways Keble was a great admirer, having first been introduced to Wordsworth’s poetry by John Taylor Coleridge at Corpus Christi and eventually meeting Wordsworth at Oxford. He dedicated the *Lectures on Poetry* to him, and as William Beek points out, Wordsworth and Keble shared several fundamental convictions:

The point in Wordsworth’s theory that Keble appreciated most was that the feelings not the reason were said to be the source of poetry. Wordsworth defined all good poetry as consisting in ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’, feelings that had been stirred by a sense of the higher spiritual truth underlying all visible phenomena. Keble made it a central point of his theory that the essence of all real poetry is to be found in the depth of the heart and the most sacred feelings of the men who write. (Beek 84)

Keble shares an expressive view of poetry with Wordsworth but he also takes a stronger view as to the religious function of poetry in a society. In his belief that poetry, by unburdening the mind via expression, could provide a kind of healing relief of a decidedly spiritual character and nature in a manner akin to religion, Keble forwards what is essentially a sacramental view of poetry or that “poetry partakes of the nature of the sacrament” (Griffin 58). Such a view matches Keble’s particular, and pre-Tractarian, interpretation of Anglican High Church theology and his Butlerian-inflected sacramental conception of the natural world. Although Wordsworth did not go this far and offered a more complex interpretation of nature, he and Keble shared a generally similar view of poetry, nature and religion. Keble’s departure from Wordsworth would emerge from the
second and heretofore undiscussed aspect of Keble’s poetic theory—the issue of Reserve—from which emerge many of Keble’s ideas on language.

Wordsworth and Keble did diverge dramatically on the question of language. Indeed, Keble’s language in *The Christian Year* provoked strong comment, largely negative, by even those who admired the poems in a general sense. Thomas Arnold, who once claimed the poems of *The Christian Year* as among the finest of their type in the English language, would later indict what he claimed to be the weakness of the language of the collection. Hurrell Froude also found occasion to fault the language of his idol claiming that there was “something which I should call Sternhold-and-Hopkinsy about the diction” (Battiscombe 84). Finally, Wordsworth, perhaps recognizing and appreciating the kindred impulse from which his own poems emerged, praised the poems of *The Christian Year* in a general sense, but he too struggled with the language: “Wordsworth certainly approved of *The Christian Year* and Keble told Pusey that Wordsworth had once proposed to him that they should go over it together ‘with a view to correcting the English’” (Martin 125). Clearly then there was something strange or different about Keble’s language in that Thomas Arnold, Froude and Wordsworth found it alternately weak, old-fashioned, and artificial respectively. Yet it was Keble who perceived a problem not with his own language but rather Wordsworth’s language and the language of the other Romantic writers of the day. Very early in his career, Keble had censured the general drift of the Romantic linguistic project. Although he would eventually come to admire the piety and conservatism of the elderly Wordsworth and broadly agree with him on the origins of poetry in the primacy of feeling, he was starkly opposed to Wordsworth’s corresponding advocacy of a reform of English poetic diction.
It appears that Keble was among the very first of the Tory reviewers not simply to ridicule the linguistic experiments of *Lyrical Ballads* but also to belatedly perceive the radical implications of the “real” language of men. As Richard Turley notes:

“Conservative critics were soon to become acutely sensitized to the political resonance of linguistic experimentation—by attacking neoclassical theories of language and poetry, writers like Hunt and Keats were perceived to be chipping away at the values of high English culture articulated by and simultaneously producing these theories” (Turley 34).

Keble was among the first to indict Wordsworth’s language on similar grounds as early as 1815 in the *Quarterly Review*:

> Mr Wordsworth....aims at great simplicity in language; but even supposing no objections exist against the particular sort of which he is ambitious, still we must be permitted to observe, that mere simplicity of language is no merit at all if it is purchased at the expense of perspicuity and this is the price which our author is continually paying for it. (453)

Later, Keble would also censure Keats on linguistic grounds, linking him as other reactionary reviewers did with the more radical Leigh Hunt, who was himself seen as a disciple of Wordsworth. Writing of “Ode to a Nightingale,” Keble noted that: “In the descriptive parts the development of abstract sentiment there is more of effort and something very much like affectation approaching in one instance (the Nightingale) far nearer than we could wish, the most vicious of all styles, the style of Mr. Leigh Hunt and all his miserable followers” (87).

Keble’s views on the origins of poetry and the importance of feeling may be firmly planted in the Romantic tradition but the opinions of his language offered above by his contemporaries and his own critique of the language of much Romantic poetry locates his linguistic sensibilities very much in the eighteenth century. For Keble the
linguistic radicalism of Hunt, Keats and even Wordsworth had to be rejected even while other aspects of the Romantic project could be simultaneously accepted. Keble’s critique of Romanticism’s language emerges from his major conservative revision or departure from a broadly Wordsworthian poetics that he had been advocating. Keble’s attack on the language of the Romantics and his own High Church orientation to language emerges from the centrality of the concept of Reserve to his thinking. Reserve, as Keble understands it, guides his thinking on language and sustains and supports the language of *The Christian Year*. Keble’s poetic goal of soothing readers in a manner akin to the Prayer Book requires a form of linguistic conservatism to ensure that the relief provided by the poem is healing and cathartic rather than undisciplined and chaotic—since, in the opinion of Keble and other conservatives the latter led to the excesses of Byron and Shelley. Reserve provides the sanction for such conservatism.

The concept of Reserve is often difficult to define since it was interpreted in many different ways for a variety of contexts. Basically, Reserve refers to the proper mode of communication between the divine and the human, or in the discussion and dissemination of religious knowledge more generally. As a communicative mode it advocates restraint and veiling due to the combined effect of the nature of the knowledge communicated and the spiritual capacities of those who are to receive it. The idea had its origins in the early Church fathers such as Clement and Origen and was carried forward in the eighteenth century by Bishop Butler. G.B. Tennyson offers a useful definition of the concept:

Briefly, the idea of Reserve is that since God is ultimately incomprehensible, we can know him only indirectly; his truth is hidden and given to us only in a manner suitable to our capacities for apprehending it. Moreover, it is both unnecessary and undesirable that God and religious truth generally should be disclosed in their fullness at once to all regardless
of their differing capacities as individuals to apprehend such things. God himself in His economy has only gradually revealed in time such things as we know about him. Both the sacredness and the complexity of the subject of religious truth are such that they require a holding back and a gradual revelation as the disposition and understanding of the recipient mature. (Tennyson 44-45)

Tennyson goes on to discuss the liturgy as a function of Reserve and the concept heeds the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount: “Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (Matt 7:6). One of Keble’s disciples, Isaac Williams, is the figure most associated with Reserve due to his exhaustive elucidation of the concept in Tracts #80 (1838) and #87 (1840) that were later combined in “On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge.”

Williams offers his own succinct definition of Reserve early in the tract: “I would say, that there appears in God’s manifestations of Himself to mankind, in conjunction with an exceeding desire to communicate that knowledge, a tendency to conceal and throw a veil over it, as if it were injurious to us, unless we were of a certain disposition to receive it” (Williams 3). Keble agreed with Williams’s definition and extended it to poetry, which he conceived of as a particularly exalted type of religious knowledge:

Keble felt that religious knowledge and its expression, especially through poetry which he regarded as God’s special means of religious communication, would be made with reserve, so that it could be gently grasped by the minds of those who had suited themselves for its reception. (Martin 44)

Accordingly, Reserve played a crucial role in the larger Tractarian effort to reawaken a sense of the numinous and mysterious in the Anglican Church, which they saw as damaged by the combined efforts of Evangelical enthusiasm the intrusive apostasy of Whig reform.
Matthew Arnold was acutely aware of Reserve and its various applications and manifestations—in matters of theology, in an understanding of Nature, as a mode of personal conduct etc. Arnold’s tenure at Winchester was crucial in fostering this awareness. Biographers have tended to pass over the significance of Matthew Arnold’s Winchester experience, but the year at Winchester and Dr. Arnold’s decision to send his sons there is curious. The Headmaster at Winchester was George Moberley, an ardent friend to the Tractarians and a good friend of John Keble who lived near the school at the vicarage of Hursley. Indeed, the two Arnold sons made visits to Keble just as another Winchester boy, Walter Pater, would in later years. The entire Winchester incident is further puzzling when the shadowy incident surrounding the Heathcote Scholarship is considered. In November 1836 Arnold was asked by Moberly if he wanted to become a Heathcote scholar, which required a subscription to the 39 Articles. He wrote to his father for help who advised him not to pursue the scholarship and subsequent subscription since, in Thomas Arnold’s opinion, the Articles were not meant to teach religion but rather to state the position of the Church of England on certain issues. Shortly afterwards, Dr. Arnold, perhaps fearing the proselytization of his sons, decided to remove them, somewhat abruptly, from Winchester and return them to Rugby: “To speak confidentially” he wrote to a friend, “I do not think the state of Winchester is as satisfactory as that of Rugby with all our faults” (Hamilton 31). However, in retrospect, Matthew Arnold’s Winchester experience had provided an introduction to Reserve and strengthened and extended his interest in the ideas found in Keble’s poetry and prose. It is perhaps too happy a coincidence, but significant nonetheless, that when asked to
describe Matthew Arnold on his return from Winchester the word that a school friend came up with was “reserved.”

Keble’s reliance on Reserve as a guiding principle for his thoughts on language is based less on its theological relevance but rather on Keble’s connection of Reserve to his views on aesthetic issues. Reserve, for Keble, was from the start as much an aesthetic concept as it was a religious one. As Tennyson notes:

> We must remember that the Doctrine of Reserve was not only theological: it was also aesthetic...it was a corollary to the fundamental principle that artistic creation was the personal outpouring of an overwhelmingly religious impulse. Reserve comes into play as a means whereby such an outpouring is prevented from becoming vulgar and profane and merely emotional. (10)

Reserve was a way of restraining expression and communicating from behind a veil in a general sense, before the Tractarians tied it largely to a theological context. As David Shaw notes: “The germ of Keble’s theory can be found as early as 1812 in his undergraduate prize essay ‘On Translation from Dead Languages.’ Keble would continue to develop this idea in a specifically aesthetic context through his periodical essays, such as “Sacred Poetry,” (70) and the Lectures on Poetry, which all antedate Williams’s two tracts. Shaw has further pointed out that two of the most potent aesthetic strategies of Reserve are generic and metrical experimentation, and it was Keble who argued that Virgil’s Aeneid masks its lyric, pastoral impulse behind epic conventions and machinery. Clough seems to have had a passing interest in this aspect of Reserve. In an essay on the various potential uses of the sonnet for The Rugby Magazine, Clough, in Kebleian fashion, sees the generic constraints of the sonnet as providing a useful check and restraint on the expressive impulses of the poet:
It certainly does strike us as true that the Sonnet is not a likely or usual medium for the expression of very strong present feeling, and this is simply because it is the most artificial and elaborate of all stanzas or systems of verse... It is surely rather fitted to be the after-record of impression for reflective and for meditative poetry... it is a profitable exercise in that first spring of poetry, and is a useful curb on, and corrective of its flightiness. That such discipline is necessary we firmly believe and we believe too that this change from the dizzy and overpowering crowd of images and forms to the more tranquil and statuesque contemplation is one, which all poets who have left any great monument behind them have felt. (49)

Again, however, such interest appears to be passing as Clough devoted himself to Thomas Arnold’s view, while Reserve as the spirit of the High Church orientation to language opens a very different set of poetic and linguistic resources and positions than Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation.

The concept of Reserve, then, helps to explain the logic behind Keble’s own uses of language in The Christian Year and in comments he made elsewhere about language in essays and lectures. Tennyson notes: “The Tractarian ethos shapes also those aspects of the poetry of The Christian Year that come under the general heading of style, by which I mean such technical matters as language, diction, imagery, and metrics, as well as such elusive qualities as verbal complexity, ingenuity, ambiguity, irony, and the like” (Tennyson 104-105). More specifically, Keble’s diction in the poems of The Christian Year must be understood as:

[A] function of Reserve...His language is marked by conventional word choice, by traditional eighteenth-century poetic locutions—“fain,” “vernal,” “lo,” “tis” “ere,” and the like, and the heavy use of the biblical “ye” and the second person familiar, with the corresponding archaic verb endings. Such language is designed not to call attention to itself [even though it does so today]...but to blend on the one hand with conventional poetic language and on the other with the language of the Prayer Book and the Bible...The Victorian concordance to The Christian Year is a substantial volume displaying a large vocabulary. What it contains little of is word coinages or
Keble’s diction is rooted in the linguistic values of the Augustan age and although a vocabulary indebted to Pope, Collins, et al seems decidedly unreserved but rather showy, artificial and flashy from our perspective, Keble’s contemporaries would have found such diction more familiar and less obtrusive than the bald, innovative language of Wordsworth that Keble abhorred. Such language was both ignorant of tradition and too often rooted in the feelings and emotions and, thus, lacked Reserve.

There are other aspects of Keble’s use of and writing on language that are linked to Reserve. Complex syntactical structures or metrical schemes can serve to veil the poet’s passion and Keble made use of both extensively in *The Christian Year*. As Keble would later note in the *Lectures on Poetry*:

> The very task of metrical arrangement will fall in with the poetical instinct, such as have been described above, in two respects. On the one hand, it shapes out a sort of channel for wild and tumultuous feelings to vent themselves by; feelings whose very excess and violence would seem to make the utterance of them almost impossible, for the very throng of thoughts and words crowding all at once demand expression. In such cases, the conventional rules of metre and rhythm may evidently have the effect of determining, in some one direction, the overflow of sentiment and expression, wherewith the mind might otherwise be fairly oppressed. On the other hand, the like rules may be no less useful, in throwing a kind of veil over those strong or deep emotions, which need relief, but cannot endure publicity...This effect of metre seems quite obvious as far as regards the sympathies of others. Emotions which in their unrestrained expression would appear too keen and outrageous to kindle fellow-feeling in any one are mitigated, and become comparatively tolerable, not to say interesting to us when we find them so far under control. (17-19)

Similarly, the use of extended and complicated troping from metaphysical conceit to epic simile to allegory or remote subject matter also can serve the ends of Reserve as Keble noted with reference to a poet whose piety (but not his poetry) he admired: “Such is, to a
great extent, the method of our own Herbert, who hides the deep love of God which consumed him behind a cloud of precious conceits: the result appears to most readers inappropriate, not to say chilling and repellent…[but]…it was Herbert’s modest reserve which made him veil under these refinements his deep piety” (99).

A final technique of Reserve was to exploit the inherently associative and suggestive qualities of language. As Keble notes, primary poets often

Hint at many things rather than are at pains to describe and divine them…They are under no necessity to delineate in minute detail; neither to assist recollection of the thing itself…nor rouse the feelings of hearers, who, when everything is methodically insisted upon, either lose interest or admire the skill of the narrator and not the story told. Judicious writers, therefore, lightly touch, the points to be impressed on the reader; and an author like a host, shows his ability most surely if his readers are dismissed with an appetite whetted but not satisfied. (77)

The poet in the task of soothing the reader does not have to “profess religion or morality, but only…use ideas and language calculated to raise the religious and moral associations” (153).

In addition to a general introduction to the idea of Reserve, Arnold sees the aesthetic possibilities afforded by the concept, and upon his return to Rugby after the Winchester experiment Reserve comes to play a prominent role in Arnold’s early poems, both in practice and as a theme of the poems themselves. A commitment to a Kebleian sense of reserve emerges with greater prominence and variety in Arnold’s juvenilia upon his return to Rugby. The post-Winchester juvenilia may continue the “poetic lalling” that Riede speaks of in terms of its dependence on prior poets, particularly Byron, but it is also marked by an increasing prominence of this central Keble aesthetic/linguistic tenet of Reserve both on a self-reflexive thematic level and in various language features of the poems. One of the ways in which this interest in Reserve is self-reflexively expressed in these post-Winchester Rugby poems is in the striking sense of silence that pervades them.
In “Inspired by Julia Pardoe’s *The City of the Sultan*” the Greek woman who is the subject of the poem braves the plague to nurse her afflicted lover and dies herself with a Stoic fortitude characterized by her near silence: “But not one word, or look, or sigh,/Might tell the storm that raged within” (27-28). In “Land of the East,” the city of Jerusalem is marked by a silence that is tied to the withdrawal of God’s spirit and the arrival of the distinctively unreserved and “unrestrained” “busy hum of many voices.” Finally, in “Alaric at Rome” the Visigoth king does not utter a word in the poem that bears his name.

Keble practices the very Reserve he dramatizes in many of the distinct, linguistic features of these poems. For example, the silence of the Greek heroine in “Inspired by Julia Pardoe’s *The City of the Sultan*” is broken only once in the course of the poem. The heroine offers a benediction to her deceased lover and forecasts her own impending death:

> ‘Mid death and corruption thy tomb shall be–
> But mine where the breeze is fresh and free;
> In a lazar vault thy ashes lie–
> But mine beneath the glorious sky.
> And when the Chains of Death are riven
> My spirit shall mount unrestrained to heaven–
> Before th’ awakening voice shall come
> To burst the cerements of thy tomb. (43-50)

The emotional climax of the poem is strangely restrained by some unusual diction choices “lazar” and “cerements,” particularly since they are the only places in the poem where the diction draws attention to itself. Also, the rhyming couplets have a distancing effect that is increased by the fact that this is the only stanza in the entire poem where Arnold employs a rhyming couplet scheme. Thus at the moment in the poem where the reader most expects a powerful expression of feelings, the language becomes restrained and artificial.
However, Reserve is haunted by problematic linguistic implications for the poet. Pushed to extremes the doctrine of Reserve appears to suggest that the poet of Reserve speaks best, perhaps, when she/he says nothing at all as David Shaw has pointed out: “For Keble’s poet of reserve, therefore, language is only a residue, the trace of a meaning that has passed. It is the trace of something unsayable, and therefore ‘unceremonious’, something which the elegist who truthfully charts the course of his feelings can never quite put into words” (74). The comic corollary to this can be found in Trollope’s *Barchester Towers* in the character of Mr. Arabin who manages to accomplish a silent courtship of Eleanor Bold culminating in a non-verbal marriage proposal: “Poor Mr. Arabin! It would not come out of him, that deep true love of his. He could not bring himself to utter it in plain language” (2:37) and “No words, be their eloquence what it might, could be more impressive than that eager, melancholy gaze” (2:234). Shaw goes on to suggest the ways in which later poets such as Browning, Tennyson, Hardy and Patmore addressed this complex dilemma and harnessed it for advanced poetic effect. But what did it mean for a young poet at the outset of his career, struggling to find an appropriate language? Keble himself does not pursue these darker implications of Reserve as later poets did, choosing instead to work within the linguistic resources of a traditional diction and metrical and syntactical experimentation to accomplish his poetic ends via Reserve. Matthew Arnold works in a Kebleian vein in a poem such as “Inspired by Julia Pardoe’s *City of the Sultan*” but grows increasingly troubled by the implications of Reserve and explores them in “Alaric at Rome.”

“Alaric at Rome” is Arnold’s last poem at Rugby. The poem spends the first twelve of its thirty-eight stanzas in a lengthy meditation on Rome’s ambiguous heritage
occasioned by the sight of the ruins of the city. The remainder of the poem treats Alaric’s final successful siege and conquest of Rome, speculates on his thoughts as he surveys the fallen city the morning after his triumph and closes with a generalizing moral drawn from this historical episode. Again, Arnold displays an interest in manipulating the language of the poem to embody the principle of Reserve. The first third of the poem, as mentioned above, is a meditation occasioned by the sight of the Roman ruins. However, Arnold withholds the proper name of the city for as long as possible, apostrophizing it as “imperial City,” “wondrous chaos,” “solemn grave.” Although the city’s identity is an open secret, it is not actually named explicitly until the thirteenth stanza. This strategy of Reserve emerges even more forcefully when it is juxtaposed with the echoes that the opening stanzas have with Byron’s much more direct address to Rome in Childe Harold: “Oh Rome, my Country! City of the Soul.” There are other ways in which Arnold’s language in “Alaric at Rome” employs and experiments with a Kebleian sense of Reserve, but the poem is also interesting in the opposition it sets up between the reserve of the city and classical culture of which it is a symbol. This reserve is revealed in the poem’s repeated description of Rome’s association with “purity,” “beauty,” “whispers,” “mute memorials” and above all “eloquent silence.” These traits emerge even more forcefully when compared with the characterization of the barbarian Visigoths who are repeatedly tied to the “wild, hoarse onset,” and the “swelling trumpet and panicked alarm.” Interestingly Alaric as the representative of the Visigoths has more in common in his brooding, reserved silence with the city he has just conquered than with his own warriors. The central image of the poem is the silent, reserved Alaric looking down upon what is in many ways a mirror image in the silent, quiet city. It is tempting, in many
respects, to draw on this opposition in the poem between the reserved, eloquent silence of Rome and classical culture and the rude, jangling barbarian hordes in order to read “Alaric at Rome” as an allegory about two different kinds of language and to see in it an early embrace on Arnold’s part of the classical purity that he would struggle towards throughout the 1840s until he reached the decisive years surrounding his famous 1853 Preface. In any event, Arnold’s juvenilia concludes in “Alaric at Rome” in the strange transformation of a Germanic Visigoth barbarian into something that very much resembles a Stoic Roman philosopher. That he associated the former with his father and the latter with Keble and later his associates at Oxford is apparent in the first poem that he wrote at Balliol in December 1841. It is the comic fragment of a drama entitled “The Incursion.” It records the conversation between two Oxford citizens, Jenkins and Tomkins, who meet in dread anticipation of an invasion from the north (Warwickshire presumably) of a barbarian hoard (Dr. Arnold making the journey to deliver his first lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History). The values of the Oxford gentleman are the values of Keble and increasingly his Tractarian associates: “Decorum, seemliness, propriety” (56) and are threatened by the “barbarian hordes” (Dr. Arnold and his Rugby disciples) who “brawl and riot in the heart of Oxford” (10).

Keble’s language and attitude to language emerges from his commitment to Reserve as an organizing principle of his poetics. His aesthetics are marked by a conservative relationship to Romanticism. He adopts an expressivist foundation for his theory of poetry that is largely consonant with Wordsworth and other contemporaries, but Keble’s interpretation of Reserve commits him to a set of linguistic values largely rooted in the eighteenth century that relies on a traditional diction and abhors the innovation and
ostentatious experimentation with language. This traditional view of language is crucial if poetry is to soothe poet and reader alike. As the cornerstone of a poetics that are largely sacramental in the role that they assign to poetry, language must play an increasingly important role in fulfilling and ensuring the efficacy of poetry’s sacramental function. Consequently, Keble must reject Wordsworth’s language as Coleridge did for being too material, temporal and modern and hence unsuitable for poetry’s important role. Keble’s interpretation of Reserve provides a religious sanction to eighteenth-century ideas about language and, as Richard Turley notes, “by linking the inviolability of neoclassical literary tenets to those of religious doctrine, linguistic experimentation is constructed as a form of heresy” (57). Keble’s ideas on language are even more conservative than Coleridge’s lingua communis. As was the case with the Broad Church orientation to language, the High Church approach to words implies a specific role for the poet—in this case the poet as priest. As a conservative interpretation of Romantic aesthetic and linguistic principles, the High Church orientation to art and language elevates the poet in the manner of the Romantics, but with the poet serving as a guardian and upholder (one of the meanings of “soothe”) of traditions and dogma. The priest upholds these in a theological sense while the poet upholds the traditions and dogmas of language, i.e. the familiar shibboleths of eighteenth-century linguistic thought. This orientation to language provides a much narrower, if more literary, set of linguistic resources and a specific authority for the poet that was attractive to a young poet such as Matthew Arnold.

In his dedication of *Guesses at Truth* to Wordsworth, Julius Hare writes: “Many will echo my wish, for the benefit of my country, that your influence and his [Coleridge]
be more and more widely diffused” (iv-v). One of the more unlikely places where this influence is felt is in the Broad and High Church approaches to language. Hare actually compares Wordsworth and Coleridge to two streams and, to continue his metaphor, the Broad and High Church orientations are the dams which acted as a filter to their Romantic ideas for Clough and Arnold. Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation is founded on a questioning of eighteenth-century ideas about language and the proposal of a more inclusive, comprehensive and democratic conception of English. By instituting reforms of classical language instruction and promoting the interest and legitimacy of the colloquial, Thomas Arnold attempts to draw on both the relatively more conservative, Coleridgean and the perceived, more liberal, Wordsworthian aspects of Romanticism to forward a positive vision of the language that acknowledges and celebrates a dialectic of permanence and progression that Arnold saw as necessary for the age. The language of Clough’s juvenilia is a record of the young poet’s struggle to work out practical solutions to the idealism of his headmaster hero. The linguistic variety between and within these poems is not just the standard experimentation of juvenilia but also an exploration of the possibilities offered by the Broad Church orientation to language and the problems it also presented. Conversely, Keble’s High Church orientation to language is a negative vision of language, seeking to preserve the principles of eighteenth-century language theory and drawing on the key concept of Reserve to both offer a defense of such principles and condemn all experimentation, most notably Wordsworth’s. Further, it is a narrow conception of language that draws on the authority of the tradition and a restricted sense of the canonical to fit language for its task in a sacramental poetics. The dogmatic assurance of the High Church orientation to language in its judgments, its literariness,
and its connection of religion, poetry and language attract Matthew Arnold. However, like Clough, Arnold is also troubled by the practicalities of this orientation for poetic production, perhaps recognizing that Reserve as the governing spirit of the High Church orientation ultimately leads to silence and, thus, is a poor foundation upon which to begin a poetic career. Clough’s and Arnold’s juvenilia offer evidence of both enthusiasm and suspicion towards the two orientations. Despite the fact that both orientations are concerned with eighteenth-century assumptions as well as Romantic ideas about language, they are very much tied to the first decade of the Victorian period. The spirit of the Broad Church movement and Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language is very much the Whig reforming spirit of the 1830s just as Keble’s High Church orientation articulates the reactionary, ultra-Tory resistance that opposed it. In his study of Wordsworth, Richard Clancey speaks of the easy transition that Wordsworth makes between Hawkshead and Cambridge. The same cannot be said of the transition between Rugby and Oxford for Clough and Arnold. Both poets arrived with strong ideas about language, but these attitudes would be challenged by the intellectual ferment of Oxford during the fall of the Tractarians and its aftermath.
CHAPTER 2
OXFORD

“Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assayed”
Matthew Arnold, “Thyrsis”

From Oxford the movement which had begun in 1833 was now vibrating through
The whole country; and it was profoundly affecting the intellectual and spiritual
life of Oxford society…It permeated more or less the whole mass…It was
omnipresent; it was endlessly discussed; it was feared; but it could not be ignored.
J.M. Wilson, Memoirs of Archbishop Temple

The truth was that the Movement, in its many sides, had almost
monopolized for a time both the intelligence and the high religious
earnestness of the University…it is hardly too much to say that whenever
men spoke seriously of the grounds and prospects of religion at Oxford or
in Victorian reading parties, in their walks and social meeting, in their
studies or in common rooms, the Tractarian doctrines were sure to come to
the front. All subjects in discussion seemed to lead up to them—art and
poetry, Gothic architecture and German romance and painting, the
philosophy of language…It was difficult to keep them out of lecture rooms
and examinations for fellowships.
R.W. Church, The Oxford Movement: Twelve
Years, 1833-1845

For many if not most of the people who spend a significant amount of time within
its confines, a university seems to be in a state of continuous transition and ongoing self
re-definition. Oxford, in the decade that spans 1838-1848 when Clough and Arnold were
students there, is no different in this respect. The passage of over a century and a half has
de-sensitized us to not only the breadth and intensity of Tractarian influence at Oxford in
the first two decades of the Victorian period, but also the Movement’s sudden and
relatively rapid decline after 1845. Nonetheless, as the epigraphs above from Wilson
and, particularly, Church suggest, the influence of the Tractarianism was, for a time, pervasive in the intellectual life of the University. The general task that this chapter undertakes is to assess the nature of that influence and reaction to it upon both the attitudes toward and uses of language in Clough’s and Arnold’s Oxford poetry.

As the first epigraph suggests, Oxford is indeed the place where Arnold and Clough begin seriously to think about the nature of poetry and the poetic vocation. That they emerged with very different conceptions of the role of the poet and poetry as well as divergent linguistic attitudes and practices is in part due to their unique negotiations with Tractarian aesthetics as well as complementary and opposing thinkers and ideas circulating in the University at this time. As “Thyrsis” makes clear, Arnold’s and Clough’s friendship flourished during the years they spent at Oxford, but Arnold was also a rival Corydon to Clough’s Thyrsis. One particularly interesting aspect of their rivalry is that which relates to their language, which serves as a subtext to their more open and explicit disagreements about poetry and politics. This linguistic rivalry had, in a sense, been underway since Rugby where the two poets had engaged with very different traditions and contexts regarding the nature and uses of words.

The previous chapter explored these contexts and traditions that inform Clough’s and Arnold’s introduction to language as they first began to consider it in a rigorous and intellectual fashion at the Rugby school. Dr. Arnold’s pedagogical and curricular reforms and the general academic atmosphere of the school immerse Clough in what is, for its time, a modestly progressive orientation to language whose features include, simultaneously, a historical understanding of the evolution of language, the elevation of the status of English in relation to Greek and Latin, and within the English language itself...
a broadening of those features of the language that might be recognized as “good” English. This approach to language looks to reconcile the democratic impulse in Wordsworth’s celebration of rural speech with Coleridge’s advocacy of a lingua communis rooted in the language’s literary traditions and preserved and transmitted by an elite clerisy. Conversely, the popularity of John Keble’s *The Christian Year*, the poet’s personal connection to the Arnold circle and the ascendancy of Tractarian aesthetic theories converged to communicate a narrower but more immediate poetically workable approach to language to Matthew Arnold—a view of words that is religiously rather than historically and cultural-politically oriented, and which, drawing on the remarkably flexible Tractarian concept of Reserve, conceives of language as serving a broadly sacramental function.

This chapter builds upon this foundation by examining the ways in which these initial attitudes to language are eclipsed, modified, improved, and challenged by Arnold’s and Clough’s Oxford experiences. Specifically, I will argue that Clough’s immersion in and subsequent reaction to the Tractarian idea of Reserve is a powerful hermeneutic in understanding the linguistic differences between his introspective Balliol and satirical Oriel poetry, while Arnold, conversely, maintains his interest in Reserve even as the focus of his poetics shifts and that this fidelity ultimately involves him in an linguistic-epistemological dilemma that is only solved by the larger, more permanent, shift in his poetics during the early 1850s.

Accordingly, I will proceed chronologically, alternating between the undergraduate experiences of both poets at Balliol before considering the poetry they composed at Oriel College. Obviously there are difficulties in attempting to write an
intertwined narrative history of the linguistic development of both poets, but this approach seems preferable to lumping the entire Oxford experience of Clough and Arnold under considerations of *Ambarvalia* and *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* respectively. Clough’s twelve years and Arnold’s seven years of residence or close affiliation with the University are marked by significant shifts and developments as well as periods of poetic inactivity that are often effaced by organizing a discussion around their publications rather than the composition of the poems themselves.

**A Season of Apostasy: Clough’s Balliol Poetry**

The fact was he had come up to Oxford fully persuaded in his own views with a firm faith and a settled distaste for High Church opinions. But when these opinions and doctrines were presented to him by Newman and others of that school, they and their advocates acquired a certain amount of attention in his eyes and he could not help for a season listening to the men and their trying to solve the questions they brought before him.  
Anne Jemima Clough,  
*Reminiscences of A.H. Clough* (1868)

Clough’s arrival at Balliol for the beginning of the Michaelmas term in October 1837 was met with hopeful anticipation by the Liberal members in the college and the university at large. Not since the matriculation of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley three years earlier had such a distinguished and capable champion of the Rugby ethos and, more specifically, the liberal political and ecclesiastical views of Thomas Arnold taken residence.  
Clough, ultimately, disappointed these high expectations by resolving to absent himself from the “vortex of Philosophism and Discussion” (*Correspondence* 1:88) that the Oxford Movement and the reaction to it had unleashed on the university.

Although Clough was only partially successful in honoring this resolution, the nature of his engagement with the Tractarians remains ambiguous. Anthony Kenny has argued
that “It is difficult, even after a close reading of the diaries in conjunction with his
[Clough’s] correspondence, to discover how far he ever really entered into Newman’s
version of Tractarianism” (*Diaries* lxiv). While a precise answer to that question may
remain elusive, the extent of Clough’s exposure to Tractarian aesthetic ideas and the
importance of such exposure in initiating a temporary but crucial phase in Clough’s
evolving conception of the verbal medium has not been remarked upon. Therefore, I
want to proceed, first, by examining the extent and, more importantly, the nature of his
contact with the Oxford Movement as a prelude to a reading of the language and attitudes
to language of Clough’s Balliol poetry.

The chronology is of some importance here since Clough’s first fourteen months
at Oxford (October 1837-December 1838) were barren in terms of poetic production.
The fact that Clough almost did not write a single poem during this period is somewhat
puzzling given the regularity with which he produced what was ultimately a substantial
quantity of Rugby poetry. Nonetheless, these months, while fallow ones in terms of
poetic composition, coincide, significantly, with Clough’s most extensive and intensive
immersion in Tractarianism.

In one of his first letters from Oxford he recommends, to his correspondent, the
works of Thomas Arnold’s famous ecclesiastical and theological opponent: “Have you
read Newman’s Sermons? I hope you will soon if you have not, for they are very good
and I should think especially useful for us” (1:44). Over the next few months Clough
would come to make the personal acquaintance of Newman and other members of the
Movement including Keble, Pusey, Isaac Williams, Charles Marriott, R.W. Church and
W.G. Ward, his mathematics tutor at Balliol. Of greater importance than such social
networking, however, is Clough’s engagement with the ideas and themes of Tractarianism. In the weeks leading up to Easter, he read heavily in Newman’s sermons, *The Christian Year*, and the recently published *Remains* of Hurrell Froude. During the Trinity Term of 1838 Clough attended Newman’s lectures on what he described as “the mystical powers of the sacraments” in the Adam de Brome Chapel in St. Mary’s (later published as *Tract 85*).51

Clough’s immersion in the Tractarian ethos was not uncommon among earnest Oxford undergraduates during this period of the Movement’s ascendance.52 What is of particular interest is the manner in which Clough’s general interest in Tractarian thought enfolds a more specific scrutiny of Tractarian aesthetics, particularly Tractarian poetry and poetics. Clough’s diaries and correspondence from the summer and autumn of 1838 bear evidence of a modulation in his interests away from theological concerns to a more focused consideration of the aesthetic aspects of Tractarianism. One difference between Clough’s first and second Michaelmas terms at Oxford is the fact that during the latter he indicates that he is not reading Newman’s sermons but rather selections from his volume of poems *Lyra Apostolica*. At the end of the year Keble’s *Christian Year* and Isaac Williams’s *The Cathedral* accompany Clough on his visits to English and Welsh relatives during the Christmas Vacation of 1838, and, in a letter from this same period, Clough expresses his bewilderment at the animus that his friend and future co-author Thomas Burbidge displays towards the very Tractarian poetry that Clough is currently reading.53

Of equal or perhaps greater importance than the evidence of Clough’s reading in the principal volumes of Tractarian verse is his contemplation of the theoretical foundations of Tractarian poetics which he encountered in three important venues. It is
not my intention to try to trace any rigidly determined line of influence between these venues and Clough’s poetic practice, but rather I want to indicate that they facilitated the circulation of certain key ideas into the intellectual atmosphere at Oxford during this crucial fourteen-month period. In each instance, Clough encounters a variation of the oft-repeated central Tractarian aesthetic doctrine that poetry is the expression of powerful emotion conditioned and disciplined by a commitment to the principle of reserve.\textsuperscript{54}

The first place where Clough meets with these ideas while at Oxford is in Isaac Williams’s Tract 80, the first part of which was published in the months immediately preceding Clough’s arrival. Here, Williams exhaustively explores the theological, ethical, and aesthetic implications of restraint and obfuscation in the communication of religious knowledge, personal conduct and powerful feelings respectively. Also during 1838 Clough read an essay by Frederic Rogers in the Tractarian periodical \emph{The British Critic}: “There is a very good article…involving a Theory of Poetry, in the last no. of the British Critic, which is now become the great organ of the Newman-People by a man whom as far as I have seen I like the best of any of them, called Rogers” (1:56). Rogers’s essay, like the aesthetic works of his Tractarian associates, seeks to emphasize the intimate connection between religious experience and poetry.

Finally, and most importantly for Clough’s developing view of language, these first terms at Oxford coincide with John Keble’s twenty-second through twenty-seventh lectures on poetry. These lectures contain some of Keble’s most detailed comments on his theory of the lyric and the importance of Reserve as a principle in regulating the impulse to the expression of powerful feelings that is the genesis of all lyric poetry for Keble. In these lectures, which Clough may have attended or at least heard report of, the
doyen of Tractarianism repeatedly rehearses his central poetic tenets including the core expressivist position that: “[P]oetry…is nothing else than each poet’s innermost feeling issuing in rhythmic language” (2.35). Elsewhere, he comments with disapproval on the ways in which language can be used without reserve when the emotions are aroused, as for example in the torrent of disordered words that mark the passion and unregulated expression in Aeschylus’s characterization of Io.\textsuperscript{55} In the light of this negative example, Keble, in these lectures, persistently advocates the necessity of Reserve in the expression of powerful feelings. For Keble and the other Tractarians, the spirit of Reserve when it was applied to words did not render them opaque but translucently veiled them for the well-being of poet and audience alike. As Keble notes in one of the lectures from this period: “[T]he poet’s deepest and most intimate feelings do not indeed lie wholly hidden, but do take refuge as it were in a kind of sanctuary, behind a veil, and shrink from the full light of day” (2:97). Keble conceives, on one level, of Reserve as a particular use or perhaps an attitude with which one approaches language. Most immediately this results in attempts to exploit the aural properties of English through deliberate, skillful manipulation of rhythmic and syntactical structures.\textsuperscript{56} However, in these 1837-39 lectures, Keble proceeds to suggest other ways in which the spirit of Reserve might be infused into language. His suggestions include the deployment of elaborate tropes: “Herbert, who hides the deep love of God which consumed him behind a cloud of precious conceits: the result appears to most readers inappropriate, not to say chilling and repellent” (2:99); the associative properties of language: “[A] complete picture is often summoned before us by a single word” (2:137); and the imposition of rhetorical structures, including one that Clough assiduously develops in his most accomplished
Balliol poetry. Keble writes:

In more modern days there has sprung up a new form of poem, and it is one of the most favourite forms of the present day, and which more strictly than all others restrains the writer’s power within its own narrow limits, I mean the sonnet...I am persuaded, indeed, that it was by no mere chance, but by a deeply rooted instinct that such men as these adopted this form, because the fact that it was unusually stringent enabled it to soothe and compose their deepest emotions and longings without violating a true reserve. (2:101-102)

The significance of the preceding digression into the circulation of Tractarian aesthetic ideas at Oxford during the first year of Clough’s residence is to suggest the kinds of ideas about poetry and poetic techniques that Clough encountered, either directly or by report. A crucial byproduct of this year, as indicated by the discussion of Keble’s lectures, is Clough’s extended introduction to a different, indeed almost diametrically opposed, way of thinking about language—an approach to words governed by the Tractarian emphasis on the importance of Reserve as a theological and aesthetic concept. Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language had promoted an expansive, inclusive, socially-oriented view of language grounded in the idea that language, whatever its origins, was an exclusively human instrument; an awareness of England’s historical relationship to and equality with Greek and Latin and an emphasis on an ideal language use of plain-spoken clarity in the service of a didactic, reformist poetics. However, Clough was always conscious of what he perceived to be an aesthetic deficit in his poetry. As Bernard Bergonzi points out, Broad Church theology “is a religion lacking any sense of the numinous, the aesthetic, the ritual, the mystical, the paradoxical” (15). Similarly, the Broad Church orientation to language does not hold out, in a traditional sense at least, the kind of aesthetic opportunity Clough might have desired for his poetry.
Matthew Arnold would, after all, indict much of Clough’s Oriel poetry as lacking in beauty. Conversely, the view of language implied by Tractarian aesthetics is narrower, exclusive, more self-consciously literary in its use of troping and metrics, and lays an emphasis on a degree of necessary opacity and veiling in the use of words—all of which has the effect of reinvesting words with an aura of the mystery and power that had been a casualty of eighteenth-century empirical philosophy. All of this was well suited to the larger sacramental aims of Tractarian aesthetics and the project of the Oxford Movement as a whole. It was this view of language, one radically different from the one that he had brought up with him from Rugby just a year earlier (but also one with which Matthew Arnold was already experimenting) that Clough found appealing and drew upon when he tentatively resumed poetic composition early in 1839.

In a series of letters that are contemporaneous with the immersion in Tractarian aesthetics that I have just outlined, we see Clough already beginning to rethink some of his ideas on the nature and function of poetry before he actually resumes writing poems. The letters that he exchanged with J.P. Gell in the summer and autumn of 1838 dramatize this development clearly. The specific occasion for the correspondence was the publication of *Poems, Longer and Shorter* by Thomas Burbidge. Burbidge, as previously noted, was censuring all things Tractarian with a vehemence that Clough found mystifying. Indeed, Clough was reading and increasingly sympathizing with the poetry of Keble, Newman and Williams and the principles upon which the poems were founded. Clough exposes his sympathies with the by-now-familiar Tractarian position, when he points out to Gell that “All poetry must be the language of Feeling of some kind, I suppose, and the imaginative expression of affection must be poetry” (1:73). This basic
expressivist position, of course, was not unique to the Tractarians. It is the keystone of Wordsworth’s definition of poetry in the “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*, and Clough had also encountered it elsewhere, namely in the poetics of Thomas Arnold. But in this letter, Clough reveals his distance from Wordsworth and Rugby and his current involvement with Tractarian aesthetics in his hesitancy to endorse the unchecked expression of feeling. He insists on the desirability of the poet veiling the direct expression of emotion when he writes: “[B]ut it seems to me that it is both critically best and morally safest to dramatize your feelings where they are of private personal character—e.g. in case of affection for a brother to write a poem like Wordsworth’s ‘Brothers’ or to suppose your brother dead and write a “My Brother’s Grave” (1:73). In response to Clough’s assertion of the questionable morality of “writing as to expose peculiar circumstances of your own life or conduct or friends” Gell responds the following week, playfully but succinctly crystallizing the issue with which Clough was grappling—“the publication of private feelings in poetry” (1:76). Gell advises Clough to be cautious about subscribing, too readily, to a principle that demands that the expression of emotion be veiled or restrained. An excessive devotion to such reserve in expression opens the poet to charges of sophistry and undermines the didactic moralizing that Gell, ever the loyal Rugbeian, still claimed to be the proper office of poetry. In the course of this friendly admonition, Gell forges a parallel between restrained expression in poetry and the “relating of experiences” on religious affairs” (1:77). With this connection, Gell hints at the broader Tractarian context that shadows the exchange with Clough. Undaunted, Clough replies that Gell’s arguments against veiling are unpersuasive and that he is increasingly convinced of the necessity of restraint in poetic expression.
The exchange between the Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates is informative in isolation, but when it is situated in the midst of Clough’s reading and exposure to the theory and practice of Tractarian poetics it takes on added resonance. Robindra Biswas, speaking of Clough’s undergraduate experience, points out that “Tractarian airs had blown strongly through this young mind, challenging its preconceptions and intimating to it the existence of problems and viewpoints which Rugby had never suggested” (67). One such draught is Clough’s engagement with Tractarian aesthetics and its attendant linguistic implications.

Clough, however, was not an ardent convert and the language of his undergraduate poetry is not the record of an enthusiastic acolyte wholeheartedly adapting the insights of the Oxford Movement. Clough’s poetry has often and effectively been characterized as a process by which he worked out his emotional and intellectual perplexities rather than a series of highly wrought poetic artifacts expressing mature convictions.\(^5^9\) This general characterization also applies more specifically to the language of Clough’s Balliol poetry which I read as the poet’s both conscious and unconscious attempt to confront and work out the linguistic implications of his interest in the very un-Rugbeian Tractarian aesthetic principles he encountered during his first terms at Oxford.

Having now established Clough’s immersion in the midst of Tractarian aesthetic theorizing and performance, the succeeding discussion will move chronologically through Clough’s Balliol poetry, considering his two unsuccessful entries for the Oxford poetry prize, a series of private lyrics that are composed in the interim between these two entries, and one of the few undergraduate poetic projects that was actually included in the
Ambarvalia volume, Blank Misgivings of a Creature moving about in Worlds not realised. Taken as a whole, this collection of widely different poems is the record of Clough’s ultimately abortive exploration and struggle to discover how he might develop a use of his medium infused with the spirit of Reserve consonant with Tractarian poetic principles.

This process begins with Clough’s 1839 entry for the Newdigate poetry prize. “Salsette and Elephanta” is, in many respects, a poem that demonstrates Clough’s undergraduate interest in comparative religion. Extending the arguments of his primary source, Friedrich von Schlegel’s Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier, Clough uses the occasion of an imagined visit to the caves and temples on the islands of Salsette and Elephanta, located off the coast of Mumbai, in order to speculate that Hinduism and Buddhism are “corrupted versions of a single original knowledge of Truth” (Kenny 2005, 49). From the point of view of Clough’s ideas about language, the poem is interesting only in a limited sense. The repeated verbal echoing of Keble’s The Christian Year suggests the most immediate way in which his Tractarian reading was yielding aesthetic dividends. Nonetheless, these verbal echoes offer an ironic aesthetic counterpoint to the poem’s content which Evelyn Greenberger has persuasively suggested is, in many ways, an anti-Tractarian allegory. Clough’s poem was passed over in favor of John Ruskin’s entry, and Clough spent the following year composing a series of short lyrics that reveal that his interest in Tractarian aesthetics and its linguistic implications would quickly expand beyond the verbal allusiveness of “Salsette and Elephanta” or some of the Rugby poems discussed in the previous chapter.
This series of private lyrics are noteworthy for the way that they bridge the gap between the superficial verbal echoing of Tractarian poetry in “Salsette and Elephanta” and the more substantial engagement with Tractarian aesthetics evident, as we shall see, in “The Judgement of Brutus.” The lyrics are a record of Clough using his poetry to “think aloud” (to use Matthew Arnold’s disparaging but not always self-enforced stricture) and work out a commitment to Tractarian aesthetic principles and their impact on his uses and attitudes to language. Matthew Reynolds has observed an impulse towards self-preservation as a noteworthy aspect of these poems: “Again and again in his poems of these years a possible step into community of feeling and obligation with other people…is suspended by the thought that to take it would betray one’s true self” (128-29). Reynolds’s general assessment dovetails with the more specific comments on Robindra Biswas on these early poems which he characterizes as the “oblique and generalized expression of feeling—grounded partly on his awareness of the danger of affectation” (101). Both of these comments are part of a larger critical tendency that characterizes Clough’s Oxford poetry, particularly its Balliol phase, as the irruption of a tortured lyricism that replaces the duty-bound didacticism of the Rugby verse. This conflicted lyricism and the language that expresses it are manifestations of Clough’s efforts to think through and deploy Tractarian principles, including Reserve, in his language.

“Oh I have done those things my soul fears” was composed on May 1839 after Clough had completed “Salsette and Elephanta.” The poem consists of a single quatrain expressing regret over youthful prodigality:

Oh, I have done those things that my soul fears
And my whole heart is sick. My Youth hath flown,
The talents thou hast given me are gone,
And I have nought to pay thee but my tears. (1-4)

The speaker is overwhelmed by powerful emotions of regret and guilt, but these feelings are compounded by his acknowledgment of the failure of language to express his emotions with any clarity or specificity. The vaguely referenced sins of his youth have left the speaker in a state of spiritual poverty, neatly re-enforced by Clough’s pun on the word “talents.” Unable to coin the words that would allow him to express the emotional crisis adequately, the speaker is reduced through his offering of tears to the state of the Tennysonian infant at the nadir of *In Memoriam*:

> So runs my dream: but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry. (54.17-20)

Four months later in the midst of the Long Vacation of 1839, Clough writes “So I as boyish years went by, went wrong.” Once again Clough is concerned with making an assessment of perceived adolescent wanderings in error. Whereas the previous lyric had despaired of finding a means to express the powerful emotions of the speaker, this poem concludes with a cautious optimism:

> My heart was hot within me, and meseemed
> I too had in my body breath to sound
> The magic horn of song. I too possessed
> Upwelling in my being’s depths a fount
> Of the true poet-nectar, whence to fill
> The golden urns of song. (30-35)

The speaker suggests that the powerful feelings that are the raw material for the poem can and must be harnessed so that they may be expressed in appropriately regulated channels. Simply pouring out one’s feelings is a sin as Clough directly appropriates the words “My
heart was hot within me” from Psalm 39 of the Authorized Version where earlier the psalmist speaks of the necessity of using language infused with the spirit of Reserve: “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle” (Ps. 39.1). Clough communicates a similar sense of the need to bridle the expression of powerful feelings by deploying two sets of images. The first is that of the breath channeled into the physical restraints imposed by the horn. The second involves the emptying of the fountain—a traditional image of unregulated creativity and inspiration—into the contained limits of the golden urns. By imaging the channeling of the breath into the horn and the containment of the fountain’s contents in the urn, Clough has rehearsed the Tractarian poetic argument. Indeed, Keble himself cited Psalm 39 in his poetry lectures as support for his argument for the religious and medicinal qualities (Psalm 39 is a prayer for healing in sickness) inherent in his definition of poetry.

While he may not have discovered, at this point, the best way to infuse his language with the spirit of Reserve, Clough grows increasingly wary of language used without restraint or conscientious forethought amidst the vanities and shallowness of daily social interaction. In “Enough Small Room” (October 1839) Clough condemns:

    Vainglorious words of fond conceit,
    Self pleasures of successful wit
    And heartless jests and coward lies
    And hollow sleek complacencies. (10-13)

Very quickly in these three short lyrics, then, Clough reaches the central linguistic dilemma generated by the inherent tension within Tractarian poetics between expression and reserve. Like the sacraments, poetry and the language of that poetry is, for the Tractarians, instrumental in simultaneously revealing higher, or in Clough’s situation
inner/personal, truths while also maintaining an aura of mysteriousness via the indirection or obfuscation of language infused with the spirit of Reserve in the very act of revelation. Clough is groping towards the Tractarian conclusions that Tennyson would reach about language early in *In Memoriam*:

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold:
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more. (5.1-12)

Clough’s Balliol lyrics, to this point, document the process by which Clough reached this linguistic state of affairs and this self-reflexive thinking aloud about language and the expressive restrictions of Tractarian aesthetics reaches a climax in “The Judgement of Brutus,” Clough’s second entry for the Newdigate poetry prize.

The compulsory topic for the 1840 competition was the early Roman Counsel Lucius Junius Brutus who, compelled by his own strict sense of justice and civic obligation, judged and sentenced to death his two sons for their part in an attempted restoration of the Tarquin monarchy. Clough’s “The Judgement of Brutus” draws heavily on the traditional classical sources, Livy and Plutarch, who interpreted Brutus “as an exemplum of Roman justice, severity, and stoicism” (Greenberger 1969, 132). Those places in Clough’s poem where he departed from his sources, however, are important in
marking the new developments in Clough’s thinking about language. Clough’s two innovations to the standard treatments of Brutus were, first, the interposition of a private night of emotional anguish between Brutus’s detection of the filial treason and his judgment and sentence the following morning. Clough also takes pains to emphasize Brutus’ passivity as he witnesses the fate of his sons. As Evelyn Barish Greenberger observes:

This divergence is interesting, for Clough’s is a Brutus who suffers more than his model in Plutarch and yet goes to greater extremes in repressing his emotions than his Livian counterpart: he is, in short neither a stoical nor indeed fully a classical hero, but a Romantic one, expressing an essentially Romantic vision and psychology which produces a conflicted hero who although he cannot master can succeed in hiding a mortal sorrow. (1969, 132)

Clough’s changes and additions bring into relief the familiar nineteenth-century preoccupation, seen in Tennyson’s “Ulysses” for example, with the tension between public and private. “The Judgement of Brutus” repeatedly reminds the reader of this dialectic, as for example when Brutus first learns of the plot to undermine the Republic: “The tale was told; the Counsel’s ear had heard,/The father’s heart in all its depths was stirred” (52-53). Greenberger’s designation of Clough’s Brutus as a Romantic hero can be specified further. The contours of Clough’s Brutus are, in one sense, recognizably Tractarian. The poem’s movement from the exploration of Brutus’ agonized emotional turmoil to the representation of the restrained public expression of his feelings parallels the two inseparable precepts of Tractarian poetic theory. Indeed, there are several aspects of the poem that suggest that Clough’s entry is, perhaps even unconsciously, a meditation on poetry and the figure of the poet in addition to a portrait of the uncompromising nature of early Roman conceptions of virtue. In addition to his public role as Counsel and
private status as a father, Clough points to Brutus’ traditional associations with public oratory:

Was it not this, that one time spoke aloud  
Lucretia’s story to the gathering crowd?  
From whose uncompromising speech the word  
Of Freedom first in Roman ears was heard. (77-80)

Further, the poem’s opening invocation is a search for a muse rather than the call for assistance to a guide already determined as trustworthy and appropriate. The speaker addresses an unnamed muse, for this poem must comprehend the private and the public Brutus or the expressive and repressive tenets of Tractarian aesthetics:

Thou sawest the first and thou the final scene  
Thou through those long and dreamlike hours between,  
...  
And he with thoughts unsigned, unknown  
Walked in his grief mid wondering crowds alone,—  
Thou in his World with him wert there apart,  
And knewest each movement of the mighty heart,  
The sudden wrench, when all without was rest,  
Shudder and start convulsively suppress’d,  
Anger and love, and every varying mood  
To inexpressive calmness all subdued. (38-51)

John Keble, one of the judges and the current Oxford Professor of Poetry, might well have recognized such lines as echoing the theory of poetry he was, at this time, elucidating at length in lectures later published as *Di Poeticae Vi Medica* (1844).

As the poem shuttles the reader from a public setting to the private sphere and back again, the character of Brutus’ language is highlighted. The indictment and sentence he pronounces upon his sons might reasonably be expected to yield a climactic emotional intensity, as it does to an extent in Clough’s source in Livy. Brutus’s public
expression, however, is cold, calculated and restrained—the precise and careful speech of a barrister (Greenberger 1970, 146):

Titus, Tiberius: little needs to say
What deed hath placed you, placed me today.
This first—Search well,—if thou,—or thou,—shalt find
One further guilt yet lurking in the mind
...
Now, further hear,—the loins from which ye sprung
Formed you at first as innocent as young,
...
Therefore the gift I gave I here reclaim
...
Thou, therefore now,—go lector, bind & slay
A sovereign Judge gives sentence here today,
...
My Countrymen, who would my sons should live!
...
As these are spared not, so let none be spared
Die, young & old who plotted! one & all!
License & lust & tyranny to recall:
So perish always, Rome, who work thee ill
So judge the father, die the children still (202-233)

Brutus’s feelings are both expressed and veiled as Clough structures his speech through repetition, syllogistic syntactic formulas and a series of widening apostrophes that drain any sense of intimacy out of the scene, and this is indeed appropriate for Brutus’s public expression.

Brutus’s climactic speech also shows Clough’s hesitating attempts to move beyond a mere thematization of the conflict and interaction between private and public. The poem is the site of a series of halting attempts to regulate the expression of emotionally-charged subject matter.62 Clough’s use of distancing techniques such as indirect discourse has been noted by critics,63 while, elsewhere, the reader’s access to the
most private moments of Brutus’s night of agonized reflection is obfuscated by a sudden profusion of extended tropes that prevent an explicit documentation of Brutus’s feelings:

   Steadfast to Heaven his eyes the Counsel raised,
   And Heaven’s wide doors were opened as he gazed:
   As on parched Earth, crisp leaf & drooping flower
   In Summer falls the small & silent shower;
   As nightly travelers sudden oft behold
   The driving clouds a starry space unfold;--
   So calm descended on the dreamer’s breast.  (149-155)

The employment of metaphor and simile while expressive on the one hand are also, in the empirical tradition of language study (a version of which Clough encountered at Rugby) a corruption of language that introduces an opacity that threatens the functional communicative office of language. Tropes, then, are vitally important to Tractarian aesthetics and ideas about language since they simultaneously reveal and conceal and are thus the most immediate, but not the sole, way in which Reserve can be infused into language use.

    The poem’s emphasis on the restrained expression of powerful emotions, however tentative and halting, both on the thematic level and in Clough’s choices and uses with regard to language is something new in Clough’s poetry and a tangible departure from the Rugby poetry discussed in the previous chapter. This new direction speaks to an increased and deeper familiarity with the core principles of Tractarian aesthetics circulating at Oxford at this time. Clough’s character, a “Tractarian” Brutus, interestingly parallels Matthew Arnold’s representation of Alaric, previously discussed. “The Judgement of Brutus” and “Alaric at Rome” were composed within a few months of each other and although Clough and Arnold are writing from the opposite ends of Roman
history, they use the occasion of the Oxford and Rugby prize poem entries respectively to explore, in different ways, the challenges, paradoxes and even opportunities afforded by High Church/Tractarian aesthetics.

Clough began composition on “The Judgement of Brutus” during the 1839 Christmas Vacation and continued to work on the poem for the next several months before submitting it to Keble and the rest of the Newdigate committee in March. In the midst of his work on this entry he took the occasion of his birthday on January 1st to compose “Here have I been these one and twenty years.” Again, the theme here is the same as the private lyrics from the preceding year—an almost debilitating sense of guilt rooted in a perception of recent moral and spiritual backsliding. However, unlike the earlier lyrics and perhaps with Keble’s approving example of how George Herbert clothed his deep love of God in a “cloud of precious conceits,” Clough substitutes the vague generalities of the earlier poems for an extended, developed conceit that allows him to express his feelings in a suitably reserved manner:

Here have I been these one and twenty years  
Since first to Being’s breeze my Soul unfurled  
A voyager upon the wavy world  
Half-idling, half at work:--by empty fears  
And emptier hopes, light mirth and fleeting tears  
Tacking and tossed forever yet in vain  
Now timidly retiring, now again  
Carelessly, idly mingling with my peers… (1-8)

Here, for the first time, Clough evokes the imagery of the sea which will appear frequently in his poetry whenever he looks to explore deeply personal and private subject matter.64 It is also significant, again with Keble’s recent admonitions in mind, that the
poem is a sonnet—Clough’s first use since Rugby of the form which by its formal requirements places external, artificial restraint on the copiousness and energy of language.

The first phase of Clough’s Balliol poetry, which includes the two prize poem entries and the private lyrics, is a record of his growing recognition of the linguistic challenge inherent in the competing expressive and repressive impulses of Tractarian aesthetics. The major poetic project of Clough’s later years at Balliol, Blank Misgivings of a Creature moving about in Worlds not realized, is ultimately a concentrated, systematic effort, gestured to in “Here have I been these one and twenty years” and “The Judgement of Brutus,” to meet this challenge by finding a suitable linguistic practice consonant with the requirements of Tractarian poetics.

Blank Misgivings is Clough’s ongoing poetic project during his last years as a Balliol undergraduate. The later American title for the poem, “Oxford: 1839-1841,” gives something of an indication of its extended period of composition. The poem is actually a series of ten shorter lyrics arranged, like Tennyson’s In Memoriam, in an order different from their order of composition, to present a vivid dramatization of the familiar Cloughean undergraduate theme of the speaker’s struggle with an almost overpowering and debilitating sense of guilt, sin and alienation. In its recursive but ultimately progressive movement towards a fragile spiritual consolation, the poem again resembles In Memoriam, although it has more in common thematically and tonally with the “terrible sonnets” of Gerard Manley Hopkins.65
The poem has received surprisingly little critical comment given that it is Clough’s most substantial undergraduate contribution to the *Ambarvalia* volume. Assessments of the poem are notably mixed with Walter Houghton, for example, decidedly underwhelmed by the logical and stylistic confusion and imprecision. Alternately, Anthony Kenny sees the poem as a harbinger of Clough’s later poetic accomplishments and as essentially experimental in nature—“the work of an apprentice trying out the style of different masters” (Kenny 1988, 13). Both Houghton’s obloquy and Kenny’s more evenhanded reading can help illuminate the nature of the language of *Blank Misgivings*, but their assessments can also, in turn, be illuminated by approaching the poem from a slightly different angle than is usual.

Clough’s final published arrangement of the ten lyrics has most often guided critical approaches to *Blank Misgivings*. However, in order to draw out the poem’s insights about Clough’s language, an approach that emphasizes the poem’s compositional process is likely to be more illuminating, particularly given that the ten lyrics that make up *Blank Misgivings* were produced in fits and starts over three years. The arrangement of the poems in *Ambarvalia* may offer an artistic representation of the “way” of Clough’s soul, but a consideration of their compositional history reveals Clough’s most searching and systematic testing of the concept of Reserve and how it might condition the poet’s handling of words. The poem is indeed experimental, as Kenny argues, but I would suggest that, if we read the lyrics in the order of their composition rather than their arrangement, *Blank Misgivings* is a much more controlled and focused experiment than has been previously acknowledged and one that is the culmination of Clough’s Balliol encounter with Reserve as a guiding principle for his language.
There are four main periods or phases in the composition history of *Blank Misgivings*. The first of these begins in November 1840, eight months following the submission of “The Judgement of Brutus,” when Clough writes the lyric that is #VIII in the final arrangement of the poem. Here the theme of guilt and shame is evoked and mixed with the speaker’s regret at his estrangement from nature. In an extended trope he asks to be hidden in the night which he compares to a mother’s lap in which the truant child seeks sanctuary:

O kind protecting Darkness! As a child
Flies back to bury in his mother’s lap
His shame and his confusion, so to thee,
O Mother Night, come I! Within the folds
Of thy dark robe hide me close… (VIII.1-5)

Formally, the entire poem is a fourteen line exercise in blank verse and thus meets the first and most important requirement of the sonnet. However, this poem lacks both one of the rhyme schemes and usual structural divisions necessary to the sonnet form. The veiling of powerful feelings in this lyric is facilitated by the extended analogy the speaker constructs between himself and the truant child. Three months later in February 1841, Clough composed a second lyric that becomes #IX and is ostensibly on the same subject as #VIII (VIII and IX form a thematic pairing placed at the end of the final arranged text). The point of a comparison between #VIII and #IX is to note that in the latter poem Clough abandons the quasi-sonnet form but compensates by imposing a more restrictive meter (iambic tetrameter) and a rhyme scheme that is maintained throughout the majority of the poem:

Once more the wonted road I tread,
Once more dark heavens above me spread,
Upon the windy down I stand,
My station whence the circling land
Lies mapped and pictured wide below;--
Such as it was, such e’en again,
Long dreary bank and breadth of plain
By hedge or tree unbroken;--lo
A few woods can only show
How vain their aid, and in this sense
Of one unaltering impotence,
Relieving not, meseems enhance
The sovereign dullness of the expanse.  (IX. 1-13)

Both poems are tentative experiments with various techniques (tropes, meter, rhyme) to restrain the anguished expression of the guilty soul, but the combined efforts of the more challenging meter and the rhyme scheme enable #IX to maintain a more efficient economy of expression and succeeds in depersonalizing the lyric voice. One feels a greater distance from the speaker in #IX when it is read immediately after #VIII. This movement from #VIII to #IX establishes the pattern that is carried forward throughout the entire composition history of the poem whereby the lyric voice is progressively more withdrawn as the language is increasingly veiled by greater restrictions on the means of expression.

But Clough was not quite ready to give up on the sonnet as evidenced by the next phase of composition in later April 1841. In a burst of activity, Clough produces the four lyrics that open the final arrangement of Blank Misgivings (#I-IV). These four poems are linked thematically by their exploration not of estrangement from nature (the theme of #VIII-IX) but rather the sense of shame and grief issuing from the awareness of youthful prodigality that Clough had explored in the earlier Balliol lyrics. Clough returns to the sonnet but, unlike #VIII, he has adhered to a consistent pattern of rhyme (a variation on the Italian form) and the standard octave/sestet division. Further, drawing on his earlier
lyrics, Clough deploys nautical and economic image patterns to both reveal and veil the account of his sinful nature:

Here am I yet, another twelvemonth spent,
One-third departed of the mortal span,
Carrying on the child into the man,
Nothing into reality. Sails rent,
And rudder broken—reason impotent,—
Affections all unfixed; so forth I fare
On the mid seas unheedingly, so dare
To do and be done by, well content. (I. 1-8)

Though to the vilest things beneath the moon
For poor Ease’s sake I give away my heart,
And for the moment’s sympathy let part
My sight and sense of truth, thy precious boon,
My painful earnings, lost, all lost, as soon,
Almost, as gained: and though aside I start,
Belie Thee daily, hourly,--still Thou art,
Art surely as in heaven, the sun at noon. (II.1-8)

In relation to the first two lyrics (#VIII and #IX), the rhyme, rhetorical structure and more consistent troping in this quartet of poems results in a more opaque language and reserved expression by the speaker.

The first lyric also offers an excellent example of Clough’s struggles to veil the frank expression of his thoughts and feelings. The octave of the sonnet (quoted above) evokes Wordsworth’s vision of childhood from the Immortality Ode in order to suggest as Anthony Kenny argues that “The ideals of childhood and early youth set a standard which the individual on the threshold of manhood finds impossible to live up to” (Kenny 1988, 18). The MS version of the sestet originally continued:

So was I from the first, so am I yet;
Yea, the first kiss that by these lips was set
On my mother’s was methinks was sin—
Nor sin alone, but falsehood; for the will
Into a deed e’en then advanced, wherein
God, unacknowledged, was remembered still. (MS I.9-14)

Clough has replaced the Wordsworthian neo-Platonic vision of the child trailing “clouds of glory” with the Christian paradigm of Original Sin since, as Kenny, again, cogently argues, the first kiss is sinful by placing a creature, even if it is one’s mother, higher in the affections than the Creator. The MS version of the sestet makes all of this relatively clear, but the version that Clough actually offered for public consumption reads:

So was it from the first, so is it yet;
Yea, the first kiss that by these lips was set
On any human lips, methinks was sin—
Sin, cowardice, and falsehood; for the will
Into a deed e’en then advanced, wherein
God, unidentified, was thought-of still. (I.9-14)

It was this sestet specifically that provoked Houghton’s harsh judgment on the lyrics of *Blank Misgivings.* The revised sestet effaces the personal pronoun “I” for the vaguer “it,” replaces the specific identity of the kiss’s recipient, removes the correlative conjunctions in line 13, and curiously substitutes “unidentified” for “unacknowledged.” The combined effect of Clough’s changes is to veil the direct and clear expression of the poem’s central point. This may fatally compromise the sonnet’s effectiveness, but it is in keeping with the pattern of growing expressive obfuscation in the lyrics.

A month later (May 1841) Clough composes what would become the last lyric in the final ordering of *Blank Misgivings.* He abandons the sonnet in favor of a variation on the ballad stanza consisting of three pentameter lines followed by a trimeter line and employing the traditional ballad rhyme scheme:

How will the heart, which now thou trustest, then
Corrupt, yet in corruption mindful yet,
Turn with sharp stings upon itself! Again,
Bethink thee of the debt! (X. 9-12)
The more limited possibilities enjoined by such a metrical arrangement combined with
the increasingly convoluted syntactic structures that accompany, or perhaps are the result
of such an ordering, combine to offer the greatest amount of obfuscation to date in the
poet’s confession of the strong feelings with which he is wrestling. In comments that are
apposite to the process that I have been tracing, Katharine Chorley remarks on Clough’s
handling of Blank Misgivings lyrics: “They are handled with restraint and for the most
part with a discriminating economy of force in an effort to express his meaning. He is
beginning to learn that a discharge of feeling by itself is only the raw material of poetry”
(51). Chorley’s observation is consonant with my own argument here, but the difference
lies in that I wish to ground this “restraint” and “discriminating economy of force” in a
specific Tractarian context and Clough’s engagement with it. Similarly, in an excellent
discussion of the formal qualities of the Blank Misgivings series, Richard McGhee argues
that the lyrics are the record of Clough’s attempts to impose a Victorian propriety of form
upon the Romantic, and specifically Wordsworthian heritage that viewed poetry as the
“spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” McGhee’s analysis, however, works
from the final arrangement of the poems rather than their order of composition and sees a
Romantic/Victorian dialectic at work whereas I want to locate the formal, and linguistic
experimentation, more specifically and systematically in the Tractarian context that so
dominates Clough’s Balliol experience.

In the fall of 1841 Clough composes two further lyrics that eventually take their
place as #VI and #VII in the final version of the poem that appeared in Ambarvalia.
Rhetorically, these poems serve as a bridge between the initial lyrics that express regret
over wasted youth and the later poems that delineate the speaker’s subsequent
estrangement from nature. They are also significant for my approach to the poem
because they come at the end of the composition process. Having imposed ever greater
restrictions by forcing, cajoling, twisting and troping words in various ways, Clough
appears to have reached an impasse in these poems which lack the careful structuring and
form of the poems that precede and succeed them. Clough has consciously or
unconsciously reached his limits in terms of his ability and/or desire to veil his language
in order to provide a restrained expression of emotion. Houghton’s indictment of the
vagueness of expression in the lyrics is as much a testimony to the difficulties of infusing
the spirit of Reserve into his language as it a revelation of Clough’s inadequacy as a poet
at this stage in his career. These poems, which are transitional in terms of their content in
the published version of Blank Misgivings, are from a compositional perspective a
moment of climactic breakdown of the systematic restrictions and reserve that Clough
had been imposing on his medium.

Clough waited until his departure for Oriel the following summer (July 1842) to
compose one last poem—a kind of coda--that would be published as #V in Blank
Misgivings. The poem microcosmically reenacts the very process that has just been
traced with regard to the other nine lyrics. It follows a strict alternating rhyme scheme
and juxtaposes tetrameter and trimeter lines. At the conclusion of the poem, Clough, in
lines that anticipate Matthew Arnold’s “The Buried Life,” comes to the very eighteenth-
century empirical recognition that, as instruments of communication, words contain
enough inherent opacity independent of any attempt by the poet to use language to veil
the expression of feeling:
Excitements come, and act and speech
Flow freely forth;--but no,
Nor they, nor aught besides, can reach
The buried world below.  (V. 13-16)

These last lines that Clough composed for Blank Misgivings are Janus-faced. The admission that language is inherently inadequate to express feelings and ideas is a tacit admission of the ultimately misguided nature of attempting to bestow on language an opacity that is already its birthright. Blank Misgivings is a series of poems that are the climactic exploration of the functional possibilities of Reserve in language, but, ultimately, end in a repudiation of Reserve itself.

Reserve and the Oracular Voice: Arnold’s Balliol Poetry

As Clough was composing the penultimate lyrics for Blank Misgivings in the autumn of 1841 and coming to the realization of the inadequacy of Reserve as a guiding linguistic principle, another, enthusiastic and interested observer of Tractarianism and Tractarian aesthetics was about to take up residence in the college that Clough would soon vacate following his unsuccessful attempt for a Balliol Fellowship in November. Matthew Arnold arrived at Oxford, already well-grounded, as the previous chapter has suggested, in the aesthetic ideas of the Oxford Movement. Like Clough, Arnold was determined to avoid involvement in the theological debate still raging throughout the University. As Hamilton notes: “Arnold resolved to steer clear from theological controversy…it was all too solemn and extreme” (45), and the Arnoldians at Oxford quickly realized that the Doctor’s son, like Clough four years earlier, would not be their champion. Arnold also encountered a different Oxford than Clough since the Tractarians were no longer in the ascendancy. The publication of Tract 90 eight months earlier had
rallied the Movement’s opponents and in its aftermath Newman initiated his long withdrawal from Oxford and ultimately from Anglicanism itself. As William Knickerbocker noted long ago:

Matthew Arnold, therefore, entered Oxford at a most interesting time. His career as an undergraduate coincided with the eclipse and collapse of Tractarianism as a party movement; and he himself, as a scholar of the college where the Catholic party laid its last siege, lived in the midst of ecclesiastical and theological turmoils. The story of his intellectual development may be seen to have had its beginnings in such a climate.

(403)

Further, as we shall see with reference to the circumstances surrounding Arnold’s “Cromwell”: “Authorities were openly humiliating High Church clergyman…As an apparent insult to Tractarians, a complimentary degree was being given to a mere Unitarian, who proved to be the innocent American ambassador” (Honan 71).

What were the implications of this atmosphere for Arnold’s understanding and employment of language? Arnold was certainly cognizant of the central Tractarian ideas, including those on the nature of poetry, and while Tractarianism may have been in the process of being eclipsed as a religious and political force in the University, it still retained strong vestiges of aesthetic appeal for undergraduates. The very same ideas that had engaged Clough during his undergraduate experience had undoubtedly filtered northward via the steady human and epistolary traffic between Rugby and the various Oxford colleges. This served to augment Arnold’s own familiarity with The Christian Year and other Tractarian texts. That the appeal of Tractarianism had been limited to an aesthetic one is indicated in one of Matthew Arnold’s most famous and oft-quoted encomium to Oxford—a testimonial to Newman’s stylistic appeal to an impressionable and predisposed young undergraduate:
Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music, -- subtle, sweet, mournful? (9: 165)

Although this is the most well-known acknowledgment, on Arnold’s part, of Newman’s appeal, there are other noteworthy points of contact that suggest that Arnold’s interest in the ideas of the Oxford Movement, if not as extensive or intensive as Clough’s in 1837-38, is significant in its own respect.

For example, “Stagirius,” composed towards the end of Arnold’s undergraduate years, is a poem with connections to Tractarian scholarship. Stagirius is, as Arnold’s notes to the poem indicate, the monk to whom St. Chrysostom addressed three books. St. Chrysostom’s status as a Doctor of the Church made him a key figure for the Tractarians, and Culler adds that “All through the late ‘thirties’ and early ‘forties’ books by and about him were being published in considerable numbers as part of the controversy over the nature of the Church” (91) and that “it is difficult to suppose that the poem did not originally have some association for Arnold with the Tractarian movement” (92). David Riede’s discussion of the poem adds another layer of significance. Riede argues that “Stagirius,” among other things, expresses wariness about the solipsistic tendencies of Romantic subjectivism and that the poem intimates that “the language of Romantic aspiration is self-indulgent, self-deceptive, and idolatrous—self-singing” (Riede 39). While this is part of a more general Victorian indictment of Romanticism, as Riede rightly emphasizes, it was also one of the specific charges leveled by Tractarian writers (particularly by Keble) against the excesses of Romantic subjectivism issuing in an unbridled expressiveness. Given his association with Tractarian scholarship on the early.
Church leaders (both Chrysostom and Gregory), the choice of “Stagirius” as a speaker and the fact that he speaks a litany—a favorite Tractarian poetic form—is noteworthy. Riede further notes that the poem both registers suspicions of Romantic subjectivism and expression, but also laments the feebleness of the human language, particularly in the perceived absence of a divinely-sanctioned authoritative voice, and that “the desire for a calming, healing voice from God is entirely Arnoldian” (Riede 37). The poem holds up the vices of Romantic expressivism and the absence of the divinely-sourced calming, soothing antidote—an antidote that is infused with the spirit of Reserve. “Stagirius” is a poem that is often overlooked by critics but it is important in two respects. It is indicative of Arnold’s engagement with Tractarianism (something that has not been widely investigated) and it crystallizes Arnold’s dilemma with regard to language early in his career.

Indeed, in *Matthew Arnold and the Betrayal of Language*, David Riede offers one of the most persuasive readings of Arnold’s early poetry and the most extensive and considered account of the language of that poetry. For Riede, Arnold’s youthful attempts to carve out a justified vocational identity involve him in a search for an authoritative language or voice that would be adequate to surmount the hurdles facing the modern poet and fulfill the already grand effects that Arnold envisioned for poetry. Riede’s exploration of Arnold’s early poetry is particularly illuminating in that it shows Arnold’s poems repeatedly, thematically and in practice, failing to find such an authentic, adequate language (“Stagirius” is but one of many examples). The oracular voices of God or nature that might assist the poet in investing his own language with the kind of authority needed are either distant, absent or indecipherable. Arnold’s search for an authoritative
language, then, quickly takes on an elegiac tone as such a language seems non-existent or, at best, unavailable. The discussion that follows examines what I see as a concurrent consolatory note to the state of affairs that Arnold ultimately found himself in with regard to language that Riede has thoroughly demonstrated. Arnold’s undergraduate poetry at Balliol is, besides a lament for the inaccessibility or impossibility of the genuine article, an exploration of how the oracular voice might be re-constructed, reconstituted or approximated by adopting as a guiding linguistic spirit the Tractarian idea of Reserve both thematically and in practice. In an age that he repeatedly claimed was hostile to poetry, Arnold’s interest in Reserve is an attempt to create a specific oracular voice, as a consolation for the absence of the usual sources (God, Nature, the unified self) that would empower him as an artist in the midst of a utilitarian ethos.

A three year gap separates Arnold’s Rugby and Oxford prize poems. Arnold’s entry for the 1843 Newdigate competition, “Cromwell” was ultimately successful, although given the highly-charged political atmosphere surrounding the competition in 1843, one might reasonably speculate on whether its success was based on its merits or due to University politics. The poem, however, is interesting in that it extends Arnold’s interest in Reserve as an organizing principle of his approach to language first seen in the Rugby juvenilia that culminated with “Alaric at Rome.” Whereas Clough’s Newdigate entries were composed in the midst of the Tractarian ascendancy in the University—a period where John Keble was completing a second successful term as Professor of Poetry, Isaac Williams was publishing his lengthy tract on Reserve, and Newman was emerging as the Movement’s most eloquent and textually prolific representative—Arnold’s “Cromwell” was composed, as alluded to above, in very different
circumstances. Following the upheaval surrounding Tract 90, Williams had not (contrary to expectations) succeeded Keble as Professor of Poetry and the choice of Cromwell as the compulsory topic by the new occupant of the Poetry Chair, James Garbett, was likely a gibe at Tractarian veneration for Charles I.\(^6\) Arnold, however, continuing in the contrarian streak from his days at Rugby, took this anti-Tractarian subject matter and fashioned a poem that is, at least, partially grounded in an understanding of Tractarian aesthetics. Regardless of the charged circumstances surrounding the competition or the reasons for the poem’s success, Machann is certainly correct in asserting that “Cromwell” “built up Arnold’s confidence in his poetic powers” (15). In thus encouraging Arnold’s vocational ambitions with regard to poetry, it also becomes the occasion for what might be argued is Arnold’s first serious, extended poetic meditation on the nature and possibilities of his medium.

“Cromwell” is, on one level, a poem that is concerned with language, specifically in its representation of the language of nature, its less substantial representation of human language and the relationship between these two languages. Working from one of Wordsworth’s later sonnets, “Cromwell” opens with an extended depiction of the voices of nature:

```
High fate is theirs, ye sleepless waves, whose ear
Learns Freedom’s lesson from your voice of fear;
Whose spell-bound sense from childhood’s hour hath known
Familiar meanings in your mystic tone:
Sounds of deep import—voices that beguile
Age of its tears and childhood of its smile,
To yearn with speechless impulse to the free
And gladsome greetings of the buoyant sea!
High fate is theirs, who where the silent sky
Stoops to the soaring mountains, live and die;
Whose scale the cloud-capped height, or sink to rest
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In the deep stillness of its shelt’ring breast;
Around whose feet the exulting waves have sung,
The eternal hills their giant shadows flung.
No wonders nursed thy childhood; not for thee
Did the waves chant their song of liberty!
Thine was no mountain home, where Freedom’s form
Abides enthroned amid the mist and storm,
And whispers to the listening winds, that swell
With solemn cadence round her citadel!
These had no sound for thee: that cold calm eye
Lit with no rapture as the storm swept by,
To mark with shivered crest the reeling wave
Hide his torn head beneath his sunless cave;
Or hear ‘mid circling crags, the impatient cry
Of the pent winds, that scream in agony! (1-26)

Although Cromwell did not live in such environs to be instructed by the language of
nature, the significant point is that nature’s language lacks authority and efficacy, as
David Riede points out: “The voice produces not profound human speech but profound
human speechlessness, and it does not inform but beguiles” (34). It is also worth noting
that this opening description in “Cromwell” suggests that the language of nature is not
univocal. There are different, even competing, voices—the voice of the waves/sea and
the voice of the mountain. The voice of the sea alternately beguiles, chants and screams
and stands in contrast to the voice of the mountain which is characterized by stillness and
a near silence as it whispers to the winds that swell with solemn cadence around it.
Putting aside, at least momentarily, the issue of the efficacy of the language of nature, I
have drawn such a distinction in the poem’s representation of natural voices, because the
poem’s later fleeting representations of human language parallel the voice of the
mountain rather than the voice of the sea. In the pageant of historical figures that parade
through Cromwell’s dream vision at the center of the poem, only Falkland speaks, if only
to murmur “Peace.” (174). The Protector himself, historically undistinguished for his
oratory, is depicted speaking towards the end of the poem, significantly in the form of a prayer: “And with its clear, calm tones, that dying prayer/Cheered all the failing hearts that sorrowed there.”

Not only is Cromwell’s voice linked to a particular manifestation of the language of nature, it is itself part of the familiar Tractarian aesthetic dialectic of the 1830s and 1840s that advocates for the imposition of reserve or restraint in the means by which powerful feelings are expressed in poetry. In “Cromwell,” the speaker suggests that, overwhelmed by emotional intensity, linguistic expression is at best partial, incomplete repressed, or even effaced:

A life that wrote its purpose with a sword
Moulding itself in action, not in word
Rent with tumultuous thoughts, whose conflict rung
Deep through his soul and choked his faltering tongue. (221-224)

Later this year and throughout much of his undergraduate poetry at Balliol, Arnold will return to this interest in the ways in which emotional intensity is stoically conditioned to an expressive calmness.

For example, in “To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore” the speaker, confined to his observation of the silent face that looks back at him on the Douglas quay, apostrophizes the titular subject: “Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known/Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth./Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own” (17-19). I would argue that Arnold’s interest in the veiling of a raw, complex, interiority is at least partially rooted in his familiarity with the Tractarian concept of Reserve.

For the most part this interest is thematic since the formal requirements of the Newdigate did not encourage much practical experimentation with language. It might be
noted, however, that the poem’s opening description of the language of nature, quoted above, is itself part of a larger strategy of rhetorical evasiveness, known to Oxford contemporaries as “The Dodge of Antimachus,” whereby Arnold avoids directly describing the less-than-sublime landscape of Huntingdonshire where Cromwell spent much of his early life.

In many ways “Cromwell” shares similarities with Clough’s “The Judgement of Brutus,” composed four years earlier. Beneath the obvious surface source material (in this case Carlyle rather than Livy and Plutarch), there is a Tractarian undercurrent at work. In these three rather disparate figures (if we also include Arnold’s Alaric)―Roman, Goth and Puritan―Clough and Arnold acknowledge the importance and attraction of Tractarian aesthetics in the formative stage of their relationship to their medium.

“Mycerinus” is another early undergraduate poem, written shortly after the completion of “Cromwell” in 1843. Arnold chose to situate it, along with “Quiet Work” at the beginning of The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems and it thus sets the tone for the entire volume. In this poem, Mycerinus, an Egyptian pharaoh of the Old Kingdom, bitterly expresses his sense of the injustice that he, according to an oracle at Buto, will die in six years while his profligate and cruel predecessors were granted long and prosperous reigns. He resolves to retreat to the Nile’s marshes and groves and surrender to a life of sensual enjoyment and revelry. The basic situations of “Mycerinus” and “Cromwell” are very similar in that each poem presents the intersection of a figure endowed with political
authority and responsibility responding to the harsh demands of Fate. Further, “Mycerinus” also expands and develops the aesthetic and linguistic ideas that were only intimated in “Cromwell.”

The most noteworthy formal feature of “Mycerinus” is its bipartite structure consisting of a speech by Mycerinus followed by a narrative coda. The first seventy-eight lines of the poem consist of Mycerinus’s monologue. This speech is essentially a speculative theodicy as Mycerinus tentatively offers a series of explanations about the nature of the gods that might offer a satisfactory justification of the fate which has been assigned to him. This address is characterized by a mix of anger, bitterness, resentment and self-pity—and anticipates in many ways the long speech of Empedocles in Act I of Empedocles on Etna. The speech offers a good example of the expression of powerful emotions delineated with an aggressiveness and directness that leaves little ambiguity regarding the intensity of Mycerinus’s feelings. The language, particularly when it is compared to the second part of the poem, is largely denotative and ensures that Mycerinus will not be misconstrued:

Seems it so light a thing, then, austere Powers,  
To spurn man’s common lure, life’s pleasant things?  
Seems there no joy in dances crowned with flowers,  
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?  
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmoved eye,  
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy? (31-36)

Yet there is also something unfocused and uneven about Mycerinus’s monologue as he veers back and forth between addressing his people and crying out to the Gods over the
course of the speech. Further, his speculations on the nature of the Gods, cast in the form of a series of rhetorical questions, convey something of the restless and passionate intensity of his mental distress.

Perhaps the only thing that imposes restraint on the expression of Mycerinus’s feelings is Arnold’s use of the “Venus and Adonis” stanza with its regularized metrical requirements and rhyme scheme. The effects of such a stanza are minimal, however, and the first half of “Mycerinus” stands out as a powerful but not particularly poetic expression, through the eponymous character’s monologue, of powerful emotions and Culler is likely not incorrect in asserting that “Most readers would probably agree that they could dispense with the first half if it were not necessary as the donnée which makes the second half intelligible” (62).

In the second part of “Mycerinus” we encounter a very different voice. The angry, blustery voice of Mycerinus is replaced by a third person narrator who recounts Mycerinus’s action in the Nile groves and the reaction of his subjects to their pharaoh’s abdication. This half of the poem has generally received the bulk of critical comment as readers attempt to determine Arnold’s ethical position in the poem and whether the text ultimately advocates Epicureanism or Stoicism. The second half of the poem also works in concert with Mycerinus’s monologue by offering balance in the form of a more veiled and ambiguous account compared to the direct speech of the angry king at the beginning of the poem. Much of this, of course, is due to the shift from the first to third person voice, but it is also accomplished in others ways, most notably in the sudden profusion of figurative language that enters the poem at this point:

Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn,
Rose-crowned; and ever, when the sun went down,
A hundred lamps beamed in the tranquil gloom,
From tree to tree all through the twinkling grove,
Revealing all the tumult of the feast—
Flushed guests, and golden goblets foamed with wine;
While the deep-burnished foliage overhead
Splintered the silver arrows of the moon. (92-99)

The last line with its echoes of the richly figurative linguistic textures of Shelley and the deployment of aural effects such as alliteration throughout the passage stands in relief to the unburnished, denotative speech of Mycerinus earlier in the poem. Just as Mycerinus withdraws into the groves and veils his feelings and his actions, so too does the language of the poem reenact this movement by its juxtaposition of the monologue with the narrative coda.

It is also possible, as Culler has pointed out, to trace a process in “Mycerinus” of communicative metamorphosis whereby “the loud sounds of cries, prayers, oracles and tears in the first section, and of laughter in the second, are muted in the third to the whisper of the pale shade of death, the silent knowledge of the king…the dull sound of distant revelry, and the murmur of the moving Nile” (60). Similarly, David Riede has pointed to the implications of this general movement in the poem:

The poem that began with references to an absolutely authoritative utterance ends with futile attempts to find meaning in the enigmatic silence of the king. The beautiful closing lines, however, tell not of silence, but of inarticulate sound…the lines…emphasize both the inarticulateness of nature’s voice, a “murmur,” and the inextricably linked pointlessness of human utterance, reduced to a “dull sound” and distanced to an echo. (47)

It is indeed undeniable that Arnold was haunted by the linguistic nihilism that Riede locates here and elsewhere, but more positively the murmur, echo, and dull sound might be construed in a marginally more optimistic fashion as characteristics of an alternative
approach to language that stands in opposition to the speech of Mycerinus. Mycerinus’s expression here is veiled by qualities of distance (echo); its constituent elements have been rendered indistinguishable, soft-sounded and quiet (murmur); and it has mixed with the natural sounds of the Nile, which are reminiscent of the indirect and restrained qualities associated with the natural language of the mountain in the opening invocation to “Cromwell.” The end of this movement is ultimately silence and inarticulateness as Riede suggests, but “Mycerinus” also represents the process by which the direct voice is veiled and it is noteworthy that even in its veiled state, the transformed language of Mycerinus at the end of the poem continues to exercise an effect, albeit a different and decidedly more indirect and subtle one, on his people:

So six long years he revelled, night and day.
And when the mirth waxed loudest, with dull sound
Sometimes from the grove’s centre echoes came,
To tell his wondering people of their king;
In the still night, across the steaming flats,
Mixed with the murmur of the moving Nile. (122-127)

Similarly, it has been Arnold’s own more veiled language and indirect mode of expression in the second half of the poem that has made a more lasting impression on readers than the direct, unpoetic lament of Mycerinus in the first half.

In poems such as “Cromwell” and “Mycerinus” (and “To a Gipsy Child by the Seashore”), Arnold presents figures who are, despite obvious differences, linked by the representation of their struggle to mask, veil or restrain the expression of powerful feelings, or at least are perceived by the speakers of these poems to be engaged in such a struggle. Further, in “Mycerinus,” in particular, Arnold makes his first tentative attempts to invest his own language with a similar restraint—to make his own words the veils that
would both express and regulate the communication of his thoughts and emotions. Like Clough in his Balliol poetry, Arnold begins to test the possibilities and effects of tropes, rhyme, meter and other aural effects in his own linguistic performances. The following year (1844) might be characterized as a focusing of Arnold’s attention on this specific challenge.

Three poems from 1844, “The Voice,” “Shakespeare,” “Written in Emerson’s Essays,” represent an interesting development from the poems from earlier in Arnold’s Balliol career, most notably “Cromwell” and “Mycerinus.” In those earlier poems Arnold is concerned largely with explorations of figures who, for various reasons, are linked to or characterized by a sense of reserve and restraint in the expression of the powerful emotions. The poems are also exploratory in that they seek but reach no conclusions with regard to the proper balance of direct and indirect expression through language. In the three poems from 1844 there is a narrowing or perhaps a re-orienting of Arnold’s interest in Reserve (or a lack thereof) to specific aesthetic contexts. This process, begun in the latter days at Balliol continues at Oriel. As questions of audience and the poet’s engagement with the world loom larger, Arnold’s interest in Reserve is increasingly preoccupied with the rhetorical consequences and possibilities of a language that takes it as one of its guiding principles.

“The Voice” is an important moment in this development and acts as a bridge between the more generalized explorations of “Cromwell” and “Mycerinus” and the 1844 sonnets that consider the issue of regulated or reserved expression as a more narrowly
defined artistic challenge or requirement. The poem is certainly one of Arnold’s most explicit and self-conscious meditations on the nature of language among his undergraduate efforts.

Critical attention on this poem has often been concerned with identifying the owner of the voice referred to in the title. On the one hand David Riede is quite right to focus attention on the nature of the voice that is presented in the poem, but it is of some importance, I think, that the voice almost certainly belongs specifically to John Henry Newman. “Cromwell” and “Mycerinus” had raised the issue of the proper balance between the expression of powerful feelings and the potential attractiveness and feasibility of reserve or restraint in that act of expression. Newman’s voice in this poem is a particularly attractive model for Arnold given Newman’s own unique experience and practice with the Tractarian idea of Reserve.

Newman had found it necessary in his own use of language, most notably his sermons, to modify the idea of Reserve first broached by Keble and popularized by Isaac Williams. Keble, in particular, had understood Reserve as a veiling, a powerful check on the expression of emotion. Newman’s own understanding and practice was less restrictive in the restraint of feeling and resulted in a greater degree of emotional intensity in his linguistic performances. Arnold who had been introduced to Reserve through his exposure to Keble had recognized that the ultimate linguistic consequence of Keble’s inflection of the concept as an aesthetic and communicative principle is silence or at best a crabbed, stunted use of language. He had intimated as much in some of the darker moments of his Rugby and early Balliol works. Newman’s approach to the idea of Reserve offered greater possibilities and flexibility for a young poet fashioning a
workable and credible poetic persona. Newman’s redefinition allowed the writer to recover a degree of emotional and expressive intensity while simultaneously demonstrating aesthetic control. Firsthand accounts of Newman’s sermons seem to confirm this use of restraint in his linguistic performances.\footnote{72}

It is this less restrictive definition of Reserve that Arnold is exploring in “The Voice.” The defining characteristics of the voice that are elucidated in the poem mix emotional intensity with indirection, beauty, sweetness and stillness. A sense of the mixed quality of this voice emerges in the concluding lines of the poem:

\begin{verbatim}
O unforgotten voice, thy accents come,
Like wanderers from the world’s extremity,
Unto their ancient home!
In vain, all, all in vain,
They beat upon mine ear again
Those melancholy tones so sweet and still
Those lute-like tones which in the bygone year
Did steal into mine ear—
Blew such a thrilling summons to my will,
Yet could not shake it;
Made my tossed heart its very life-blood spill,
Yet could not break it. (29-40)
\end{verbatim}

While critics have largely been preoccupied with identifying the owner of the voice or discussing the qualities of that voice, little attention has been devoted to the way that Arnold organizes his own language in this poem that is itself about language. Interestingly, the elucidation of the voice’s indirect, subtle and veiled nature is itself enacted by the poem which describes this subtle, perhaps insidious, voice not directly but indirectly through a series of similes. The quiet, effective appeal of the voice is performed by the description itself:

\begin{verbatim}
As the kindling glances
Queen-like and clear,
\end{verbatim}
Which the bright moon lances
From her tranquil sphere
At the sleepless waters
Of a lonely mere,
On the whirling waves, mournfully, mournfully,
Shiver and die.
As the tears of sorrow
Mothers have shed--
Prayer that to-morrow
Shall in vain be sped
When the flower they flow for
Lies frozen and dead—
Fall on the throbbing brow, fall on the burning breast,
Bringing no rest.
Like bright waves that fall
With a lifelike motion
On the lifeless margin of the sparkling Ocean;
A wild rose climbing up a mouldering wall—
A gush of sunbeams through a ruined hall—
Strains of glad music at a funeral—(1-22)

The poem chooses to present the indirect, subtle nature of the voice indirectly by structuring the first half of the poem on a series of tropes. Further, the poem’s unusual metrical scheme in the first two stanzas where the short trimeter and tetrameter lines are broken in the penultimate line with a hexameter recreates the sense of the language and the voice struggling for, temporarily losing and then regaining a sense of restraint and reserve. There also remains the question of the voice’s efficaciousness. The speaker points out the failure of the voice, in the second half of the poem, to break his heart or his will. This, however, does not cancel out the totality of the voice’s power. Indeed, its very “failure” to “shake” the will or “break” the heart refers to the content the voice delivers even as it the aesthetic appeal of the voice is remembered and organized around the idea of Reserve rather than a more aggressive, expressive, direct use of language.
The rest of 1844, in terms of poetic composition, is taken up with the production of a quartet of sonnets that are the last poems Arnold wrote as an undergraduate at Balliol. These sonnets are written shortly after the publication of Stanley’s *Life* of Thomas Arnold and are partially a response to Stanley’s exercise in Victorian hero-worship. Combined, the sonnets present an eclectic gallery: Shakespeare, Wellington, Emerson and Butler.73

The sonnets on Shakespeare and Emerson in particular are important in further developing the concerns raised in “The Voice” from earlier in the year. In “Shakespeare,” the playwright is presented as the paradigmatic poet of Reserve in many respects. With the Romantic traditions of the “objective” and “subjective” poet (a distinction first raised by Schiller using different terminology in his essay “On Naive and Sentimental Poetry”) in the background, Arnold focuses on Shakespeare’s success in veiling himself from public scrutiny to the point where he is an enigmatic figure who Gioconda-like: “smilest and art still./Out-topping knowledge” (1-2). David DeLuara places Arnold’s assessment of Shakespeare within the nineteenth-century tradition that attempted to understand “a paradoxical Shakespearean mode of impersonal subjectivity” (146). Such a tradition is at the very least consonant with the dialectic of Tractarian aesthetics between expression and reserve. Related to this veiling is the poem’s emphasis on Shakespeare’s taciturnity. As Riede notes “Very strangely in a poem celebrating a poet, Shakespeare’s most notable trait is an inscrutable silence” (43). Shakespeare’s personal inscrutability and silence, however, does not preclude all communication. Indeed, the poem emphasizes that Shakespeare continues to speak to humanity, albeit indirectly and in a reserved manner through the medium of his dramatic corpus.
Shakespeare’s self-effacement from his work allows him to yield general rather than local insights and makes him ultimately more accessible. Paradoxically, Shakespeare’s personal inscrutability makes his works less opaque.

As was the situation in “The Voice,” Arnold’s own language in the poem parallels the thematic concerns about artistic inscrutability and accessibility. The entire poem is built on the comparison between Shakespeare and a mountain. Once again Arnold explores the expressive opportunities and restrictions offered by the simile:

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrows his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foiled searching of mortality… (2-8)

As Allott points out in his notes to the poem, the image (particularly the fifth line) is reminiscent of the opening to Cowper’s Olney hymn “Light shining out of darkness.” That hymn with its familiar opening (“God moves in mysterious ways”) forwards an understanding of nature as the sacrament by which God is indirectly revealed to humanity that parallels Tractarian ideas on nature and the issue of Reserve. The mountain has generally been seen as an ill-chosen vehicle since it suggests an impenetrability that undercuts the poem’s claims to Shakespeare’s trans-historical appeal—such certainly is the argument of F.R. Leavis—but this is not necessarily the case. Arnold’s previous use of mountain imagery, as one appealing dialect of the language of nature in
“Cromwell,” suggested that the voice of the mountain worked quietly and indirectly to teach the lessons of freedom. Shakespeare’s reserve in effacing himself parallels such indirect but effective communication.

Further, although the image of a Shakespeare as a mountain has been plausibly linked to comments by Goethe and Emerson where Shakespeare or the poet in general is seen as a Mount Blanc or a Chimborazo respectively, the image of the mountain as cloud-capped in a way that foils the restless, impatiently questioning masses that linger at the base is also evocative of Sinai—a foundational example of Reserve in the communication of religious knowledge for the Tractarians. Shakespeare is both the mountain itself and the Mosaic figure that knows the “stars and sunbeams” of the summit and brings them to the base through his work. We must content ourselves with his works to learn the truths to which Shakespeare was exposed and seeks to communicate if only indirectly.

Further, as mentioned above, Arnold enacts the very indirection and veiling he celebrates in Shakespeare by structuring the poem (unlike the other 1844 sonnets) around the extended simile. Even within that comparison, Arnold veils his communication to the reader by blurring the distinction between tenor and vehicle. For example, in the ninth line of the poem, the pivotal volta of the Italian sonnet of which this is an example, the language is ambiguous in its reference so that when the speaker says: “And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know” it is unclear whether the object of the address is the mountain top or Shakespeare, or, as is most likely, both simultaneously. This emerges even more clearly when we keep in mind that Arnold rejected an earlier version of the line which would have read “And thou whose wit to highest heaven did go,” which would have removed any ambiguity from the comparison. Another rejected variant of this
crucial line also clearly identified the referent as Shakespeare: “And thou whose head did stars and sunbeams know.” As one critic has pointed out: “By personifying the mountain (lines 3-8), Arnold fuses the tenor and the vehicle of the metaphor to such an extent that the reader is unable to distinguish which aspect Arnold is referring to” (Truss 56). Indeed, the blurring of the distinction in the poem’s extended simile enables the pun in the concluding line where “brow” can refer to both the mountain and Shakespeare: All pains the immortal spirit must endure,/All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow/Find their sole speech in that victorious brow” (12-14). The reference to the brow also is reminiscent of the smoothed brow of Mycerinus (ll. 112) after he had successfully masked his bitterness and fled into the revelries of the Nile groves. Whereas Mycerinus struggles, somewhat unconvincingly, to restrain his overpowering feelings, in “Shakespeare” Arnold suggests a more successful effort and the evidence of a productive and controlled sense of Reserve more appealing for a young poet.

An interesting comparison can be made between the sonnet on Shakespeare and the sonnet “Written in Emerson’s Essays.” The poem describes the world’s indifference to the voice of Emerson:

‘O monstrous, dead, unprofitable world,
That thou canst hear, and hearing hold thy way!
A voice oracular hath pealed today,
To-day a hero’s banner is unfurled;
Hast thou no lip for welcome?’—so I said.
Man after man, the world smiled and passed by;
A smile of wistful incredulity
As though one spake of life unto the dead…(1-8)

As a description of Emerson’s reception at Oxford, however, this is not entirely accurate as Emerson was read and discussed extensively by Arnold and his friends. The point
here is not what Emerson is saying but how he is saying it that is the problem. Whereas
Shakespeare’s reserve and self-effacement was not inimical to his efficacy, the bold,
direct version of the oracular voice of Emerson falls on deaf ears. His direct and
distinctive style which Arnold intimates—“Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful” (9) has
little effect and he is largely ignored. Later in the sestet Arnold gives a further sense of
Emerson’s style through a rough paraphrase from Emerson’s essay ‘History’: “Strong is
the soul, and wise, and beautiful;/The seeds of godlike power are in us still;/Gods we are,
bards, saints, heroes, if we will” (11-13). Significantly, when Arnold composed the poem
in 1844, he himself wondered if the linguistic/stylistic enthusiasm of Emerson was a
judicious use of language. The original manuscript draft of the sonnet’s concluding line
(“Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery”) read: “O barren boast, o joyless mockery”
and Allott notes: “Perhaps unintentionally this reading appears to justify the world’s
scorn of the enthusiast.” In any event, the poem’s judgment of Emerson’s voice seems to
raise questions about direct, individual and forceful communication.

A Return to Roots: Citizen Clough’s Oriel Poetry

When we last left Clough on the eve of the Schools in the spring of 1841, his
poetry, and the language of that poetry, was mired in something of a dead end. Having
arrived at Oxford determined to forward the reforming principles of Thomas Arnold,
including his Broad Church orientation to language, Clough had, for the past several
years, succumbed to the influence of the Tractarians who were then ascendant and even
dominant in so many aspects of the intellectual life of the University. One aspect of this
“season of apostasy,” as I have termed it, was an engagement with the widely
disseminated ideas of Tractarian aesthetics which manifested itself in Clough’s efforts to
invest his language with the spirit of Reserve as a natural complement to the tortured
lyrics he produced during these years. This had produced some interesting metrical and
generic experimentation and an exploration of the figurative resources of language, but
with the concluding lyrics of the *Blank Misgivings* series, it tended to silence rather than
empower him as a poet.

The move from Balliol to Oriel in 1842 would ultimately entangle Clough in the
religious questioning and difficulties that eventually drove him out of Oxford six years
later in 1848. However, from an aesthetic and linguistic perspective, the liberation from
Balliol sets Clough’s poetry and language in a new and important direction that leads
through some of the more memorable pieces of the *Ambarvalia* volume and onward to
the three major poems of 1848-1850.

The post-Balliol Clough that emerges in the letters, biographies, memoirs and
poems of the succeeding years, is a more readily identifiable Clough, a figure reminiscent
of the Rugby Clough in many ways. Kenny notes with reference to a pair of early Oriel
poems: “[T]hat they are the first poems written since Rugby that are not mere
expressions of self-torment” (Kenny 2005, 70). There is a marked renewal of interest in
the wider world beyond Oxford. Freed from the pressure of examinations, immediate
pecuniary concerns and the stifling atmosphere of Balliol, Clough’s diaries and letters
turn increasingly to the issues and events of the mid-1840s such as Chartism, the Corn
Laws, the Factory and Ten Hours Acts, and the Irish Famine. The reforming spirit so
prevalent at Rugby under Thomas Arnold’s tutelage is reawakened here. As Biswas
notes with regard to Clough’s interests and activities during the years of his Oriel
Fellowship:
Clough was ranging even further, marking out for himself in the process an area of study and speculation which was to become, during his time as a Fellow of Oriel. A distinctively, emphatically non Tractarian, venture into contemporary social and economic problems, and so provide him for a number of years with an exhilarating role as an Arnoldian reformer. (4.83)

It was with this renewed sense of interest and engagement with the world’s problems that Clough composed “Thought May Ever Well Be Ranging” in the transitional months preceding his move to Oriel. Here a re-energized Clough announces a commitment to action and work that would replace the hyper-contemplative introspection of Balliol and its reserved expression:

Thought may ever well be ranging,
And opinion, ever changing
Task work be, though ill begun,
Dealt with by experience better;
By the law and by the letter
Duty done is duty done
Do it! Time is on the wing (1-7)

This new resolve, however, raised a familiar problem. The injunction to duty and work posed a challenge to Clough who conceived a large portion of that work to take the form of poetry—the question posed in one of his poems about the utility of poetry remained an open one.

Retreating to the Lake District after his Second-class degree from Balliol, Clough composed two poems, specifically about poetry. These poems both affirm the renewal of his Rugby reforming fervor and points, tangentially, to the new direction of his ideas about language. “A Golden Key Upon the Tongue” was composed at Grasmere during the 1841 Long Vacation. In it Clough wonders if poetry, or at least the poetry that he had been writing at Balliol is worthwhile and important work:
Thou trifler, Poesy!
Heaven grant the manlier heart, that timely, ere
Youth fly, with life’s real tempest would be coping;
The fruit of dreamy hoping
Is, waking, blank despair. (12-16)

Acutely aware that his recent poetry lacked an obvious social and direct engagement—that it did not cope “with life’s real tempest,” Clough sets himself the task of redefining or re-awakening the central thrust of his poetics and, by extension, rethinking or revising his views on language. Another poem from July 1841 is a light piece of doggerel entitled “About what sort of thing.” In this poem, Clough excuses his lack of poetic production by mentioning the more important work he must perform, “Until four in the day/We are reading away” (5-6). Later, and more interestingly, he considers his own literary and linguistic belatedness:

Then for subjects—‘Why twenty—
Lakes, mountains in plenty!
...
Ullswater or Derwent lake
Would a long journey take;
And even Thirl-mere
Is not over-near
Grasmere and Rydal
We can walk to, though idle,
But for them I must trouble you
To refer to W.W.
Who you know very well
Of your own pretty self
Has wrot all can be wroot;
And said all can be said. (1-2, 14-27)

The line “Has wrot all can be wroot” is of particular interest and importance. On the one hand it is a humorous nod to Clough’s view of Wordsworth’s “real language of men.”

Clough and many other Victorians understood Wordsworth’s celebration of rustic speech as sanctioning a particular form of English that was, theoretically closer to nature itself.
Clough, here, evokes an earlier, archaic form of English—an example of English that foregrounds its Germanic roots by preserving “wrot” and “wroot” in their pre-Great Vowel Shift state. Clough’s preference for “wroot” is symptomatic of Clough’s burgeoning awareness of the roots of his English language. Indeed, the most notable recurrent feature of Clough’s Oriel poetry will be its self-conscious etymological awareness. No longer content to veil the expression of personal emotion through an exploitation of the obfuscation inherent in words, Clough will employ words in a way that exposes the deleterious effects of such opacity; and he will seek to employ words with an awareness of their origin and history in order to write a new, more socially engaged poetry.

The guiding spirit behind this renewed social commitment in Clough’s poetry is undoubtedly Thomas Carlyle. Although Clough was certainly aware of Carlyle and his reputation, he does not appear to have read Carlyle with any intensity or regularity until he arrived at Oriel. Clough’s Oriel diaries and correspondence reveal not so much the discovery of Carlyle as an increased interest in his work, particularly his explorations of the “Condition of England Question” and his injunction to “know thy work” (see Clough’s poem “Qui Laborat Orat” for example). Clough was certainly familiar with most, if not all, of Carlyle’s major works of the 1830s and early 1840s including *Miscellaneous Essays*, *Cromwell*, and *Sartor Resartus* when it appeared as a single volume in 1838. With the sudden death of Thomas Arnold in June 1842, it is not surprising that Carlyle emerges in many ways as an influence. Both Carlyle and Dr. Arnold shared a commitment to the comprehensive reform of British society, albeit by different means and with decidedly different degrees of optimism and intensity.
Although one of Clough’s most memorable prose pieces—his pamphlet on the
Irish Famine to the Oxford Retrenchment Association—bears the characteristics of
Carlyle’s electric prose style, the Sage of Ecclefechan is important to Clough less as an
artist and more so as an iconoclast. Carlyle’s relentless exposures of the shams and
hypocrisies of his age—his satiric, piercing exposure of the Dandiacal Body that was
Early Victorian England—is bracing for Clough who seeks to emulate the spirit of
Carlyle’s corrosive and critical sociological realism in his poetry. As Biswas points out,
Clough developed at Oriel “the reputation of a Carlylean idol-breaker” (111). Biswas
speaks further to the general importance of Carlyle for a young radical such as Clough:

Heavily indebted to German Romanticism and Transcendentalism, Carlyle
presented himself in a dual role: he was both Destroyer and Preserver.
Deriving from Herder and Goethe in the notion of palingenesis—cultural
death and rebirth—he saw in his iconoclasm the constructive purpose of
clearing the way for renewal and growth. Launching a massive attack on
contemporary society, its religion, its values, its culture, and its
institutions, he waged unceasing war against sham, cant and hypocrisy.
(4.148)

In the poems written in the aftermath of 1848, Clough would come to appreciate
Carlyle’s dual role as Destroyer and Preserver, and the idea of palingenesis would be an
important shaping principle to the language of these longer poems. At this point,
however, Clough is interested in Carlyle primarily in his capacity as Destroyer since it
informs his own satiric inclinations and is the motivation behind the etymological self-
consciousness that comes to dominate the language of the Oriel poems that I want to turn
to now.

“I give thee joy! O worthy word” is a useful place to begin. The poem is an
exploration on the nature of language as it is used in civil discourse. The speaker
juxtaposes the careless employment of words in polite society against the tenuous deployment of words in the service of inter-subjective communication before concluding with a consideration of those private but powerful instances of language including the mother’s prayer and the martyr’s last sigh. What is most important and most immediately noticeable about the poem as it relates to Clough’s language is announced in the opening lines: “I give thee joy! o worthy word!/Congratulate” (1-2). Clough makes a direct appeal to etymology and it is that interest in etymology that becomes the hallmark of Clough’s poetic language at Oriel. The English word “congratulate” ultimately descends from the Latin “congratulare,” to wish joy (com-together + gratulari-give thanks, show joy). The opening line then provides the etymological meaning before announcing the word itself. As Michael Timko notes: “[I]n “I give thee joy! O worthy word!” the real (i.e., natural) meaning of the word is emphasized” (Timko 119)

However, Clough is not engaged in a display of his erudition here. The etymological sensitivity of the opening line is ironically juxtaposed against the casual use of the word (or words in general) in the hypocritical niceties of polite society where language is a currency exchanged without any sense of its true worth/meaning:

I give thee joy! O worthy word!

*Congratulate*—A Courtier fine,
Transact, politely shuffling by,
The civil ceremonial life,
Which, quickly spoken, barely heard,
Can never hope, nor e’en design
To give thee joy! (1-7)

If this is the case, then the tenuousness of language’s role in inter-subjective communication is further intensified. The speaker states the familiar epistemological/semantic idealism:
I give thee joy! O faithful word!
When heart with heart, and mind with mind
Shakes hands; and eyes in outward sign
Of inward vision, rest in thine;
And feelings simply, truly stirred,
Emphatic utterance seek to find,
And give thee joy!

I give thee joy! O word of power!
Believe, though slight the tie in sooth,
When heart to heart its fountain opes
The plan to water that with hopes
Is budding for fruition’s flower—
The word, potential made, in truth
Shall give thee joy! (8-21)

Further, an older use of “congratulate” is not simply to wish or give joy but to express a sympathetic pleasure, and this underlies the image of communion in these two stanzas. The poem also views words as that which are exchanged between users of a language who have varying degrees of awareness of the true meaning of the word. To be aware of the etymology of a word is to be aware of its true worth when it was coined and Clough seeks to convey this etymological awareness to his readers for their benefit. It is interesting that the poem, although composed in 1844, was published two years later in *The Balance*, a scholarly journal to which Clough contributed several epistolary essays critical of laissez-faire political economy.

“I give thee joy! O worthy word” is not the first instance of Clough’s evocation of the etymological roots of words. It occurs in two poems written just as Clough was making the transition from Balliol to Oriel—“Duty—that’s to say complying” and “To the Great Metropolis.” In the former poem, Clough offers an acidic critique of the mechanical, unthinking formality and moral blindness inherent in Victorian conceptions of duty. The poem offers a catalogue of many of these empty conventions:
Duty—that’s to say complying
With what’er’s expected here;
On your unknown cousin’s dying
Straight be ready with the tear
Upon etiquette relying
Unto usage naught denying
Lend your waist to be embraced
Blush not even, never fear;
Claims of kith and kin connection
Claims of manners honour still
...
Go to church—the world require you,
To balls—the world require you too,
And marry—pappa and mamma desire you
And your sisters and schoolfellows do... (1-18)

Clough’s exposure of the threadbare conception of Duty adopted by so many of his contemporaries anticipates later efforts at Oriel and aspects of his longer poems in later years. The opening line with the combination of the early caesura and the phrase “that’s to say” (which might well be read as: “in other words”) is, I would suggest, a kind of poetic equivalent to a dictionary entry. The rest of the poem then, like certain dictionary entries, follows the definition with a series of examples. This structure is repeated twice later in the poem (and two additional times in cancelled lines from the MS). Further, Clough exploits his etymological awareness of “duty” to sharpen the edge of this satire. He is aware, and expects his readers to be aware, that “duty” is originally (and remains in one sense) related, of course, to matters of economics and trade. Clough’s exposure of the emptiness of Victorian pieties of duty is heightened by weaving its original, root meaning into the texture of his indictment. Duty is the “Ready money of affection/Pay, who’er draw the bill” (11-12). Clough establishes in this early poem the practice of exploiting his awareness (seen most explicitly in “I give thee joy o worthy word”) of the radicals of words to propel a poetry invested in a radical critique and observation of
Victorian society. The poem’s (and other poems from the last days at Balliol and Oriel) interrogation of a particular intellectual/moral value by dissecting and anatomizing it locates it, on one level, as a kind of poetic Mennippean satire, since Clough’s satirical targets are never individuals but rather ideas and attitudes and “the debilitating effect of custom and convention” (Timko 112). These interrogations of concepts are deeply entwined in the examination of the name of that concept, and Clough’s language with its heightened sense of etymological roots furthers that project.

A second poem from Clough’s latter days at Balliol is “To the Great Metropolis.” The poem alludes both implicitly (by its subject matter) and explicitly (by its reference to the “mighty heart” in the last line) to Wordsworth’s “Composed on Westminster Bridge, September 3 1802.” Clough’s target here is not the moribund understandings of duty but the consequences of England’s unconditional embrace of unregulated laissez-faire capitalism. As a self-anointed Apostle of Anti-Laissez Faire, Clough would undertake a serious study of modern economics at Oriel, writing extended letters on economic topics for The Balance and delivering impassioned speeches on the subject in the Decade—the exclusive Oxford debating society to which he belonged. In this poem, whereas Wordsworth likens early morning London to a sleeping Albion, Clough, drawing on his heightened awareness of the roots of words, satirically offers the opposite view. Playing off the polyvalence of the word “capital,” Clough suggests the city is not the heart of England but rather it is the head. The capital city of England is, however, the very heart of its economic capital. Clough’s language in the poem is utilized with sense of the root meanings and origins of individual words. The opening observation of “Traffic” is certainly rooted in Clough’s observation of the physical phenomena of an increasingly
congested London, but Clough draws on it with an awareness of its roots in an economic sense, as would Ruskin two decades later. Other words from the poem are similarly deployed such as “traveling” (from “travail”) and “fashion” (from “to make”) and help cement Clough’s criticism of the edifice of a Victorian society built upon the foundations of laissez-faire capitalism. Further, in a poem that strongly denies the Wordsworthian assertion that London is Albion’s heart the opening startled recognition of “Traffic” (reminiscent of Wordsworth’s apostrophe to Milton in “London, 1802) carries a deeply ironic undercurrent in the awareness of the word’s origin not in the Saxon or Norman stocks but rather in Arabic. At the time of the poem’s composition, philologists posited “traffic” as descended from the Arabic word (taraffaqa- ‘to seek profit’). When this etymological resonance is kept in mind, Clough’s use of the word “Bazaar” (a Persian word that came into English via Italian via Turkish) to describe London in the penultimate line is entirely appropriate. The opening and closing words then add resonance to Clough’s attack on the city and culture that was perceived by so many complacent Victorians to be the epitome of Western Civilization. The historical and etymological sensitivity that Clough demonstrates in his choice of words sharpens the sonnet’s satiric indictment that seemingly conflates England’s enthrallment to the laissez-faire principles of political economy with a loss of native “Englishness.”

If the broad political project of Clough’s Oriel poetry is an iconoclastic Carlylean puncturing of the shams and hypocrisies of English bourgeois society in the 1840s, then the etymological self-consciousness evident in Clough’s Oriel poetry replays, on the level of language, the same rending of the linguistic veil that insulates the hegemony in such a society.
The etymological impulse that comes to characterize Clough’s approach to language in his Oriel poems is reminiscent of and rooted in the empirical tradition of language study that descends from Locke through Tooke to Bentham and the Utilitarians. Clough’s interest in the precision and explanatory power of the roots of words is put in the service of a poetry that radically questions the cultural shibboleths and pieties and locates him as an early Victorian Horne Tooke, although there is no evidence that he was a student of Tooke’s theories. His project is, however, broadly similar to that undertaken in *The Diversions of Purley*. Clough’s interest in this empiricist tradition in language study is in one sense not surprising given that his epistemological orientations were themselves broadly empiricist. As Walter Bagehot noted in his posthumous study of Clough: “He had by nature an exceedingly real mind…The actual visible world as it was and as he saw it exercised over him a compulsory influence…He could not dissolve the world into credible ideas and then believe these ideas as many poets have done” (Chorley 54). While he could sympathize and commit himself to a Carlylean program of social reform, he had little or no interest in Carlyle’s natural supernaturalism (or Emerson’s version of transcendentalism for that matter). The etymological impulse in Clough’s Oriel language is part of a larger materialist orientation in his thinking that finds expression in other ways—for example, in his religious difficulties or in his strikingly modern (by Early Victorian standards) celebration of the physical, material aspects of sexuality in poems such as “Natura Naturans.”

Further, there is a more immediate influence that cultivates Clough’s materialist sensitivity to the origins of words and their subsequent history and development. That influence is John Stuart Mill, whose *A System of Logic* Clough read and discussed
enthusiastically at Oriel shortly after it appeared in 1843. Clough makes multiple references to the work in his correspondence and it seems to have been a topic of discussion in the Decade. The fourth book of the *Logic*, “Of Operations Subsidiary to Induction,” contains two chapters entitled “On the Requisites of a Philosophical Language” and “On the Natural History of the Variations in the Meaning of Terms.” In the first of these chapters Mill argues for the importance of precisely determining the meaning of names by ultimately referring to the concrete or material root from which all abstract terminology ultimately flowers. Elsewhere in these chapters he discusses the difficulties of inter-subjective communication and the various ways in which the original meaning of a concrete term is changed by transference, generalization, specialization etc. Mill, therefore, offers Clough philosophical buttressing for his interest in etymology and the history of words which so informs his sense of language at this point in his career. Mill, unlike Tooke, sees the etymological root of a word as one, albeit an important one, aspect of a word’s meanings and it is this more flexible sense of the semantic values of a language that informs Mill’s work and keeps Clough’s etymological awareness in the language of this Oriel poetry from being reductively materialist.

In a slightly different sense, the poem “The Silver Wedding” is another poem that interrogates the various meanings of a particular word, in this case the words “silver” and “gold.” The poem, occasioned by the twenty-fifth anniversary of the parents of Clough’s Oxford friend Theodore Walrond, celebrates the enriching and ennobling of love over time. “The Silver Wedding” is interesting in the demands it places on readers to constantly reassess their understandings of the signification of the words “silver” and “gold.” Clough begins with the same typographical convention as “I give thee joy! O
worthy word” which signals that it is a poem on one level about the meaning of the text’s key terms. As the poem develops, we witness a contest for supremacy between “silver” which can variously refer to the past, old age, the twenty-fifth anniversary and “gold” which is at times more valuable than silver (as in the golden days of youth that witnessed the wedding compared to the silver days of old age that mark the present commemoration or the golden anniversary of the fiftieth anniversary) and at other moments less valuable (the love commemorated by the “silver” anniversary is mellower and richer than that solemnized by the fool’s gold of youthful infatuation that was present on the original wedding day). Clough’s clever conceit in the poem draws attention to the instability in the meaning of the key terms and compels the reader to trace out the twists and turns in the signification of the word over the course of the poem. In so doing, Clough communicates a broader insight about the nature of language.

A sensitivity (and perhaps an over-reliance) to the precise meanings of words and etymological roots informs what is perhaps Clough’s most famous shorter poem, “Epi-Strauss-ion.” Again, the poem turns on an extended conceit and pun that compares the knowledge of Jesus before and after the publication of the German biblical scholar David Friedrich Strauss’s Leben Jesu:

    Matthew and Mark and Luke and holy John
    Evanished all and gone!
    Yea, he that erst, his dusky curtains quitting,
    Through Eastern pictured panes his level beams transmitting
    With gorgeous portraits blent,
    On them his glories intercepted spent,
    Southwestering now, through windows plainly glassed,
    On the inside face his radiance keen hath cast,
    And in the luster lost, invisible and gone,
    Are, say you, Matthew, Mark and Luke and holy John?
    Lost, is it? Lost, to be recovered never?
However,
The place of worship the meantime with light
Is, if less richly, more sincerely bright,
And in blue skies the Orb is manifest to sight.  (1-15)

Knowledge of the Son is imaged as beams of the sun passing through Church windows.

Before Strauss and the Higher Criticism, the son/sun’s beams passed through the stained glass of the eastern windows of the Church. As the sun/son passes through these stained glass portraits it casts a luster throughout the church. After Strauss, the son/sun passes through the clear south-west windows and the beams radiate through the church. Much of the poem’s linguistic import turns on an awareness of the differences between luster and radiance. “Luster” refers to refracted light as it passes through the stained glass. This is an indirect light that has been mediated, just as understanding of Christ has traditionally been mediated by the traditions, forms, and rituals of the church. On the other hand, “radiance” refers to light as it emits directly from the source and parallels the direct, unmediated access that Strauss and the Higher Criticism has afforded to the Son. Further, this radiance is seen as perhaps less glorious but more sincerely bright. Clough’s interesting adjectival choice of “sincerely” shows his continued interest in etymology—in this case a false etymology. At the time of composition, the word “sincere” was believed by many to have an etymology meaning “without wax” (sine cera). The etymology was rooted in the story that ancient craftsman would mask the defects of their work with wax which would only be revealed after purchase. To assert that something was “sine cera” was to assert that it was pure and unalloyed. In choosing “sincerely” to describe the effects of Strauss’s work, Clough suggests it offers a non-ecclesiastically alloyed access
to Christ that is salutary. Unaware of the fallaciousness of the etymology, Clough’s assessment of the effect of the Higher Criticism is rooted in a specific meaning of words based on their etymologies.

Yet the poem’s position is complicated by its extended conceit of the sun shining through the stained glass and clear-paned windows. Clough celebrates the triumph of rationality and the effect of Strauss’s scholarship in offering a less mediated engagement with Jesus. Not only had nineteen centuries of mediating ecclesiastical tradition been undermined by Strauss’s approach, but also the current and most immediate promulgators of that very tradition, the Tractarians, would presumably also be diminished by Strauss’s efforts. Clough’s etymological impulse here is a linguistic parallel to the Straussian project of cutting through the mists of tradition to locate the natural Jesus. However, the fact remains that the etymological resonance of certain words in the poem is counter-balanced by the extended metaphor which reinvests the language of much of the poem and the effects of that language with an aura of indirection and mediation. 81

In these poems and others from Oriel we witness a drastic change in both Clough’s conception of poetry and language from Balliol. Clough’s emerging radical political views mandated a reassessment of his undergraduate poetic and linguistic orientations. His interest in Tractarian aesthetics had situated him in one, particularly conservative, stream of the dominant post-Romantic expressivist poetics that was popular in certain circles in the 1830s and 1840s. At Oriel, Clough’s poetry shifts direction and announces its affiliation with the minority tradition of Early Victorian poetics—a tradition inaugurated by Henry Taylor’s Preface to Philip van Artevelde and characterized by its affinities with eighteenth century empiricism and rationalism. 82
A corresponding shift is also registered from the quasi-sacramental view of language that dominates Clough’s Balliol idiom to the more empirically oriented, materialist characteristics of the language of the Oriel poems, rooted in the British empirical tradition, most notably the recent work of J.S. Mill. Clough’s language at Oxford might be said then to abandon its sacramental pretensions in favor of a more scientific spirit, however tentatively. Clough would explore his admiration for eighteenth-century poetry and its language is a series of lectures and essays written later at University Hall in London, but his interest in the linguistic qualities he ascribed to the period inform the language of his later Oxford poetry as Biswas points out with reference to what Clough identified as the positive qualities of the language of much eighteenth-century poetry and prose:

The ideal written style, if it was to preserve cultural health, needed to fulfill certain definite conditions. It must approximate the idiom and texture of spoken, everyday speech; it must be definitive in its simplicity of exact, completely precipitated statement. It must be forceful without straining towards elevation. (224)

One other poem from Clough’s Oriel period is worthy of consideration since it also looks forward to the linguistic challenges that Clough would tackle upon his departure from Oxford. Clough’s poem beginning “Farewell my Highland lassie” is generally read as part of the poetic preliminaries in anticipation of The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich. The poem records the moment of separation, and subsequent nostalgia, between the speaker, a proto-Philip Hewson, and the Highland woman with whom he has fallen in love. The speaker, by noting his imminent Grand Tour, indicates his own privileged position in Victorian society as he bids farewell:

Be it Greece, or be it Norway, where my vagrant feet are found,
I shall call to mind the place, I shall call to mind the day,
The day that’s gone for ever, and the glen that’s far away;
I shall mind me, be it Rhine or Rhone, Italian land or France,
Of the laughings and the whispers and the pipings of the dance (2-6)

As with the narrative details and characterizations in *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*,
the impulse to an allegorical reading of the scene here as representative of the larger gulf
that separates classes and cultures, should be considered. What is interesting is that this
valedictory poem turns upon the farewell that the speaker offers to the Highland woman
as a kind of benediction. His parting words, however, play upon the etymology of the
word “goodbye.” Cast as a benediction, the speaker actually provides an etymological
lesson where he says to the girl “god be with you” rather than “goodbye.” A connection
is forged between these two representative figures (English, upper class and Scottish,
working class) by an appeal to the roots of the language, with the hopes that such an
appeal will bridge the literal and symbolic distance that will divide and already divides
them respectively. However, Clough complicates such an idealized vision of inter-class,
inter-cultural communication by delivering the actual etymology of goodbye (“god be
with you”) in Greek (ό θεός μετά σον). This overlay of a learned, classical language
undermines, as quickly as it was established, the tentative etymological connection
forged between the speaker and the Highland woman in the act of valediction. In a
highly condensed and oblique manner, “Farewell my Highland lassie” suggests the
simultaneous clarifying, connective and obfuscating potentialities of language and
language use that speaks to the entirety of Clough’s Oxford years at Balliol and Oriel.
The dilemma of the co-existence of the materialist impulse to exposure and the Tractarian tendency to concealment collide in this late Oxford poem that, in its idealism, also looks forward to the utopian optimism of *The Bothie of Tober-na-Voulich.*

**Quiet Work: Arnold’s Oriel Poetry**

Unlike Clough, Arnold’s Second Class degree in the autumn of 1844 was not particularly surprising to his friends and family. Like Clough, however, Arnold was elected to an Oriel Fellowship several months later. At long last Arnold, whose academic career had shadowed Clough’s through Rugby and then Balliol (arriving at both institutions just as Clough was departing them), was on equal terms with Clough and living in close proximity with ample opportunity for discussion and debate. To this point, the language of Arnold’s and Clough’s poetry had been circling around related ideas and theories, but Arnold’s election would seem to hold the promise of the inauguration of a full-scale poetic dialogue. This is not the case. Somewhat frustratingly for the reader looking and hoping for such interaction, the two years that Arnold spent at Oriel (April 1845-April 1847) were fallow ones for his poetry. Indeed, with the exception of “In Utrumque Paratus,” Arnold did not produce any poetry during these years. He resumed writing poetry upon his arrival in London in the spring of 1847 when he was appointed to serve as private secretary to Lord Lansdowne. Nonetheless, Arnold observes Clough carefully during these years. The famous letters that he wrote to Clough date from his arrival in London and are in many ways the expression of Arnold’s observation of his father’s star pupil at Oxford. Among other things, he had witnessed the shift in Clough’s poetry to greater social engagement and he had undoubtedly noticed, as we shall see below, the etymological awareness manifest in the language of many of Clough’s poems.
In London, Arnold would resume his own poetry and like Clough’s it would be informed by a heightened social awareness, based in part on Clough’s Oxford radicalism but also the very fact of London itself, Arnold’s situation in the background in the corridors of power and the Arnoldian (Dr. Arnold) earnestness of his younger brothers Tom and William who were in the process of carrying Dr. Arnold’s ideas and ideals to New Zealand and India respectively. These would be as Hamilton notes: “prolific years for Arnold’s verse” (93), but they would also be crucial years in which Arnold would come to explore “the nature of language, literature and the role of the writer” (Ullmann 3).

Thus, just as Clough’s poetry shifts to a more socially active mode at Oriel, so too do Arnold’s Oriel/London poems begin to consider the relation of poetry to the wider world. However, unlike Clough, Arnold does not abandon Tractarian Reserve but continues his exploration of its possibilities for his language. At Balliol, Arnold had looked to understand more fully than in his Rugby poems the nature of Reserve as it applied to language even as his faith in an authoritative divine/natural oracular voice was increasingly unstable. The language and representation of language in poems such as “Cromwell” and “Mycerinus,” draws an analogue with a particular inflection of the language of nature and is marked or characterized by restraint and reserve as the most appropriate outlet for the expression of powerful emotion. “The Voice” had located subtlety, quietness and indirection as key qualities of an ideal voice—qualities that the poem connects to Tractarian Reserve, which the language of the poem embodies by its deployment of the simile and suggests by its possible association with Newman. Finally, the sonnet “Shakespeare,” in utilizing the nature imagery of “Cromwell,” the smoothed brow of Mycerinus, the extended similes of “The Voice,” in many ways incorporates
elements from all of the preceding poems in presenting Shakesepeare as the paradigmatic poet of Reserve and again draws upon simile and ambiguity inherent in language more generally. To this point though, in practice, Reserve in language seemed to mean to Arnold a commitment to the simile as the primary means of creating indirection and subtlety in language while his new Oriel/London concerns about the impact of a language organized along such principles had largely been subordinated to other concerns. The shift that occurs in the language of Arnold’s long-distance Oriel poetry is not a shift away from Reserve, as it is for Clough, but a shift that reflects an interest in the rhetorical possibilities or necessity of Reserve in the language of a more socially engaged poetry directed to a specific audience. Was it possible to write poetry in a language infused by Reserve that would connect with an audience and adequately address the issues and questions of the age? Was a didactic poetry possible if it was written in a language that took Reserve as its guiding principle? These questions, while certainly present, at some level, in the Balliol poems discussed earlier, were submerged and they become pronounced and dominant in these poems from the second part of Arnold’s university career.

Earlier, I noted how some of Clough’s earlier pieces from Oriel evidence a reawakened sense of current affairs and the wider world. The same can be said of Arnold. A sense of the interest in contemporary affairs and the entanglement of this concern with the question of who a poet’s audience is and the nature of that audience is evident from the early stanzas of “A Horatian Echo” which begins with reference to political tensions at home and abroad including Chartist agitation:

Omit, omit, my simple friend,
Still to enquire how parties tend,
Or what we fix with foreign powers.
If France and we are really friends,
And what the Russian czar intends,
    Is no concern of ours.

Us not the daily quickening race
Of the invading populace
Shall draw to swell the shouldering herd.
Mourn will we not your closing hour,
Ye imbeciles in present power
    Doomed, pompous, and absurd!

And let us bear, that they debate
Of all the engine-work of state,
Of commerce, laws, and policy,
The secret’s of the world’s machine,
And what the rights of man may mean,
    With readier tongue than we. (1-18)

In counseling withdrawal, Arnold urges his ambitious friend (John Blackett, or perhaps Clough) to moderation. It is not that current political, economic and social realities are unimportant, but rather that their representation needs to be discussed and treated in a way that is more consciously restrained and effective—advice that Arnold was revolving for his own poems and the language of those poems. The problem with those who choose to discuss the challenges of the contemporary world is, according to Arnold:

    Only, that with no finer art
They cloak the troubles of the heart
With pleasant smile, let us take care;
Nor with a lighter hand dispose
Fresh garlands of this dewy rose,
To crown Eugenia’s hair. (19-24)

In a letter written later about this poem, Arnold reveals that the idea of detachment and withdrawal which the poem seems to advocate cannot be divorced from a sense of the poet’s audience. He noted to Clough that unlike Horace who wrote for a coterie of
disillusioned readers who might be receptive to his oblique way of treating topics, the modern poet must remember that her/his detachment and oblique stance is situated in the context of “a far different and wider audience.” And yet Arnold, unlike Clough, is convinced that this is the most effective way for the poet in an unpoetic age. Clough, as we have seen, disagreed and abandoned Reserve while Arnold willed himself forward.

In the sonnet “To George Cruikshank” Arnold records his response to Cruikshank’s eight engravings entitled “The Bottle,” which trace the degradation of a working-class man and his family through the effects of alcohol. The series was immensely popular and Arnold salutes it for the salutary lesson it might provide for a blithely unaware English middle class:

Artist, whose hand, with horror winged, hath torn
From the rank life of towns this leaf! and flung
The prodigy of full-blown crime among
Valleys and men to middle fortune born,
Not innocent, indeed, yet not forlorn…(1-5)

Arnold’s enthusiasm for Cruikshank’s collection of illustrations for temperance is tempered by the manner in which Dickens’s illustrator has made his appeal to the public. There is something unpleasantly aggressive about the way in which Cruikshank has flung his message out to his audience. He has spoken too directly and forcefully. What is needed is an art (and for Arnold specifically, a language) that will both teach and soothe: “Say, what shall calm us when such guests intrude/Like comets on the heavenly solitude?” (6-7). The speaker tentatively raises the possibility of a retreat into classical pastoral: “Shall breathless glades, cheered by shy Dian’s horn,/Cold-bubbling springs, or caves? Not so!” (8-9). Rather he suggests that the soul opposes or breasts such excessive expressions of grief: “The soul/Breasts her own griefs” (9-10). Cruikshank’s failing is
that his message has been “urged too fiercely” (10). Arnold is again arguing for the necessity of restraint in the expression of emotion, but it has taken on urgency as considerations of audience loom ever larger in his poetry.

In “The World and the Quietest,” Arnold continues this line of thinking. The poem begins with the speaker, a poet, reproducing the complaints raised against his “mournful rhymes” by the worldly Critias, a man of action and resolve:

‘Why, when the world’s great mind
Hath finally inclined,
Why,’ you say, Critias, ‘be debating still?
Why, with these mournful rhymes
Learned in more languid climes,
Blame our activity
Who, with such passionate will,
Are what we mean to be?’ (1-8)

The poet’s response acknowledges the inevitable domination of the world’s activity and noise, but also acknowledges a place for the poet’s voice which is represented as working subtly and indirectly:

Yet, as the wheel flies round
With no ungrateful sound
Do adverse voices fall on the world’s ear.
Deafened by his own stir
The rugged labourer
Caught not till then a sense
So glowing and so near
Of his own omnipotence. (17-24)

The final stanza of the poem both represents and enacts this very indirection. The poem shifts from the recorded debate between the poet and Critias to a scene from Herodotus. Here the man of action, the Great King, is interrupted in the midst of the din of the feast by a figure analogous to the poet, the white-robed slave. The speaker focuses on the manner in which the slave addresses the king:
So, when the feast grew loud
In Susa’s palace proud,
A white-robed slave stole to the Great King’s side.
He spake—the Great King heard;
Felt the slow-rolling word
Swell his attentive soul… (25-30)

As Greenberg points out, this tableau-ending (one of Arnold’s first) is in many ways an indirect way of commenting on the relation of the poet to an audience preoccupied by the Time-Stream:

Since Arnold chooses not to record the slave’s word, ” he obliges us to assume that what the king hears is less important in content than its effect-raising him to consciousness, swelling his attentive soul…Like the poet quietest, the slave is in no position to “blame” forcefully and directly. His “adverse” voice is heard rather as a qualification or penetration into the din of activity. (288)

Arnold’s representation of the poet’s engagement with an audience and the world requires the quietness and indirection of a language governed by Reserve.

In these three poems, Arnold focuses repeatedly on the artist’s relationship to an increasingly broad audience while maintaining the commitment to a reserved, indirect mode of communication that he had first explored at Rugby and Balliol. The new element here is the awareness of an audience for such a mode of expression. In two poems from 1847-48, “The Sick King in Bokhara” and “The Forsaken Merman,” Arnold dramatizes different styles of reserved language juxtaposed against other modes of language that are noteworthy for the absence of the restraint he deemed necessary for the modern poet’s idiom at this point in his career. Indeed, as the Time-stream impinges more and more upon Arnold, the role of Reserve in resisting it and speaking to it grows in
prominence. Arnold’s belief in quietness, indirection, detachment parallel the qualities of Tractarian Reserve he had encountered earlier and dovetails into his later interests in Stoicism and the quietism of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

“The Sick King in Bokhara” is a poem that is frequently neglected by critics, but it further adds to our understanding of Arnold’s interest in a particular, reserved use of language. Like so many of the poems of Arnold’s years in Oxford and London, it is, on one level, a self-reflexive poem about poetry, and consequently is also at least partially about the language of poetry. The poem touches on a variety of issues in addition to this including the tension between the letter and the spirit of the law, the nature of sympathy and humanitarianism and the limits of civic and religious authority. Although Arnold chooses to represent the distant locale of central Asia, this poem of mullahs, viziers, mosques and the Sharia is, in many ways, a thinly veiled allegory of Victorian England with Bokhara serving, as Honan notes, as a kind of “orientalized London” (176). In brief, through a series of framing devices and dramatic speeches, Arnold recounts the dilemma of the King of Bokhara whose humanitarian sympathies render him reluctant to impose a death sentence upon a local mullah who has, in the eyes of the King and likely Arnold’s European, Victorian audience, committed a relatively innocuous violation of Islamic law. Against his natural inclinations and despite his efforts to mitigate the punishment, but with the full sanction of the mullah himself, the sentence of death is inflicted, which in turn plunges the King into a depression that shatters his effectiveness as a ruler.

The poem explores questions related to language in several places. Most immediately, the mullah’s literalist, fundamentalist understanding of the Sharia not only
generates the central conflict and tension in the poem, it speaks to an image of language where words are stripped of all connotation, multi-valence and interpretive potential. Such an attitude to language issues in a direct, confrontational linguistic performance where the mullah accosts the king on his way to afternoon prayers (a very different employment of words):

Justice, O King, and on myself!  
On this great sinner, who did break  
The law, and by the law must die!  
Vengeance, King! (36-39)

For the mullah, words such as Justice and Vengeance submit to a single, denotative meaning while the King struggles, unsuccessfully, to make room for a broader definitional, inclusive space for these words. More importantly, the king is just as limited in his relationship to language as David Riede has pointed out:

The king evidently does not hear the voice of Allah, though he must submit to the will of the priests and fulfill his duty as Allah’s substitute by pronouncing the sentence. His official oracular voice—his voice of authoritative power—comes from non-divine sources and is hopelessly counter to his own moral impulses. As an oracle the king is a sham (Riede 46-37)

This is undoubtedly the case, but the king does have a final act of expression. It takes the form of the tomb—the artifact which is the product of the king’s grief appropriately channeled into artistic expression. Again, ultimately, the implications of this for language are literally a monumental silence but it is noteworthy that the King’s failed oracular voice is mitigated somewhat by the indirect expression of his grief in the artistic tomb. As Culler puts it, the King “transforms his pity into a pieta, he healed his own sickness” (111). If we are to read the poem as an allegory on the relation of poetry to the
world, we see that its first function is to provide a Tractarian healing for the audience and
an indirect engagement with the audience as its expression of emotion and idea is always
veiled as Culler again elucidates:

The brickwork tomb shows us that the writing of poetry may be a social
act. One does not need to join the Mendicity Society or write Oxford
Retrenchment pamphlets, as did Clough. One does not need to found
Pantisocracies in the wilderness or join the Roman Catholic Church. One
does not even need to repudiate the Articles or pace the barricades in Paris
and Rome. One can simply sit in the elegant library at Lansdowne House
and read one’s Homer and write one’s poems, and in so doing one will
perform a social act. (111)

The king’s oracular voice-direct and authoritative-ends in failure, but the poem does not
end here, but rather with the king attempting a new form of expression through the art of
the tomb.

“The Forsaken Merman” also dramatizes the clash between direct, bold,
unrestrained voices with voices characterized by a restraint and indirection. “The
Forsaken Merman” was one of Arnold’s most popular poems from The Strayed Reveller.
Drawing on translations from Danish sources, Arnold’s poem is composed of the
Merman’s lament as he relates the story of how his human consort, Margaret, has
abandoned her life with him and their children in the sea and returned to her family on
the land. As many critics have pointed out, the poem sets up a series of familiar
oppositions between sea and land, work/duty and pleasure/beauty. Critics are divided as
to whether the poem sympathizes with the Merman or with Margaret. What is
particularly instructive about the poem, however, is not that it asks us to choose sides, but
that it juxtaposes the two perspectives so effectively and vividly. McHann has
summarized the tension as one between “the natural pagan world of beauty and the
controlled and pious human world” (21). One other conflict that the poem raises, somewhat less extensively, is the conflict between the voices and language of the Merman and particularly the children and the voice of the land. Much attention has been devoted to the Merman’s voice:

Children dear was it yesterday  
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?  
In the caverns where we lay,  
Through the surf and through the swell,  
The far-off sound of the silver bell?  
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,  
Where the winds are all asleep;  
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,  
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,  
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,  
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;  
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
Dry their mail and bask in the brine; (30-42)

There is certainly ample warrant to see the Merman as a specific type of poet. It is true that the Merman’s speech with its chanting, repetitive, sensuous language is attractive and is, as Riede has pointed out, Arnold’s essay in recreating “natural magic.” What is also clear about the Merman’s world and his language is its lack of restraint. The chanting, repetitious aspects of his language intimate abundance and an overflow of feeling (see for example the anaphora cited above). Further, the language of the Merman and the children is self-reflexively referred to as saturated in unrestrained emotional intensity:

Call her once before you go—  
Call once yet!  
In a voice that she will know:  
‘Margaret! Margaret!’  
Children’s voices should be dear  
(Call once more) to a mother’s ear;  
Children’s voices, wild with pain—(10-16)
At Balliol, Arnold had found an analogue to the reserved, detached use and effect of language he desired in the sounds and accents of the mountain landscape. In “Cromwell” he had contrasted this with the wild, unrestrained language of the sea, and in “The Forsaken Merman” the unreserved emotional intensity of the Merman’s lament and the children’s cries is associated very closely with the sea. But the Merman’s language is ultimately ineffective. It does not lure Margaret back to the sea.

It is true that the poem only directly represents the voice of the Merman, but there are indications in the poem that another kind of language is associated with the land. The most significant of these references is to the authoritative tones of the Prayer Book that the Merman sees Margaret reading in the church: “But ah she gave me never a look,/For her eyes were sealed to the holy book!” (80-81). For Keble, the soothing language of the prayer book had been the paradigm for his own practice in *The Christian Year*, precisely because it effectively calibrated the balance between emotional expressiveness and the propriety of reserve.

Margaret herself is not generally seen as a poetic figure in the same manner that the Merman is, but the poem does represent her at work:

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She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: ‘O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well,
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun!’
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still. (87-97
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The Merman here reports Margaret’s voice and it sings what is essentially a hymn of thanksgiving. The image of Margaret at the spinning wheel is not necessarily one of the poet, but it is important to remember that Arnold may well have originally conceived of it in this sense. The penultimate line of the passage quoted above originally read: “Till the shuttle falls from her hand.” In a letter to Clough shortly after the appearance of *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*, Arnold thanks his friend for alerting him to the lack of precision in his diction regarding Margaret’s spinning wheel and also indicates his association of Margaret’s activity with poetry. “I believe you are right about the shuttle also: but I will look in the technological dict: one is sadly loose by default of experience, about spinning and weaving, with a great poetic interest in both occupations” (1: 138). Further, Margaret sings and hymns in the midst of a community compared to the emotionally intense but isolated and ultimately ineffective language of the Merman. In both “The Sick King in Bokhara” and “The Forsaken Merman,” Arnold presents a variety of voices in order that their efficacy may be judged. While perhaps unable to articulate and practice the indirect, reserved voice (or not having progressed beyond his experiments at Rugby and Balliol), the poems certainly offer it as a credible alternative to the direct, unreserved, starkly literal voices of the mullah or the Merman.

By virtue of its eponymous status with regard to Arnold’s 1849 volume, “The Strayed Reveller” is a central poem from Arnold’s Oxford period. Along with “Resignation,” it is one of Arnold’s most extensive meditations on poetry and the role of the poet. Although the poem is structured as a dramatic piece with the characters of Circe, Ulysses and the Youth, it is the extended speech of this last character, which occupies the last half of the poem that has been of particular interest to critics. The
Youth’s speech includes the representation of two distinct poetic modes or poetic visions. Each of the two visions treats the same subject matter-- Tiresias, the Centaurs, the Indian, the Scythian, the merchants, and the Heroes—and obviously invites comparison with the other. The vision of the gods is one of detachment, serenity and distance:

They see Tiresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm grassy
Asopus bank,
His robe drawn over his sightless head,
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes
They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools,
With steaming flanks and heads
Reared proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind. (135-150)

They see the Heroes
Sitting in the dark ship
On the foamless, long-heaving
Violet sea,
At sunset nearing
The Happy Islands. (135-150; 201-206)

The language of this particular type of poetic mode is equally detached, providing, for the most part, a description of the various figures and their physical surroundings. Like the Gods, the language confines itself to the surface and presents a rather bloodless tableau of mythological and human figures.

The Youth immediately follows his depiction of the vision of the Gods with that of the wise bards who see the same things as the gods but also experience the suffering and pain that lies beneath the serenity of the surface appearances. The wise bards enter
sympathetically into what they behold. Accordingly we might expect the descriptions to reflect this difference, and they do to an extent. There is a description of the foreboding felt by Tiresias, the pain felt by the Centaurs or the anxieties of the merchants but its intensity of expression is enervated by the introduction of two elements missing from the first set of descriptions. First, Arnold does not so much present an intensified picture of the various subjects as the sympathetic bardic vision might imply, but rather a contextualized picture. Tiresias is no longer simply described as sitting on a grassy bank, but he is also dwarfed, as Arnold alludes, by the larger cosmic drama involving Hera and Zeus. The language does not attempt to convey the experience of his “groping blindness” or “scorned white hairs.” Rather, it simply presents Tiresias in an equally detached but different manner. The same technique is repeated with the descriptions of the Centaurs. They are no longer seen in their physical isolation on the mountain side. Instead they are contextualized in the story of the “grim Lapithae and Theseus.” It is a different way of seeing the Centaurs, but there is nothing that suggests a greater immediacy. The supposed sympathetic intensity of the bardic vision is enervated in the other pictures as well. For example in the case of the merchants, the Youth suggests their anxiety as they cross the river, but rather than detailing its causes, the Youth offers a series of possibilities. Their anxiety might be due to their fears that:

A cloud of desert robber-horse have burst
Upon their caravan; or greedy kings,
In the walled cities the way passes through,
Crushed them with tolls; or fever-airs,
On some great river’s marge,
Mown them down, far from home. (248-253)

The same tactic is repeated when discussing the Heroes whose identity is not specifically
revealed. They might be the heroes of:

    Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy;
    Or where the echoing oars
    Of Argo first
    Startled the unknown sea… (257-260)

In short, the language of the bards is not markedly different from the language of the gods. Despite claiming that the bardic vision involves a sympathetic identification with the subjects of vision, the Youth is unable to invest the language of his descriptions with any emotional intensity—or perhaps he does not wish to. Indeed, the Youth seems to have more in common with the divine vision of the Gods. In the end, as was the case with “The Forsaken Merman” it is unclear which of the two visions the poem might actually be endorsing. Many critics have suggested the poem presents a collision of classic and Romantic conceptions of poetry. As Culler points out: “Which of the two, if either, we ought to prefer he does not say. If we were to judge by the loveliness of the scenes, it would be the classic, but if by the honesty of the effort, it would be the romantic” (71).

I would argue that the poem does endorse the vision of the wise bards—the poet is after all human—the root of the vision of the wise bards is in suffering and emotion as they sympathetically enter into the condition of their subjects. But it is significant that the expression of the vision of the bards is not that different from that of the Gods. The expressive qualities of the vision of the Gods is what the poet must aspire toward. The poem endorses the Romantic view that the poet, who by entering sympathetically into
what he sees, engages in poetry in the act of expressing these powerful feelings. However, the example of the gods reminds the Youth of the necessity that the bardic, sympathetic vision must be expressed with reserve and restraint.

In all three of these poems (“The Forsaken Merman” “The Sick King in Bokhara” “The Strayed Reveller”) Arnold explores the possibilities of locating an effective language. While not offering a positive alternative, all three poems, in strikingly different ways, speak together in suggesting that a language that is too direct, rooted in and expressive of passionate emotions and lacking a sense of restraint or detachment will not do for a poetry that looks to engage with the world in a particularly elevated way.

Two other poems reveal a more positive attempt on Arnold’s part to incorporate the spirit of Reserve into his language. These are the sonnets “To a Friend” and “Quiet Work.” As was discussed earlier with reference to Clough, the choice of the sonnet form necessarily places restraints on the kinds of expression Arnold can partake of. Arnold’s argument for Reserve in language is largely a negative one—arguing for it by arguing against other, more direct modes. His Oxford poetry had been exploration of the general principle of Reserve and a sense of the necessity of restraint for a truly effective and didactic poetry.

He had admired its presence in the voice of Newman, the figure of Shakespeare and regretted its absence in Emerson. His major Oriel poems had explored the ultimate inefficacy of overly emotional or direct instances of language. Such language and the poetry it produced could offer no soothing relief and deep instruction that Arnold was coming to see as the mission of poetry in the modern world.

In “Quiet Work,” a sonnet Arnold produced in 1848 and the poem he chose to stand first in *The Strayed Reveller*, the speaker again returns to the example of a silent or
quiet nature as the foundational principle for a theory of expression that is both adequate and an antidote in the modern world. As Culler notes:

The piece is not specifically about poetry, but standing as it does at the forefront of the volume, it seems to warn the reader that although the poetry he will find therein may not be so impressive as that of some other poets, it may be more enduring in the end. It stands to Byron and the Spasmodic poets as Mycerinus at the end of the poem does to Mycerinus at the beginning. (62)

Again, the silence of nature is troubling since it seems to prescribe a similar silence for the poet, but Arnold’s advocacy of silence as an ideal of language is a theoretical construct. His very practice of continuing to write poetry would seem to suggest that he was aware his own language could aspire to and never attain silence. It was the aspiration to an ultimate reserve that characterizes this language. This is characteristic of other absolutes such as disinterestedness that Arnold sets up in his career. Arnold himself was aware that disinterestedness was impossible, although many subsequent readers have been too willing to take him at his word. Similarly, Arnold quickly realized that the ultimate consequence of Tractarian Reserve was silence. He was unwilling, however to abandon the concept. Rather it serves as an ever-receding ideal that allows Arnold in this poem to explore and push the limits of draining emotion out of his language—something he thought necessary if poetry was going to fulfill the high function he set for it.

Finally, in the sonnet “To a Friend” Arnold enacts in the language of the poem his very rejection of a direct, expressive aesthetic for something more soothing, indirect and subtle. The sonnet opens with the much derided line: “Who prop, thou ask’st, in these bad days, my mind?” (1). The line is not an example of Arnold’s failure as a poet, as
many have claimed. Rather it is a dramatization of the expressive immediacy in language that he eschewed. The line’s allusion to Carlyle alerts us to the possibility that its stylistic baldness is in one sense a comment about the bold, directness of Carlyle’s language that Arnold was anxious to avoid. As the sonnet progresses, the clauses grow longer, the caesuras less frequent and the effect is that the poem, which promotes the soothing and salutary effects of classical authors such as Sophocles and Homer, reenacts the process by which those effects are achieved linguistically and stylistically. The poem is also noteworthy in that Arnold seems to be speaking to Clough in ways beyond the address of the title. When he refers to Europe as “The Wide Prospect” he is engaged in the same etymologizing arena that marked Clough’s Oriel poetry. The moment in the poem seems to gesture to Clough even as elsewhere the more common Arnoldian practice of infusing reserve is underway.

Why was Arnold so reluctant to really explore the possibility of infusing his language with Reserve. In the end it is largely due to his fear that adding further indirection to language would aggravate the epistemological dilemma related to language which he had detected as early as Mycerinus. Alan Grob summarizes this problem:

Though we long to achieve direct, true, and intimate communion with beings like ourselves, we are like islands (as Arnold explains in “To Marguerite—Continued”) bound to separate identities within the alien element, the sea’s “enclasping flow” (l. 5); or we are like ships that pass in the night (the central metaphor of “Human Life”), driven relentlessly apart by the irresistible currents of wind and water, the nonhuman determinants of our destinies. But isolation for Arnold is not simply a psychological phenomenon, purely personal and hence temporary and localized, but something universal, necessary, inherent in the epistemological conditions of human existence. There is, of course, the perennial philosophic conundrum of other minds, the fact that we can never apparently breach the boundaries of the individual consciousness of another, never
apprehend and savor the uniquely private experience of that other as he or she actually apprehends and savors it. (Grob 1982, 9)

A language organized around the principle of Reserve would only aggravate this problem. It would take poems such as the Switzerland series and *Empedocles on Etna* for Arnold to work through the full implications of this dilemma. But when he confronts it, the result is a major shift in his language that parallels the shift in his poetics formally announced in the 1853 Preface.
CHAPTER 3
LEGISLATORS OF THE WORD: CLOUGH’S AND ARNOLD’S MAJOR POETRY AT MID-CENTURY

In endless chases to pursue
That swift escaping word that would do,
Inside and out turn a phrase, o’er and o’er,
Till all the little sense goes, it had before,—
If it be these things make one a poet,
I am one—Come and all the world may know it.

Arthur Hugh Clough, “If to write, rewrite, and write again” (1851)

How needful it is for those who are to discuss any matter together, to have a common understanding to the sense of the terms they employ….how needful and how difficult.

Matthew Arnold, “Literature and Science” (1882)

The five years that encompass the autumn of 1848 to the autumn of 1853 are undoubtedly the most productive of both Clough’s and Arnold’s poetic careers. This half decade witnesses the composition (although not always the public appearance) of the major poetic achievements upon which the reputations of both poets was and continued to be founded. At the beginning of this brief period, Clough and Arnold had completely or for all intents extricated themselves from Oxford.\(^3\) However, both poets quickly exchanged one part of the Victorian education establishment for others as Arnold assumed his role as H.M Inspector of Schools and Clough took over duties as Principal of University Hall in London. These years also are marked by a loss of the personal intimacy in the relationship between Arnold and Clough. Their interaction remained,
almost always, cordial but, as the two men moved in increasingly different social and professional circles, there is a loss of the familiarity that had characterized the earlier stages of their friendship.

In the introduction to this study, I suggested that the poem “Qua Cursum Ventus” was illustrative of the overall nature of the relationship between Clough and Arnold. Another Oxford poem which explores the loss of a friendship is “Sic Itur” and it speaks, unintentionally, to the nature of the relationship between the two poets during this specific and productive five year period. In the poem Clough begins with two images of estranged friendship:

As, at a railway junction, men
Who came together, taking then
One train up, one down, again
Meet never! Ah much more as they
Who take one street’s two sides, and say
Hard parting words, but walk one way:
Though moving other mates between,
While carts and coaches intervene,
Each to the other goes unseen,… (1-9)

The second image, in particular, with its idea of separate but parallel journeys on either side of a crowded street speaks, I think, to the nature of Clough’s and Arnold’s poetic development during this period of their careers. Although widely varied in style and subject matter, the major poems that Clough and Arnold compose between 1848 and 1854, can be read as landmarks in parallel journeys that each poet undertakes, consciously and unconsciously, to redefine the respective understandings and attendant uses of language that each writer had arrived at by the conclusion of their Oxford careers. These parallel journeys are themselves situated prominently within a broader
recalibration of each poet’s political and poetical sensibilities following their departure from the University. For Clough, this journey can be traced through his three major poems from these years (The Bothie, Amours de Voyage and Dipsychus) and can be characterized as a shedding of the activist idealism about language inherent in the Broad Church and radical linguistics of the preceding decade in favor of a more detached, historical understanding of the English language that is consonant with his increasingly muted poetic and political ambitions. For Arnold, the linguistic journey that can be traced through the poems of these years is also one of confronting an idealism that is tied to language. Arnold’s Oxford attempts to accommodate Tractarian Reserve to his language had, in the end, indirectly raised the issue of semantic idealism and inter-subjective communication. In the following years, the language of Arnold’s poems explores, confronts and ultimately attempts to mitigate the growing and gnawing realization of the chimerical nature of such semantic idealism in order, as is the case with Clough, to find a workable medium for Arnold’s redefined poetics.

**Political and Linguistic Commitment and Detachment: Clough’s Major Poems**

*The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* was composed very rapidly in the autumn of 1848 following Clough’s resignation of his Oriel fellowship. It is Clough’s most linguistically idealistic poem, but it is a linguistic idealism that Clough realizes, at various key moments in the text, may well be untenable and utopian. *The Bothie* represents a group of Oxford undergraduates in the midst of a reading party in the Scottish Highlands. One member of the group—a young radical, Chartist sympathizer, and poet—named Philip Hewson becomes the poem’s protagonist as the text follows his romantic imbroglio with a local farmer’s daughter and an aristocratic noblewoman before
he finds a more substantive and satisfying relationship with Elspie Mackaye, a resident of the cottage named in the poem’s title. At the end of the poem, Philip and Elspie are married and emigrate to the Antipodes in search of a more just and equitable society. Written in the immediate aftermath of the European revolutions from earlier in the year, Clough’s lingering political and social idealism is evident in the poem’s thematic concerns. Descriptions of Highland scenery and local culture are interspersed with seriocomic debates among the undergraduates on politics, the Woman Question, class inequality, love, and Aristotelian ethics.

Many of Clough’s friends at Oxford and elsewhere expected that his first post-Oriel poem would offer an explanation of the religious difficulties that had hastened his departure from the University. Instead they received what one critic calls “a school-boy shout on escaping from school into the air” (Osborne 42). There is much truth in this statement since it may be said that while *The Bothie* is Clough’s public inauguration as a poet, the poem is also the culmination of the linguistic education that he received at Rugby and Oxford.86

Although the anecdote surrounding the poem’s title is well known, it also speaks to many of the larger concerns about language in the poem as a whole. The original title, *The Bothie of Toper-na-Fousich*, was revealed to be a Gaelic euphemism for the female pudendum and, although Clough saw the humor of a work by this title appearing in mid-Victorian drawing rooms and the studies of Oxford dons, the title was modified to the nonsensical *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*. The poem’s title, then, indicates the kind of linguistic inclusiveness that Clough desired as it evokes the local Gaelic dialect (*Bothie*) to introduce a poem composed in classical hexameters.87 But Clough’s own
confusion regarding the title (Toper-na-Fousich vs. Tober-na-Vuolich) speaks to the utopian aspect of that idealism. Ultimately the title simultaneously gestures to Clough’s linguistic ideal of Broad Church comprehensiveness while pointing to his own misgivings about its practical possibilities.

Critical attention has largely focused on the early sections of the poem to the exclusion of the latter books. Patrick Scott, however, has usefully pointed out that the real complexity and character of the text emerges when the larger structural pattern, encompassing all nine parts of the poem, is discerned—a structure that moves from the realistic, social and at times satirical concerns of the early sections to the pastoral and symbolic elements found at the end of the poem. This consideration of the full aesthetic spectrum of the poem is particularly important for an account of the poem’s language. Scott’s characterization of the poem’s development broadly parallels the linguistic evolution of The Bothie as well. Broadly speaking, the language of the early books of the poem offer Clough’s most comprehensive exploration of the socially-oriented ideas about language rooted in a comparative and historical sensibility that he had imbibed at Rugby and explored in a more radicalized way later at Oriel. In the later books Clough reverts to the spirit of Reserve that had dominated his poetry and language at Balliol as he explores the emotionally charged and controversial subjects that emerge in the course of the love plot of the poem. Thus, to read the poem is to re-experience the various phases of Clough’s linguistic education of the previous decade, and indeed the poem, at the level of language, is in many ways Clough’s extended assessment of the nature and value of that education.
Perhaps this is one of the reasons why readers as different as the Tractarian R.W. Church and the novelist Charles Kingsley could find much to their liking in *The Bothie*. Church writing with a Tractarian appreciation for the uses of metrical complexity in veiling direct expression focuses his approbation of the poem on its hexameters. Kingsley, on the other hand, sees in the poem’s more expansive linguistic register (confined largely to the early sections of the text) an antidote to the prevailing tenets of Tractarian aesthetics. Reviewing the poem in *Fraser’s* he notes that:

> When our readers hear of an Oxford poem, written, too, by a college fellow and tutor, they will naturally expect, as usual, some pale and sickly bantling of the *Lyra Apostolica* school; all Mr. Keble’s defects caricatured, without any of his excellencies…the prevailing problem with the Oxford poets has seemed to be, how best to hide the farthing rushlight of bigotry under the bushel of mystification; how an author, having no definite meaning, or, if he have one, being frightened at it, may so jumble his words as to mean nothing,… (38)

The appeal of the poem to a wide spectrum of readers is a consequence of its generic and linguistic compositeness. However, Robindra Biswas, commenting on this phenomenon in *The Bothie*, asks an important question: “Is that compositeness, in other words, a position of strength or is it a refuge from uncertainty” (285)?

The early books of the poem present Clough’s most extended and ambitious attempt to incorporate the cautiously comprehensive attitude of the Broad Church orientation to language into his poetry on both linguistically self-reflexive and practical levels. The interest in the explanatory power of etymological roots that so animates much of the Oriel satiric poetry is abandoned by the time Clough begins composition of *The Bothie*. The poem opens with a Highlands banquet—a scene of class and cultural harmony that is, in many ways, the utopian dream of Clough’s mentors Thomas Arnold
and Thomas Carlyle This harmony is reinforced, significantly, through a series of
references to the co-existence of a variety of linguistic denominations:

    Bid me not, grammar defying, repeat from grammar defiers
    Long constructions strange and plusquam-thucydidean,
    ...
    All through sentences six at a time, unsuspecting of syntax,
    Hurried the lively good-will and garrulous tale of Sir Hector.
    ...
    How the noble Croupier would wind up his word with a whistle,
    How the Marquis of Ayr, with quaint gesticulation
    Floundering on through game and mess-room recollections,
    ...
    How, too, more brief, and plainer in spite of Gaelic accent,
    Highland peasants gave courteous answer to flattering nobles. (1.93-111)

Even among the Oxford undergraduates there are differences in modes of speaking as the
narrator points out repeatedly when documenting the competing reports that Lindsay and
Arthur provide of their Highland rambles:

    And it was told, the Piper narrating and Arthur correcting,
    Colouring he, dilating, magniloquent, glorying in picture,
    He to matter-of-fact still softening, parting, abating,
    He to the great-might-have-been upsoaring, sublime, ideal,
    He to the merest-it-was restricting, diminishing, dwarfing,
    River to streamlet reducing, and fall to slope subduing…(3.153-159).

This linguistic variety is complementary rather than contradictory—a merry and energetic
Babel that mirrors the vision of co-operative co-existence among the Scottish class
structure that the banquet is meant to embody.

Clough’s return to a Broad Church ideal of linguistic comprehensiveness is
connected, as well, to the initial rush of optimism ushered in by the European revolutions
earlier in the year. Clough’s enthusiasm finds expression in a return to Rugby rather than
a continuation of the satiric Carlylean tenor of the Oriel poems. Clough rediscovers or
perhaps reconnects with his earlier linguistic training at the Rugby School which, among other things, celebrates the paradoxically heterogeneous unity of English with its inclusive co-existence of different dialects and vocabularies.

This linguistic variety is seen elsewhere in these early sections of the poem. Not only are the various characters presented as speaking differently, the language of this part of the poem juxtaposes different dialects and vocabularies. Slang, jargon, local Highland dialects, current political slogans, literary language all jostle for the reader’s attention. In a perceptive reading of the language of The Bothie Isobel Armstrong comments on this phenomenon:

He [Clough] evolved a radical language, not by inventing a notional ‘common’, universally accessible speech abstracted as a norm, nor by inventing a condescending imitation of the language of the poor, but by enabling language to become the object of democratic investigation. This is a democratic account of language because it explores speech as it is determined and organized by and in specific social groups. Language thus becomes the communal, social possession formed by particular groups, whether it is the possession of undergraduates or aristocrats. (180)

The roots of this vision of language are in Clough’s Rugby experience. However, Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church orientation to language, in looking to expand the idea of “English” in ways harmonious with the older traditions of language study, was developed as part of a broader response to a growing realization of disharmony in British society that might be mitigated by the strategy of comprehension. The problem was if anything more acute in 1848 and Clough’s presentation of the varieties of English in the poem is both a celebration of the parliamentary character of the language and an acknowledgment of its fragmentation into separate speech communities.
This sense of linguistic variety is seen most evidently and extensively in the early books of the poem which constitute Clough’s contribution to the “Condition of England” debate of the early Victorian period. Clough offers a vision of Britain divided along class and regional lines. A sense of this division is conveyed in Clough’s much discussed use of slang, most obviously the Oxford argot of the undergraduate reading party. Among the many examples from the first third of the poem are: “Shady in Latin, said Lindsay, but topping in Plays and Aldrich” (1. 24); “Hewson and Hobbes were down at the matutine bathing” (1.35); “Only the Men who were all on their legs as concerned in the thanking,” (1.169); “Thirdly, a Cambridge man I know, Smith, a senior wrangler./With a mathematical score hangs-out at Invernary” (2.325-326); “Yes, and with fragrant weed, by his knapsack, spectator and critic” (3.82); Drumnadrochet was seedy, Glenmorrison adequate, but at/Castleton, high in Braemar, were the clippingest places for bathing” (3.147-148) . While the use of slang celebrates, in one sense, the diversity and especially the vitality of the language and contributes to the poem’s sense of novelistic verisimilitude, it is also a symptom of what was wrong in England--a symptom of widespread and increasing social fragmentation. As Armstrong observes:

But what is clear is that English is now a language of ‘escaping components’, all incomplete, no one of which has authority…The Bothie makes no attempt to homogenize and ‘re-unite’ the language. Instead it performs an exuberant analysis of these ‘escaping components’ as they belong to different groups and subgroups, different social ‘components’…(182-83)

Indeed, this consequence of slang is suggested by the fact that the typical undergraduate slang is further divided into a specific slang that is applicable to just the Highlands reading party of the poem. As the narrator notes, it is Lindsay “Who in three weeks had
created a dialect new for the party/Master in all that was new, of what’er was recherché and racy,/Master of newest inventions, and ready deviser of newer;” (1.29-31). One such example of this slang-within-slang occurs at the end of the second book: “Three weeks hence we return to the shop and wash-hand-stand-bason/(These are the piper’s names for the bathing-place and the cottage)/Three weeks hence unbury Thicksides and hairy Aldrich” (2.291-293).

The slang, however, is not the only evidence of variations from “standard English” in the early books of the poem. The poem’s setting allows Clough to include examples of Gaelic in addition to “bothie”: “Eight stout shepherds and gillies had run, two wondrous quickly;” (1.4); “Bowing their eye-glassed brows, fingering kilt and sporran” (1.9); “He had left that noon, an hour ago. With the lassie?—” (3.247).

In addition to the use of slang and Gaelic dialect, there is a much discussed instance of jargon in the poem when the undergraduates employ the specialized terminology of Pugin and trope it to discuss principles of beauty in women:

Philip shall write us a book, a Treatise upon The Laws of Architectural Beauty in Application to Women; Illustrations, of course, and a Parker’s Glossary pendent, Where shall in specimen seen be the scullionary stumpy-columnar (Which to a reverent taste is perhaps the most moving of any,) Rising to grace of true woman in English the Early and Later, Charming us still in fulfilling the Richer and Loftier stages, Lost, ere we end, in the Lady-Debased and the Lady-Flamboyant: Thence why in satire and spite too merciless onward to pursue her Hither to hideous close, Modern-Florid, modern-fine-lady? (160-169)

The metaphorical use of jargon here adds another level of specialized fragmentation to the language, rendering it even more the exclusive property to the undergraduate reading party. Elsewhere there are popular political and Chartist slogans (2.215, 9.178), archaic
forms (the numerous “lo”s, “ersts”, and “anon”s etc that are uncommon for Clough) and, at the other extreme from slang but also an instance of non-standard English, examples of literary language drawn from the Authorized Version, Tennyson (2.43-44) and Burns (who straddles several categories of non-standard English).

Another aspect of the Broad Church orientation that Clough incorporates into The Bothie is its awareness of the historical development of the English language. The Piper’s reference to the cottage and the bathing place as the shop and the wash-hand-stand bason is in one sense part of the Piper’s idiolect, but the compound wash-hand-stand-bason evokes English’s Anglo-Saxon heritage. Elsewhere, Philip, speaking of both flowers and women in an extended conceit, points to English’s composite vocabulary, favoring its earlier more “native” elements over its later Latinate importations:

Sick of the very names of your Lady Augustas and Floras
Am I, as ever I was of the dreary botanical titles
Of the exotic plant, their antitypes in the hothouse:
Roses, violets, lilies for me! The out-of-door beauties;
Meadow and woodland sweets, forget-me-nots and heartsease! (2.19-23, italics mine)

Despite such passages, Clough is not a nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon purist, nor is his radical mixture of dialects and vocabularies untouched by more conservative elements.

One of the best examples of the conservatism that checks the radical elements of the Broad Church orientation to language appears in another evocation of slang in The Bothie. In Book III, the Piper describes his regret at leaving the castle of Balloch to return to the reading party: Only one day to have stayed who might have been welcomed for seven./Seven whole days in castle and forest—gay in the mazy/Moving, imbibing the rosy, and pointing a gun at the horny!” (3.94-96). Geoffrey Tillotson has pointed out that
the slang terms “mazy” and “rosy” which refer to dance and wine respectively were used by Dickens in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, but that “horny” (referring presumably to the deer that might be hunted in Balloch’s forest) is Clough’s invention (Tillotson 1965, 135).

Clough provides us with a lesson in morphology here. The creation of the slang term “horny” is part of the poem’s evocation of a democratic idiom, but the way the word is created is through the classical linguistic process of analogy. Radical and conservative elements of the Broad Church orientation to language come together at this moment in the poem. Meg Tasker usefully reminds us that: “Clough’s radical sympathies are still those of an overeducated Oxonian, and the democratic deployment of multiple discourses in *The Bothie* does not entail a complete renunciation of the more traditional poetic methods or the language and knowledge he questions” (Tasker 207).

Clough’s employment of hexameters as the poem’s meter must be brought into the discussion at this point. The hexameters are as noteworthy as the slang as an aesthetic/linguistic feature of the poem, and they elicited much comment from Clough’s contemporaries. Clough’s attempts to situate himself in the nineteenth-century debate on the hexameter and the feasibility of an English hexameter have been discussed by critics in great detail. Whether Clough’s attempts to accommodate both quantity and accent in his hexameters are radical or conservative seems beside the point in many ways. As Joseph Patrick Phelan points out: “In the ideas of Blackie, Newman he found a way of reconnecting his classical studies with living languages” (175). In other words, Clough’s hexameters are composed in the spirit of the Broad Church orientation to language.
By attempting to incorporate the classical and the modern simultaneously, Clough’s hexameters level any implied hierarchy just as Thomas Arnold himself had attempted at Rugby to place the relationship between Latin and Greek and the modern languages on more equal terms. Further, the very heterogeneity of the hexameters has an important effect with regard to the poem’s “radical” diction. Reynolds observes:

This formal freedom makes possible the remarkable dictional variety of the *Bothie*, at once in the basic sense that is allows such diversely unpoetical words as ‘quadruped’, ‘clippingest’ and ‘Méalfourvónie’ to be physically accommodated in a line of verse, and for the less demonstrable though equally important reason noted by William Whewell: ‘the very novelty of the measure makes us willingly accept a style in which the usual conventional phrases and dim generalities of poetical description are replaced by idioms and pictures of common life.’ (137-138)

The hybridity of the hexameters enables the comprehensiveness of the poem’s diction. At the same time they remain, in spite of their novelty and irregularity, hexameters--a distinctly classical element in the poem which coexists even as it facilitates the poem’s modern language. This causally interconnected co-existence of the classical and the modern in *The Bothie* is one of Clough’s most interesting instantiations of the spirit of the Broad Church orientation to language in the language of his poetry.

That Clough could imagine and describe the co-existence of all these varieties comprehended under the idea of English is perhaps his most adept, and certainly his most extensive, poetic rendering of the Broad Church orientation to language’s ideal of comprehension. The various registers and metrical experimentation of the *Bothie* speak to Clough’s belief in the co-existence and intermingling of standard and non-standard, classical and modern varieties of English. Dennis Taylor’s description of the language of Hardy’s poetry is apropos to the characterization of Clough’s efforts in this part of *The
"Bothie: “Hardy’s anomalous vocabulary reflects his sense that current language is a compound of many kinds of language at many stages of evolution” (14). In many ways the vocabulary of *The Bothie* anticipates James Murray’s extended but crucial description and diagram of the vocabulary of the English language in the “General Explanations” of the first volume of the *OED* many years later:

That vast aggregate of words and phrases which constitutes the Vocabulary of English-speaking men presents, to the mind that endeavors to grasp it as a definite whole, the aspect of one of those nebulous masses familiar to the astronomer, in which a clear and unmistakable nucleus shades off on all sides, through zones of decreasing brightness, to a dim and marginal film that seems to end nowhere, but to lose itself imperceptibly in the surrounding darkness...So the English Vocabulary contains a nucleus or central mass of many thousand words whose ‘Anglicity’ is unquestioned; some of them only literary, some of them only colloquial, the great majority at once literary and colloquial,—they are the Common Words of the language. But they are linked on every side with other words which are less and less entitled to this appellation, and which pertain ever more and more distinctly to the domain of local dialect, of the slang and cant of ‘sets’ and classes, of the peculiar technicalities of trades and processes, of the scientific terminology common to all civilized nations, of the actual languages of other lands and peoples. And there is absolutely no defining line in any direction: the circle of the English language has a well defined centre but no discernible circumference. (xvii)

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Murray’s description and visual image of the circumference-less circle of English vocabulary is reminiscent of Clough’s parliament of voices and registers of diction in *The Bothie*. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to suggest that the language of the *Bothie* is solely triumphant celebration of the spirit of Rugby linguistics on Clough’s part.

As was noted earlier with reference to the use of slang, Clough is troubled, in a sense, by the sheer heterogeneity of language and *The Bothie*’s celebration of a more comprehensive linguistic vision grows more problematic as the poem proceeds. For example, another aspect of the poem’s concern with language in the opening books is seen in the implications that arise from the various acts of naming that are represented in the poem. Many of the Oxford undergraduates have nicknames that further cement the bonds among the group but also strengthen the reading party’s aura of exclusivity. The first to be named is the undergraduate Hope:

Hope was the first, black-tied, white-waistcoated, simple, His Honour;
For the postman made out he was son to the Earl of Ilay,
(And indeed he was, to the younger brother, the Colonel,)
Treated him therefore with special respect; doffed bonnet, and ever Called him his Honour, his Honour therefore he was at the cottage.
Always his Honour at least, sometimes the Viscount of Ilay. (1.13-18)

Hope is nicknamed his Honour but the name’s signification is split between the local postman, who uses it as a term of respect, even if he is mistaken as to Hope’s social position, and the undergraduates who, knowing Hope to be not an heir but rather the younger son of a younger brother, use it with an ironical awareness. The reading party’s Tutor is, significantly, named Adam and like his namesake attempts to exercise his naming prerogative:

Lindsay the ready of speech, the Piper, the Dialectician,
This was his title from Adam because of the words he invented
This was his title from Adam, but mostly they called him the Piper.
Lindsay succeeded, the lively, the cheery, cigar-loving Lindsay. (1.27-33)

Adam’s name for Lindsay fails to garner even the minimal agreement required in
conventional acts of naming and falls flat. Interestingly, the word itself, “Dialectician,”
may actually be Clough’s coinage for “a professed student of dialects” accordingly to
Patrick Scott. In the third book there is another instance of naming—in this case the
swimming spot referred to frequently in the text:

There is the sparkling champagne, ecstatic, they shrieked and shouted.
‘Hobbes’s gutter’ the piper entitles the spot profanely,
Hope ‘the Glory’ would have, after Arthur, the glory of headers:
But, before they departed, in shy and fugitive reflex
Here in the eddies and there did the splendour of Jupiter glimmer,
Adam adjudged the name of Hesperus, star of the evening. (3.62-67)

Here we have different levels of diction represented in the various acts of naming from
frank sexual crudeness to literary and symbolic allusiveness. There is no indication of
the supremacy of one name over the other—they simply co-exist. Even among such
limited numbers, these conventional acts of naming prove impossible and are fraught by
division. Thus Clough develops, a potent irony in the opening books in which the vision
and idea of unity (symbolized by the Highland banquet in the opening book) is both
evoked and undercut by the poem’s language and comments about language which
suggest just the opposite.

Indeed, while the juxtaposition of the various vocabularies and dialects in the
opening book implicitly suggests social and cultural fragmentation, there is an explicit
representation of this problem in the reports provided of the awkward and confused
interaction between Philip and Katie in Book III:
How here too he [Philip] was hunted at morning, and found in the kitchen watching the porridge being made, and asking the lassie that made them what was Gaelic for girl, and what was the Gaelic for pretty; how in confusion he shouldered his knapsack, yet blushingly stammered, waving a hand to the lassie, that blushingly bent o’er the porridge something outlandish—Slan-something, Slan leat, he believed, Caleg Looach. That was the Gaelic it seemed for ‘I bid you good-bye, bonnie lassie;’

(3.184-191)

This is an image of the long odds for both the personal union between the two characters and the two cultures and classes they are symbols of, and the most immediate obstacle to their union is linguistic.

The middle books of the poem, which generally receive little attention and less comment, are important nonetheless, because they serve as a transition between the linguistic concerns of the early sections of the poem and the decidedly different latter sections. The cacophony of voices and vocabularies that energize the opening of *The Bothie* give way to a quieter and more consistent narrative voice that works indirectly through report and epistle. Philip’s abortive romance with Katie is reported to the reader through a soliloquy that suddenly foregrounds archaism and literary allusiveness. The narrator and Philip begin the account of the affair: “Lo, and he sitteth alone, and these are his words in the mountain./Souls of the dead, one fancies, can enter and be with the living;/Would I were dead, I keep saying, that so I could go and uphold her. (4.40-42). Clough’s ironic allusion to Tennyson’s “Mariana” (the abandoner Philip speaking the refrain of the abandoned Mariana) not only offers a preview of the most noteworthy linguistic feature of *Amours de Voyage* (composed the following autumn) but is symptomatic of the greater degree of detachment as the poem gropes toward a different attitude to and use of language in the latter sections. The narrative becomes
increasingly difficult to follow as the story resorts to an epistolary format that creates a sense of opacity. The language of the opening sections had seemed to hold out the possibility and hope of reconciliation and union among different classes and cultures, or at least the celebration of their diverse co-existence (despite Clough’s simultaneous misgivings). This attitude to language is increasingly problematic as the poem develops. Rather than a potential conventional bond it becomes an obstacle to knowledge as Adam notes: “Words which we are poring at, hammering at, stumbling at, spelling” (4.224).

Just as the language of the early books of the poem might be read as a reconnection, on Clough’s part, to the Broad Church orientation to language of Rugby, so might the later books be seen as a revival of another phase of Clough’s linguistic education. As the poem focuses increasingly on the relationship between Philip and Elspie, there is a revival of the quality of Reserve in Clough’s language. The most notable aesthetic feature of these later books, which are noteworthy for the ascendancy of the symbolic and pastoral mode, are the series of long, epic similes shared between Philip and Elspie as they explore the complexities of their burgeoning relationship:

Yes,—I don’t know, Mr. Philip,—but only it feels to me strangely
Like to the high new bridge, they used to build at, below there,
Over the burn and glen on the road. You won’t understand me.
But I keep saying in my mind,—this long time slowly with trouble
I have been building myself, up, up, and toilfully raising,
Just like the bridge were to do it itself without masons,
Painfully getting myself upraised one stone on another,
All one side I mean; and now I see on the other
Just such another fabric rising, better and stronger,
Close to me, coming to join me: and then I sometimes fancy,—
Sometimes I find myself dreaming at nights about arches and bridges,—
Sometimes I dream of a great invisible hand coming down, and
Dropping the great key stone in the middle: there in my dreaming,
There I feel 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, tingling
All the way up from the other side’s basement-stones in the water,
Through the very grains of mine:…(7.58-75)

In his Balliol poetry, Clough had applied the spirit of Tractarian Reserve to veil the
eexpression of his own private and embarrassing sense of sinful behavior.91 When Clough
came to develop and resolve the love plot in the latter books of *The Bothie*, his desire to
represent the intimacies of that relationship honestly and realistically poses the problem
of the frank expression of such modern and private sentiments. Indeed, as Elspie
attempts to articulate the awakening sexual awareness she shares with Philip, the poem,
rather than presenting a frank, direct representation of her feelings, resorts to a long epic
simile:

You are too strong, you see, Mr. Philip! You are like the sea there
Which *will* come, through straits and all between the mountains,
Forcing its great strong tide into every nook and inlet,
Getting far in, up the quiet stream of sweet inland water,
Sucking it up, and stopping it, turning it, driving it backward,
Quite preventing its own quiet running: and then, soon after,
Back it goes off, leaving weeds on the shore and wrack and uncleanness:
And the poor burn in the glen tries again its peaceful running,
But it is brackish and tainted, and all its banks in disorder.
That was what I dreamt last night. I was the burnie
Trying to get along through the tyrannous brine, and could not;
I was confined and squeezed in the coils of the great salt tide, that
Would mix-in itself with me, and change me… (7.124-137)

The similes veil the sentiments of the lovers and offer a way for Clough to explore such
subject matter. In this sense, Clough’s conception of the simile as a strategy of Reserve
forwards a diametrically opposed position to the one that Matthew Arnold would arrive at
in the aftermath of the 1853 Preface and explore in poems such as *Sohrab and Rustum*.
Similarly, Philip in articulating his reawakened radicalism to Adam at the end of the
poem employs the indirection of the simile (9.103-137). The similes, and the more general strategy of investing the language with Reserve through extended figures of speech, enable Clough to treat sensitive subject matter with a decorum that he considers appropriate for poetry. Reserve has been completely secularized once again to allow Clough’s poetry to explore, in a more restrained manner, the broad canvass of modern life and feeling that the novel had appropriated as its province.

The hexameters assert their centrality to the poem here as well. While certainly instrumental in helping to realize a Broad Church orientation to language ideal of linguistic comprehensiveness early in the poem, the hexameters, in the latter books when the slang and dialects have largely faded, join with the extended similes to facilitate a Tractarian veiling of the explicitness and directness of the confessions and professions of Philip and Elspie. In a cogent description of the effect of Clough’s hexameter Katharine Chorley, while not specifically making the connection to Tractarian Reserve, speaks of Clough’s meter in language that strongly parallels Keble’s statements on the restraining function of metrical language as a corollary to the expression of powerful feelings:

His handling is often crude and clumsy...But the meter is vital in his hands, pulsating with a kind of half-tamed life. It bucks and rears and pants, like a horse not yet consistently docile to its rider’s reign and spur and then suddenly for a moment forced into a proud beauty of control...increases the range of his emotional tone (149)

Indeed, the heterogeneity of Clough’s hexameters invests them with an elasticity that provides a degree of emotional range that is absent in the early, more mechanical impositions of meter and tropes as veils in the Balliol poems such as Blank Misgivings.

*The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* is the pivotal poem in Clough’s œuvre since it is a summary, or stock-taking, of Clough’s linguistic education at Rugby and Oxford and it
indicates some of the directions that Clough’s language would take in the poems he would compose in the coming years. The poem contains some of Clough’s most optimistic linguistic moments as he attempts to implement the Broad Church orientation to language and imagine a greatly expanded notion of “English.” And yet The Bothie is haunted by a sense of the utopianism of such a language as Clough explores the inadequacies and problems inherent in the Broad Church orientation’s spirit of expansion and comprehension. There is also the fact that he abandons his implementation of it in the second half of the poem, falling back on the Tractarian approach that had dominated the language of his Balliol poetry. As Biswas has noted: “The antagonism between Arnold’s Rugby and Newman’s Oxford is seen as offering a major clue to the nature of his intellectual and spiritual difficulties” (60). This antagonism was, in one sense, played out at the level of language itself. The “dipsychean” quality of the language in The Bothie—the way in which Clough juxtaposes the two traditions (Broad Church and Tractarian) that has shaped his linguistic education—makes the poem an important landmark in the history of Clough’s understanding and experimentation with his medium. Appearing in November 1848, the poem represents the full spectrum of Clough’s exposure to a series of often contradictory ideas about language that spanned two decades (he had first arrived at Rugby twenty years earlier in the autumn of 1828). Freed from the constraints of Oxford, he ultimately finds both traditions inadequate and Amours de Voyage moves Clough and his language in a new direction.

In a letter to Clough, written shortly after the publication of The Bothie, the provost of Oriel, Edward Hawkins, who had recently accepted Clough’s resignation from his fellowship, makes a passing observation about The Bothie. Hawkins writes: “I very
much regretted to find also that there were frequent allusions to Scripture, or rather parodies of Scripture, which you should not have put forth” (Williams 80-81). This observation is an important one and Hawkins detects the emergence of an interest in particular uses of allusion in Clough’s work that would become the dominant aesthetic-linguistic feature of *Amours de Voyage* and indicative of an evolution in the his understanding and use of language.

That evolution, however, is tied to developments in Clough’s thinking about poetry. In “Resignation: To Faustus,” composed approximately three months after the publication of *The Bothie*, Clough outlines aspects of his evolving poetics. The poem is ostensibly an exploration of the incongruity between the pure, classical beauty of a Corinthian column and the physical squalor that surrounds it. However, it is apparent that the description is allegorical and the poem is a meditation on the relationship between the work of art and its connection to the everyday world in which it finds itself situated. The speaker comes to realize the necessary interdependence between the rarefied and the quotidian, the aesthetic and the real, the poetic and the prosaic—the inevitability of “The graceful with the gross combined” (7). As the speaker notes:

So is it: in all ages so,
And in all places man can know,
From homely roots unseen below
In forest shade in woodland bower
The stem that bears the ethereal flower
Derives that emanative power;
From mixtures fetid, foul and sour
Draws juices that those petals fill. (43-50)

Further, the poem is obviously a response to Matthew Arnold’s “Resignation”--a poem that Clough would have first encountered in the same month he composed “Resignation:
To Faustus” (February 1849) since it was also the month in which Arnold published his first volume *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*. Clough is clearly rejecting the detached Olympian poetics of Arnold’s poem, but at the same time, he is clearly uncomfortable in promoting a radical poetics that might seem to be suggested by his rejection. “Resignation—To Faustus” outlines the clash between high and low, ancient and modern, old and new, tradition and innovation, ideal and real, the rarefied aesthetic and the quotidian. It advocates, not in favor of a hierarchy of one over the other or for a choice of one over the other, but for the necessity and inevitability of their juxtaposition to use a key word from *Amours de Voyage*. This is a keynote not only of Clough’s poetics at this moment but also of the language that services this poetics. *The Bothie* had quixotically aspired to an ideal synthesis but Clough’s growing political disillusionment (present perhaps even in the form of the contradictions of *The Bothie* shows that ideal synthesis must give way to realistic juxtaposition.

Three lyrics linked by their focus on Biblical topics reveal Clough working towards a language that would be appropriate for his modern, novelistic but somewhat disillusioned poetics. The first of these poems was written between *The Bothie* and *Amours*. “The Song of Lamech” focuses on Methuselah’s son Lamech who is mentioned in the genealogy of Genesis 5 linking Adam to Noah. In the fourth chapter of Genesis, Lamech offers one of the most cryptic passages of the Old Testament, a passage that is linked to Cain’s protection by God following the murder of Abel. In Genesis 4:23 Lamech addresses his wives: “Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding and a young man to my hurt. If Cain is avenged seven-fold truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.” Clough’s
poem is essentially his effort to demystify this passage—surely one of the most cryptic in the Pentateuch. Clough’s poem provides the context and the elucidation of such an opaque expression by representing Lamech telling his family the story of how Abel forgave Cain and their eventual reconcilement. In a sense the poem is a piece of Biblical exegesis as Clough takes a cryptic passage from the Old Testament and elucidates it via a background narrative. What is significant about this poem for our understanding of Clough’s language is the fact that he focuses on a particularly opaque example or expression from the Authorized Version—the language of which Clough, following Coleridge, identified as one of the chief repositories of the lingua communis. Here Clough feels compelled to make such examples of England’s storied literary-linguistic tradition more accessible to his readers as he preserves and updates it for a modern audience.

In a similar but also slightly different vein, in “The Latest Decalogue” Clough explores the hollowness of Victorian morality, the hypocrisy of the sham that makes utility the guide to ethical action. He decries the hypocritical flexibility of his fellow citizens when it comes to moral precepts:

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

“The Latest Decalogue” is ostensibly a reforming or renovating, for particular satiric
effects, of the authoritative and familiar cadences of the Authorized Version of the Ten
Commandments. In this case, the language of Exodus is evoked in order that it may be
subject to further comment by the speaker. From a linguistic point of view, like “The
Song of Lamech,” Clough’s satire here is reminiscent of the manner of the Oriel poems,
takes language, in this case a well known example from the Authorized Version and
seeks to elucidate it further for his readers. He takes a series of expressions from the
lingua communis and wryly decodes it for a modern audience. Again we see an interest
in the language of the Authorized Version and Clough’s ironic play with that language.

In “Easter Day” Clough continues this practice. The poem was written in the
immediate aftermath of Clough’s arrival during the siege of Rome and thus at the height
of his political disillusionment. In it we see most clearly Clough’s use and revision of the
lingua communis of the Authorized Version in a crystallized form that compares
favorably to his extensive practice of this technique in Amours de Voyage which he was
simultaneously composing. In this poem Clough uses Biblical language, cadences and
echoes, most notably the expression Christ is risen and “ashes to ashes/dust to dust” to
make a thoroughly modern statement and speak to his Victorian crisis of faith. Rather
than find a new expression to explore a new idea, Clough draws on the tradition of the
lingua communis and modifies it for modern circumstances—old wine in new bottles in a

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sense. This is the language of political disillusionment and bitterness that verges on
cynicism and it is also the language that Clough found most suitable for his cautiously
democratic, modern poetics. The idea of comprehensiveness seen in The Bothie’s attempt
to reconcile competing traditions of language mutates in these short poems and the longer
pieces to a more ironic evocation and revision of England’s linguistic glory that feeds the
cautiously democratic if disillusioned poetry of Clough at this time.

Although only approximately one year separates the composition of The Bothie of
Tober-na-Vuolich and Amours de Voyage, the two poems suggest far more differences
than similarities, including divergent views and uses of language. To move from The
Bothie to Amours is to be made immediately aware of a striking difference in tone
between the two works. The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich is a poem swept up in the
immediate aftermath of the excitement of 1848; it is the poem of “Citizen Clough” and is
perhaps naively optimistic about its own harmonious and reconciliatory prescriptions on
matters of love and politics (although we have seen that The Bothie itself at moments
seems to question these prescriptions as well). Amours de Voyage, conversely, is very
much a poem of the autumn of 1849; it is the poem of Clough’s political disillusionment
in the context of the rapid re-ascendancy of the forces of reaction in the months following
the revolutions. The skepticism and detachment of Claude, the protagonist and chief
correspondent of the fifty-eight letters that make up Amours de Voyage, is the most
obvious manifestation of Clough’s disillusionment. Amours de Voyage, however, is not a
reactionary palinode to the radicalism of The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich. Rather, on
both its thematic and linguistic levels, *Amours de Voyage* juxtaposes a quieter, more subtle, thoughtful, and at times ambivalent reforming impulse to the revolutionary energies of *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*.

As Patrick G. Scott has helpfully pointed out, the compounded effect of Claude’s detachment as both tourist and intellectual allows Clough to register his own ambivalence about culture, politics, and love (3). This ambivalence is further embodied, I believe, in Clough’s views and uses of language in the poem which represent a new but brief phase in his relationship to language. Building on the interest in England’s literary/linguistic tradition seen in those short lyrics just discussed and which were composed approximately contemporaneously with *Amours de Voyage*, the poem’s language differs significantly from that of *The Bothie*. In order to get a sense of this change, I begin by comparing two aspects of language common to both poems (use of non-English diction and self-reflexive acts of naming) before turning more specifically to the language of *Amours de Voyage* itself.

Although Rome would seem to offer just as much of a reservoir of foreign words as the Scottish Highlands, Clough’s deployment of non-English diction is markedly different in *Amours de Voyage* than in *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* in a number of ways. The most obvious difference is quantitative. *Amours de Voyage* makes much less use of non-English diction than *The Bothie*. The large quantity of Gaelic words in *The Bothie*, which combined with the undergraduate slang, literary idiom and technical jargon that renders many of the early sections of the poem a virtual parliament of dialects and styles, is replaced in *Amours de Voyage* with a more judicious selection of Italian and French words that Claude uses to burnish his letters to England with a requisite
cosmopolitan sheen. For instance, Claude opens his first letter to his English
correspondent Eustace with such a flourish: “Dear Eustatio, I write that you may write
me an answer/Or at least to put us again en rapport with each other” (1.1–2). The
sprinkling of Italian and French words into the conversational rhythms of Claude’s letters
serves a much more limited purpose here than the use of dialect, slang or jargon in The
Bothie of Tober na-Vuolich. Here they foreground aspects of Claude’s character and add
touches of verisimilitude to the eyewitness reports of life in Rome. They also are the
occasion for touches of light humor as when Claude, discussing an Oxford acquaintance
he has met in Rome, attempts to display his wit in awkwardly translating the English
idiomatic expression: “Not that I care a tuppence for him” into “Not that I like them
much or care a bajocco for Vernon” (1.122).

More significant are the differences that emerge in the two poems’s respective
attitudes to the act of naming. Both Amours de Voyage and The Bothie of Tober-na-
Vuolich open with such moments. As a young Oxford don, Claude has traveled to Rome
as a tourist but has been swept up in the founding of Mazzini’s Roman Republic and the
subsequent siege of the city by French forces. The early letters of Amours de Voyage,
however, are concerned primarily with Claude’s impressions of the Eternal City:

Rome disappoints me much—St. Peter’s, perhaps, in especial;
Only the Arch of Titus and view from the Lateran please me.
…
All the foolish destructions, and all the sillier savings,
All the incongruous things of past incompatible ages,
Seem to be treasured up here to make fools of present and future.
Would to heaven the old Goths had made a cleaner sweep of it!
Would to heaven some new ones would come and destroy these churches!
(1.3–4, 21–25)
Having surveyed Rome, Claude assigns it what he believes is its most appropriate epithet: Rome disappoints me much; I hardly as yet understand, but/Rubbishy seems the word that most exactly would suit it” (1.19-20). The differences between this act of naming and the naming of the undergraduates in the opening section of The Bothie may seem initially slight, but in reality there is a significant difference that is indicative of a broader shift in Clough’s attitudes to language. The naming of the members of the undergraduate reading party in The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich stresses Lindsay’s innovation as he invents names and indeed coins an entirely new, private language for the party, even if the consequences of such activity are to foreground division and fragmentation because this new language lacks the authority of convention. Lindsay is the Dialectician, coining neologisms in what is essentially an ambitious, creative, idealistic attitude to language. In the opening letter from Amours de Voyage quoted above, Claude is engaged in something decidedly less ambitious, creative and idealistic as he attempts to communicate his impression of Rome. The passage emphasizes, through Claude’s self-conscious asides, the thoughtfulness and contemplation involved in selecting the proper word from the existing stock of the English vocabulary. This basic difference here between the impulse to innovation and the impulse to selection from the existing language is one of the aspects that distinguish the general linguistic principles of Amours de Voyage from The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich.

Further, this act of naming that opens the poem should also be considered in the context of the opening letters of the poem which are largely taken up, as noted earlier,
with Claude’s impressions of Rome. Claude’s observations about the sites of Rome repeatedly return to a sense of the oppressiveness of the cumulative weight of its past as it is represented by the city’s ruins and cultural treasures:

Rome disappoints me still; but I shrink and adapt myself to it. Somehow a tyrannous sense of superincumbent oppression Still, wherever I go, accompanies ever, and makes me Feel like a tree, shall I say, buried under a ruin of brick-work. Rome, believe me, my friend, is like its own Monte Testaceo, Merely a marvelous mass of broken and castaway wine-pots. (1.35-40)

Rome is a particularly rich, multi-layered palimpsest and its history constantly impinges upon its present status. This is evident, for example, when Claude visits the Pantheon and can only feel the persistence of its pagan past despite the fact that it has recently been converted into a Christian church, or later when Claude comments on the treasures of classical antiquity that adorn the holy places of the Roman Catholic Church at the Vatican. This larger thematic motif regarding the persistence and relevance of the past on Rome’s present parallels and speaks to the poem’s more specific linguistic concerns as well.

In the poem’s initial act of naming, discussed above, we see Claude selecting from the materials or words at hand and eschewing the innovatory impulse when it comes to language—Claude is no coiner of words. Like the palimpsestical nature of Rome and its ruins, language, for Claude, is not something one creates, but rather something he finds himself in the midst of and of which he must make use for present concerns—in linguistic matters Claude is no revolutionary but rather a reformer or perhaps more accurately a renovator.
How then does such a reforming/renovating impulse make itself known in Clough’s use of language in the poem? The linguistic expansiveness and comprehensiveness of the idealistic Bothie is replaced by the cautious, reforming and ironic updating of existing language in Amours. Whereas characters such as Lindsay and the Tutor in The Bothie brought a creative spirit to their dealings with words (indeed the Tutor is significantly enough named Adam), in Amours de Voyage, Claude sees himself in less idealized terms as simultaneously both Iago and Adam:

Dear, dear, what do I say? But alas, just now, like Iago,
I can be nothing at all, if it is not critical wholly;
So in fantastic height, in coxcomb exaltation,
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 them, they are, the bird, the beast, and the cattle;
But for Adam, alas, poor critical coxcomb Adam,
But for Adam there was not found an help-meet for him. (1.147-155)

As the detached observer or as the tourist, Claude imagines for himself a role comparable to that of Adam in assigning names to all that is brought before his purview, but there is a more powerful critical spirit within him that looks to work upon the existing language. However, Claude is both latter-day Adam and latter-day Iago. For those living not like Adam at the earliest ages of civilization, but rather in its later ages, the fundamental use of language in acts of naming is fraught with problems and challenges. Like Adam, Claude feels the imperative to name, accurately and honestly, all that comes before him—his impressions of Rome, the Roman Republic and the siege, and the Trevellyns among other things. Patrick Scott has pointed out the consonance of Claude’s self-comparison with Adam to a passage from Sartor Resartus:
Not only all Common Speech but Science, Poetry itself, is no other, if thou consider it, than a right Naming. Adam’s first task was giving names to the natural Appearances: what is ours still but a continuation of the same; be the Appearances exotic-vegetable, organic, mechanic, stars or starry movements (as in Science); or (as in Poetry) passions, virtues, calamities, God-attributes, Gods?” (Sartor Resartus, 1836 Bk. 2, chap.1)

Unlike Adam, Claude is not the original namer, but rather a latter-day namer, compelled to name with a language that he does not invent as Adam does in Genesis, but rather with the language that he finds himself born into. This speaks to the other figure mentioned in the passage, Iago. Whereas Adam’s acts of naming can be considered as creative and participating in the larger creative project of Genesis, Iago uses language not to create but to destroy. In juxtaposing Adam and Iago, Claude fashions a relationship to language that embodies both creative and critical perspectives. The creative energies of Adam and the nihilistic energies of Iago speak to a larger ambivalence that Claude/Clough has in the course of the poem when it comes to words.

However, the question still remains as to how this general observation about language is put into practice in the poem itself. How does Clough connect from this crucial moment of linguistic self-reflexivity to Claude’s use of language in the poem. Unlike The Bothie which brings together a number of linguistic and aesthetic features that compete for the reader’s attention in a Broad Church scheme of comprehension, there is one aspect of Claude’s language in Amours de Voyage that dominates all others. This feature is Claude’s reworking, ironic modifications and relocations of the linguistic touchstones of the Authorized Version and, to a much lesser extent, the Odes of Horace and Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar and Hamlet.
This practice is established immediately in the opening letter, when Claude confides to Eustace that the reality of Rome has frustrated his expectations and has sparked a desire to travel elsewhere in the Mediterranean and Near East: “That I could travel to Athens, to Delphi, to Troy, and Mount Sinai. Though but to see with my eyes that these are vanity also” (1.17-18). The lines echo, of course, the opening of Ecclesiastes, but here the opening thesis of the biblical book on the insubstantiality of life is applied to the specific expectations of the Victorian tourist. Another memorable example occurs in Canto II, when Claude draws on the language of the Authorized Version once again to compare the siege of Rome with Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem from 2 Kings 18-19. Describing the French general Oudinet, Claude notes:

He is passed from Monterone, at Santa Serva
He hath laid up his guns. But the Virgin, the Daughter of Roma,
She hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn,—the Daughter of Tiber
She hath shaken her head and built barricades against thee! (2.50-53)

Clough’s echoes are relatively explicit and admit little variation from the Biblical original in 2 Kings: “This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him; the virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee” (2 Kings 19.20). Elsewhere the comparisons and echoes are not so extensive. For example, in discussing the impulse to martyrdom on the part of the republicans, Claude echoes the familiar refrain from Leviticus: “The smoke of the sacrifice rises to heaven./Of a sweet savour, no doubt, to Somebody…” (2.153-154).

Claude’s use of linguistic touchstones is not limited to the Bible, although that is his most frequent resource. He ironically quotes the Marseillaise to celebrate the defenders of Rome now pitted against French forces: “…yet did I, waking/Dream of a
cadence that sings, *Si tombet nos jeunes heros, La/Terre en produit de nouveaux contre vous tous pret a se batter*” (2.58-60). Earlier he creatively revises Augustus’s epigrammatic assessment of Rome in order to express his own disillusionment:

“‘Brickwork I found thee, and marble I left thee!’ their Emperor vaunted;/Marble I thought thee, and brickwork I find thee, the Tourist may answer” (1: 49-50).

Further examples might be marshaled but the point is that these variations of reviving and reworking familiar linguistic touchstones of Claude’s cultural heritage—a practice that is both creative and critical, both Adam-like and Iago-like—is the dominant feature of his language throughout the course of the poem. It was certainly an aspect of the poem that provoked comment from its first two readers, Theodore Walrond and J.C. Shairp who read the draft manuscript as early as the autumn of 1849 (nine years before it was published in *The Atlantic Monthly*). In an additional passage for Canto II, Letter I which ultimately did not find its way into the final published poem, Clough had reworked Paul’s famous injunction from 1 Corinthians 13: “For now abideth—Politics, Art and Love, these three, and of these the greatest/Is—but I am not the Shepherd Idean to settle the question—Politics, Art and Love, and the greatest of these is the purest.” Clough’s evocation of this familiar passage provoked comment from one of the poem’s first readers—either Walrond or Shairp—who noted in the margin of the manuscript: “Why parody that of all passages.” Clough would revisit this passage in the closing moments of the poem when Claude has reached some sort of resolution to carry on:

Not as the Scripture says is, I think, the fact. Ere our death-day
 Faith, I think, does pass, and Love; but Knowledge abideth.
Let us seek Knowledge;--the rest must come and go as it happens.
Knowledge is hard to seek, and harder yet to adhere to. (5.197-200)
However, it seems that Walrond or Shairp in characterizing Clough’s practice as parody fundamentally misunderstand what Clough is doing with these passages. This was also the case, nine years later, when Clough’s American editor, Lowell, was equally unsettled by the relocation and revision of Biblical linguistic touchstones in Clough’s modern poem. In one of his critiques of middle-class British philistinism as embodied by the Trevellyns Claude writes:

No, the Music, the cards, and the tea so genteel and insipid,
Are not, believe me, I think it, no, are not vain oblations
One can endure their whist, their assemblies one can away with,
No, and it is not iniquity, even the solemn meeting. (143-146)

Lowell deleted these lines because, as Scott points out “they paraphrase Isaiah’s warning to the rulers of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah: “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with this iniquity, even the solemn meeting” (Isaiah 1.13).

Interestingly this creative/critical use of the language of the Authorized Version occurs immediately before the passage, discussed earlier, where Claude imagines himself and his task as that of a modern day Iago/Adam interested in a creative/critical naming of all that is brought before him.

This reworking of previous instances and celebrated uses of the English language that is, in my opinion, the most noteworthy aesthetic feature of *Amours de Voyage*, contributing as it does to the carefully cultivated ironical characterization of the poem’s central character and speaker, Claude. However, it is an aesthetic feature grounded in Clough’s interest in the thinking on language. Behind Clough’s repeated practice of drawing on the linguistic touchstones of the Authorized Version and other canonical
texts, lies a Coleridgean commitment to and celebration of the lingua communis

supplemented by a Carlylean re-tailoring of it. Something of this can be seen in another
important passage from one of the poem’s working manuscripts that was ultimately not
included in the final published version of the poem:

Tis but the impatience that seizes
Every new age as it follows at finding already done for it
What it believes it could do for itself more exact to its fancy.
‘Tis but the frivolous longing for calling old things by new names, for
Buying new furniture, filling its chambers, in patterns less pleasing
But of its own silly choosing, with ever the self-same devices
For the old palpable needs, the bed, the chair and the table.
I have looked into new systems—not far, but enough for detecting
Just the old paths and runs of the spirit in these woods likewise,
Just the old points of the compass laid down upon this card also,
All the old Mental and Moral Geometry prevalent here too.
Here as in space uniformly the three everlasting dimensions.
I have beheld many fools for a new Terminology screaming,
You a true catholic soul most sensibly working the old one.

Claude’s revolt here against the tendency towards innovation and revolution is matched
by a commitment to cling to older forms and traditions when they are still valuable and
do not necessarily need to be replaced. Claude may well see him as a latter-day Adam
but unlike his predecessor he does not need to invent a new or first language but can
work with the one that he has inherited and reapply it into new contexts. This underlies
his revolt against new terminologies. Clough’s practice, in *Amours de Voyage* and other
poems from this period, of revising and relocating linguistic touchstones from the past in
order to comprehend and address the challenges and concerns of the present is in many
ways an attempt to envision a language appropriate to the aesthetic principles he had
earlier outlined in poems such as “Resignation: To Faustus”
Nor was this use of the lingua communis confined to the major poems that Clough wrote at this time. In another poem written in the aftermath of the siege of Rome, “Peschiera,” Clough noting the nobility of sacrifice of the men of Brescia at the hands of Austro-Hungarian invaders writes:

What voice did on my spirit fall,
Peschiera, when thy bridge I crost?
’Tis better to have fought and lost,
Than never to have fought at all. (1-4)

From a linguistic point of view, what makes the poem interesting is Clough’s playful revision not of an established example from the lingua communis, as is the case in Amours de Voyage or the biblically-themed poems discussed above, but from what he perceived, and was subsequently proven correct, to be a more recent example of English that would assume its place in the lingua communis. In this case he revises Tennyson’s famous passage from the recently published In Memoriam. He anticipates the future classical status of living poetic language yet realizes and acknowledges the flexibility of such words in his own hands as he writes modern poetry.

In another poem from this period Clough again follows his habit of revising and updating the lingua communis. “In the Great Metropolis” Clough revisits the subject matter of the similarly named “To the Great Metropolis.” Indeed, Clough’s point in this latter poem is the same as the one he makes in the Oxford one. The poem records Clough’s observation on the predatory, self interested competitive nature of modern society organized on laissez faire principles. Instead of exploiting the radicals of key words as part of a radical, satirical project exposing the shams and hypocrisies of his day, here Clough adopts an idiomatic expression “The Devil take the hindmost” and makes it
his refrain in the poem. However his adoption of the phrase is an adaptation of it as well
as he reinvigorates it for a modern audience, thus extending and refreshing the lingua
communis for a new generation of readers and writers. The expression “The Devil take
the hindmost,” originally referred to late medieval magic and was used in Beaumont and
Fletcher’s *Philaster.* Here it is updated and assigned to the specifically Victorian form of
selfishness and hypocrisy that Clough relentlessly exposes and ridicules in the poem.

With the composition of *Dipsychus* following his visit to Venice in the autumn of
1850, Clough completed his third major poetic project in as many years. In these three
poems (*The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich, Amours de Voyage, Dipsychus*), all written and
revised in the years surrounding the mid-point of the century, we see Clough working
through a series of diverse, and often seemingly incongruous, ideas and attitudes about
language from the idealism of *The Bothie* through the ironic disillusionment and lowered
linguistic ambitions of *Amours de Voyage* to the detached almost scholarly interest in his
medium, as will be shown, in *Dipsychus.* The effect is in many ways kaleidoscopic as
different linguistic concerns are juxtaposed, vie for prominence, blend into each other,
appear, disappear and reappear in rapid succession across the books, cantos and scenes of
these three texts, but the gradual loss of ambitious idealism ushered in by *the Bothie*
provides an overall arc to the evolution of Clough’s language during these years. In one
sense, the language of *Dipsychus* can be seen as developing from the linguistic concerns
of *Amours de Voyage.* In *Amours de Voyage,* Clough’s habit of evoking, transplanting
and revising a series of literary/linguistic touchstones as the central linguistic feature of
*Amours de Voyage* Clough situates himself within the contours of nineteenth-century
linguistic theories emphasizing a historical orientation to the study of the current English
language; theories that saw the language as a constantly evolving organism, forever adding, incorporating, modifying, troping, and discarding aspects of itself. The revision of the linguistic touchstones from England’s linguistic and literary past suggests the continued vitality and renewal of the language through time. In *Dipsychus*, Clough’s interest shifts somewhat. Clough’s interests continue to remain with a larger historical understanding of English, but now begin to focus increasingly on the interaction between the language’s classical (i.e. Latin elements) and its older Germanic components and the consequences of the relations between these two components of the language—a retreat from the literary to a scholarly or even philological interest in the language. The dramatic structure of *Dipsychus* makes this turn immediately discernible. The battle between Dipsychus and the Spirit is in many ways a battle between two visions of the English language, with an inconclusive result.

In many of the early scenes of *Dipsychus*, Clough working out from under the shadow of Goethe’s *Faust* imagines the interaction between Dipsychus and the Spirit in terms of a dynamic of seduction. In these early scenes, the Spirit attempts to tempt Dipsychus to lust and wrath. The high stakes of this seduction are heightened by Clough’s strategic allusions to comparable seductions in *Paradise Lost*. Early in the drama, Dipsychus cries out: “Off, off! Oh heaven, depart, depart, depart!/Oh me! the toad sly-sitting at Eve’s ear/Whispered no dream more poisonous than this! (2.34-36). The evocation of Milton’s Satan and the stress that *Paradise Lost* places on the rhetorical talents of Satan in the seduction of Eve adds a linguistic dimension to the struggle between Dipsychus and the Spirit. Indeed, in many ways, the Spirit attempts to seduce
Dipsychus and have him embrace his linguistic values and principles that are
diametrically different from the ones that Dipsychus holds himself. In the following
scene, Dipsychus again alludes to another skilled rhetorician from Milton’s epic:

Why did I ever one brief moment’s space
To this insidious lewdness lend chaste ears,
Or parley with this filthy Belial?
O were it that vile questioner that loves
To thrust his fingers into right and wrong
And before proof knows nothing” (3.22-27)

In the end, however, the drama presents itself not so much as a seduction by the Spirit of
Dipsychus as a clash or battle of two competing views of language. The poem itself
presents the interaction between Dipsychus and the Spirit as a battle, as Houghton notes:

“The Spirit’s jaunty wit and empty profession of faith clash with striking incongruity
against the solemn momentous statements of Dipsychus. The battle could not have been
joined more dramatically” (179). Indeed, I want to read Dipsychus as Clough’s
opportunity to work through two very different visions of the English language.

That Dipsychus is as much about the battle and conflict between two views of
language as it is between some other antagonists such as faith and doubt, duty and
pleasure, individuality and conformity, is apparent even before the opening scene. In the
Prologue that Clough composed for the poem, two positions on language are announced.
The first, held by the poet’s Uncle (and by the Spirit within the poem itself), advocates
good, plain English against the artificiality of English warped to conform to the classical
standards of Greek and Latin:

‘I hope it is in good plain verse’, said my uncle; ‘none of your hurry-
scurry anapests, as you call them, in lines which sober people are reading
for plain heroics. Nothing is more disagreeable than to say a line over
two, or, it may be three or four times, and at last not be sure that there are
not three or four ways of reading, each as good and as much intended as another. (Prologue 1-6)

This avuncular advice also announces an allegiance to a conception of English that emphasizes its plain-spoken, lack of ambiguity—a version of the Wordsworthian real language of men. Indeed, by denigrating the classical anapests with the Germanic and idiomatic compound adjective “hurry-scurry” the uncle announces his linguistic preferences. The Poet responds, however, with a negative defense of the classical aspects of English by pointing to the shortcomings of good, plain English rooted in the idiomatic traditions of its speakers: “Still, there is an instructed ear and an uninstructed. A rude taste for identical recurrences would exact sing-song from ‘Paradise Lost,’ and grumble because “Il Penseroso” doesn’t run like a nursery rhyme” (Prologue 9-12). The Prologue establishes the central linguistic contest of the poem that is to follow, namely the conflict between plain-spoken, idiomatic language of the Spirit and the more self-consciously styled, classical and high literary language of Dipsychus. This clash plays out throughout the poem in a variety of ways.

One such way is in the use of rhyme and meter. For example, in the opening scene, in which the spirit attempts to entice Dipsychus to enjoy the sights, sounds and tastes of a summer evening in St. Mark’s Square, the Miltonic blank verse, punctuated with heavy use of the caesura, of Dipsychus contrasts to the ballad-like rhythms and rhymes of the Spirit:

**Dipsychus**
The scene is different, and the place; the air
Tastes of the nearer North: the people too
Not perfect southern lightness. Wherefore then
Should these old verses come into my mind
I made last year at Naples? O poor fool,
Still nesting on thyself!

...  
The whole great square they fill,  
From the red flaunting streamers on the staffs,  
And that barbaric portal of St. Mark’s,  
To where, unnoticed, at the darker end,  
I sit upon my step. One great gay crowd.  
The Campanile to the silent stars  
Goes up, above—its apex lost in air.  
While these—do what? (1.1-5, 1.43-49)

**Spirit**

Enjoy the minute,  
And the substantial blessing of it;  
Ices, *par exemple*; evening air;  
Company, and this handsome square;  
Some pretty faces here and there;  
Music! Up, up; it isn’t fit  
With beggars here on steps to sit.  
Up—to the café! Take a chair  
And join the wiser idlers there.  
Aye! What a crowd! And what a noise!  
With all these screaming, half-breeched boys.  
*Partout* dogs, boys, and women wander—  
And see, a fellow singing yonder;  
Singing, ye gods, and dancing too—  
Tooraloo, tooraloo, tooraloo, loo;  
Fiddle di, diddle di, diddle did a  
*Figaro sù, Figaro giù*—  
*Figaro quá, Figaro là!*  
How he likes doing it! Ah, ha, ha! (1.50-68)

In this passage and elsewhere the inclusive energies of the Spirit’s language that  
in incorporates snatches of popular opera, well-known foreign phrases, and a colloquial,  
plain diction increasingly appeal to Dipsychus who comes to see the hollow, artificiality  
of his own more classically-grounded English which causes him “To warp the  
unfashioned diction on the lip,/And twist one’s mouth to counterfeit; enforce” (4.37-38).  
Later still, he tentatively commits to adopt the directness and plainness of the spirit:

“Come, we’ll be definite, explicit, plain” (9.40).
The Spirit also continues to assault the language of Dipsychus in ways beyond the example that his own idiom provides. At one point in the poem when Dipsychus lapses into hexameters, the Spirit comments: “Hexameters, by all that’s odious,/Beshod with rhyme to run melodious!” (5.70-71). It is the artificiality of Dipsychus’s language that most bothers the spirit. At various points in the poem he challenges Dipsychus with the charge that his language is false, evasive and dissembling. One such example occurs when Dipsychus and the Spirit discuss the consequences of submitting to sensual desire. In the following exchange, the Spirit grows frustrated with the ways in which Dipsychus’s language veils a direct, unambiguous communication of his thoughts:

_Dipsychus_

No, no, apart from the pressure of the world
And yearning sensibilities of soul,
The swallowed dram entails the drunkard’s curse
Of burning’s ever new; and the coy girl
Turns to the flagrant woman of the street,
Ogling for hirers, horrible to see

_Spirit_

That is the high moral way of talking;
I’m well aware—about street walking (3.90-97)

Here and elsewhere the Spirit’s slangy (“street-walking”) idiomatic directness is juxtaposed against the pietistic, circumlocutions of Dipsychus, accomplished through liberal uses of analogy, metaphor and other literary devices.

Indeed, the Spirit’s indictment of Dipsychus’s language is intertwined with a revisiting and rejection of Tractarian Reserve. It is in _Dipsychus_ that Clough comes to a final position on Reserve as a guiding principle for linguistic practice. Dipsychus’s classically-grounded, highly literary language is, from one angle, consonant with the idea of language as a veil that counterbalances the expression of powerful feelings. At one
point in the poem, the Spirit offers a critique of Dipsychus’s (Clough’s) poem “Easter Day” which opens with a version of the expressive impulse that is the foundation of Tractarian poetics:

Through the great sinful streets of Naples as I past,
With fiercer heat than flamed above my head
My heart was hot within; the fire burnt, and at last
My brain was lightened when my tongue had said,
Christ is not risen…(1-5)

After listening to the poem, the Spirit offers a predictable critique of its mode of expression given his own penchant for directness and plain-speaking in language:

Well, now it’s anything but clear
What is the tone that’s taken here;
What is your logic? What’s your theology?
Is it or is it not neology?
That’s a great fault; you’re this and that,
And here and there, and nothing flat.
Yet writing’s golden word what is it,
But the three syllables, ‘explicit’?
Say, if you cannot help it, less,
But what you do put, put express.
I fear that rule, won’t meet your feeling;
You think half-showing, half-concealing,
Is God’s own method of revealing. (8.16-28)

In the classical, non-native, non-idiomatic qualities of Dipsychus’s language, the Spirit detects something distinctly artificial and challenges Dipsychus about it towards the end of the poem:

I too have my grandes manieres in my way
Could speak high sentiments as well as you,
And out blank-verse you without much ado;
Have my religion also in my kind,
For dreaming unfit, because not designed
What! You know not that I too can be serious
Can speak big words, and use the tone imperious;
Can speak, not honeyedly of love and beauty,
But sternly of a something much like duty?
Oh, do not look surprised? Were never told,
Perhaps, that all that glitters is not gold?
The Devil oft the Holy Scripture uses,
But God can act the Devil when he chooses. (12.52-64)

Although the struggle between Dipsychus and the Spirit is ultimately inconclusive in the sense that the Spirit fails to completely seduce Dipsychus to his linguistic principles, it is evident that from the point of view of language at least, it is the Spirit and his language that is on the offensive, gains an upper hand and seems to command the sympathies if not the allegiance of poet and audience alike. Moreover, in the course of working out this collision between two views of the English language, Clough appears to have come to a recognition that the veiling implied in a commitment to Reserve was something that he was anxious to abandon and so it becomes linked to the classical, high literariness of Dipsychus’s language and subject to the Spirit’s withering attack.

The larger contest between Dipsychus and the Spirit on questions of individuality, conformity, vocation remain unresolved at the end of the poem, but from the point of view of Clough’s interest in language, *Dipsychus*, in the qualified triumph of the Spirit’s linguistic values, reveals Clough moving to a greater embrace of the idiomatic, plain-spoken aspects of English—an embrace that ultimately leads to a qualified elevation of the older Germanic aspects of the language over its later Latin importations. This emerging view would be developed in other venues, most notably the lectures and prose of Clough’s work at University Hall and would inform the neo-Chaucerian impulses in Clough’s last major poem *Mari Magno.*
In the autumn of 1849 Arnold composed “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’,” a poem that critics have often identified as a crucial turning point in his career. This elegy for Étienne Pivert de Senancour is deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, the speaker celebrates the evident power of Senancour’s work: “I turn thy leaves! I feel their breath/Once more upon me roll” (13-14), but he also increasingly realizes that such poetry accomplishes little:

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain,
That Obermann! the world around
So little loves thy strain? (37-40)

As the poem unfolds, the speaker, like Arnold in the years surrounding the middle of the century, comes to realize that his place is in the world—symbolized by the hot and dusty strife of the city—rather than the cool alpine solitudes that Obermann and his poetry inhabit. Critics, not surprisingly given the stark contrasts that Arnold draws in the poem, have tended to see “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” as a significant moment in Arnold’s development. Culler, for example, is adamant regarding the significance of Arnold’s elegy: “This act—the act by which Arnold separated himself from Obermann—was certainly the most important spiritual act of his entire life, for it put behind him all of the turbulence and unrest, the Sturm und Drang, that had troubled him in previous years” (130). Later critics have, for the most part, concurred, identifying the poem as the moment where Arnold makes his break with the Romantic tradition that had so informed his early poetry. Indeed Linda Ray Pratt argues that the poem is “Arnold’s most openly heart-broken farewell to the Romanticism he could not make his
work in his Victorian world of science, democracy and industrialism” (52). It is important to note that Arnold is not offering a valediction to poetry or the poetic vocation, as Pratt seems to suggest elsewhere along with Nicholas Murray, but rather a farewell to the kind of poetry that in seeking solitude and detachment (Arnoldian resignation) withdraws itself too radically or too ineffectively from the world. The elegy, then, is important as an early and necessary stage in Arnold’s redefinition of his poetic aims and methods which culminates in the 1853 “Preface.”

As Arnold’s poetics begin the shift to register a more persistent concern with the efficacy of poetry upon an audience, there is an inevitable recalibration of Arnold’s linguistic values, and “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” is involved in this process. While most critics agree that the poem bids farewell to the Romanticism of Arnold’s youth, it has not been widely noted that it also, subtly, calls into question the specific Tractarian inflection of Romantic aesthetics that had played such an important role in Arnold’s Rugby and Oxford poetry. Senancour seems to share with the Tractarians that same dialectic of expression and restraint that Arnold had attempted to infuse his language with in the preceding years:

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign;
A wounded human spirit turns
Here, on its bed of pain. (21-24)

The choice of “feign” suggests that the speaker of the poem detects a degree of insincerity and as Arnold increasingly sought to communicate more directly and efficaciously with his audience, a language whose hallmarks were those of the Tractarians was inimical to his purposes. The poem inaugurates the first phase of
Arnold’s major poetry (1849-1854) which, in the series of very different poems (in terms of both subject matter and length) that follow, is a record of how Arnold begins to identify and confront a central and potentially debilitating linguistic dilemma raised by the process of his larger poetic re-orientation.

If “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” is Arnold’s valediction to Romanticism (Riede 77)—and as I would argue the specific Tractarian inflection of it which had guided much of Arnold’s linguistic thinking and performance in the preceding years—, then the series of love lyrics, later collected as the “Switzerland” series, composed simultaneously with the Senancour elegy in the autumn of 1849, exposes the dilemma he had, perhaps unwittingly, burdened himself with—“Unfortunately, however, having eliminated the voices of his poetic predecessors…he is still left without an authoritative voice to write any other kind of poetry” (Riede 77). At the center of the “Switzerland” series is a quintet of poems Arnold composed that record the ambivalent and oscillating fortunes of the speaker’s relationship with the enigmatic Marguerite. These love poems, valuable in their own right as contributions to the genre, are particularly noteworthy for the insights they yield about Arnold’s language, which at this moment was in a particularly important state of transition. The Marguerite poems are the indirect occasion through which Arnold begins to intuit the linguistic dilemma that would preoccupy him in both “The Buried Life” and Empedocles on Etna, namely that human language while perhaps aspiring to directness and plainness in communication is plagued by the fact of its referential inadequacy.

The attempts to definitively identify the historical Marguerite have, in the end, provided inconclusive answers, but biography is important in a different sense when
approaching these poems. It is important to remember, I think, that these poems, along with “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann,’” are situated in the almost immediate aftermath of Arnold’s quiet rejection of the Tractarian Reserve which had played such an important role in this thinking about language to this point in his career. The aspiration of love poetry, as many critics have pointed out, is to a sincerity of expression, which, as Riede notes, places significant pressure on a poet’s use of language—“the ultimate challenge to sincere self expression” (163-64). Arnold’s desire for an increased plainness and directness in his language, in contrast to the masking and indirection that characterizes the personas and language of his Rugby and Oxford poems might seem, at first glance, to be well-suited to meet this criterion of sincerity. The poems of the “Switzerland,” however, reveal the inadequacy of language to record and communicate the emotional intensity of the lover’s experiences or to alleviate the solitude and isolation in which the lover finds himself in the course of each poem.

The first poem in the series, “A Memory Picture” records the speaker’s efforts to preserve the freshness of his experiences with Marguerite in his memory. The following stanza is representative of these efforts throughout the poem:

Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
Her soft face, her hair around;
Tied under her archest chin
Mockery ever ambushed in.
Let the fluttering fringes streak
All her pale, sweet-rounded cheek.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick thy tablets, Memory! (25-32)

In the poem’s penultimate stanza, the focus shifts from the speaker’s private act of attempting to fix Marguerite within his own memory to a judgment on the efficacy of the
poem itself as an act of expression. Turning to his friends, who presumably have, like the
reader, overheard this quasi-soliloquy, the speaker asks:

    What, my friends, these feeble lines
    Show, you say, my love declines?
    To paint ill as I have done
    Proves forgetfulness begun. (49-52)

The poem which begins with a concern for memory ends with a concern about language
and its ability or inability to externalize the inner workings of the mind.

This suspicion of a fundamental human linguistic poverty is dramatized in another
poem from the series, “Meeting,” where the reunion of the speaker and his beloved by a
moonlit Swiss lake is cut short before any words can be exchanged by a decidedly more
authoritative voice:

    Again I spring to make my choice;
    Again in tones of ire
    I hear a God’s tremendous voice:
    ‘Be counselled, and retire.’ (9-12)

As Riede points out: “Perhaps more conspicuously than anywhere else in Arnold’s
poetry, the feebleness and inadequacy of human speech is illustrated in the ‘Switzerland’
series by the sudden intrusions of infallible utterance from on high” (167-68). Indeed, the
best the speaker seems capable of in rendering his beloved for the reader with this feeble
and inadequate instrument, here and in other poems from the collection, is in a
fragmented, metonymic description so that Marguerite seems in the end to be little more
than some apparitional amalgam of blue eyes, pale cheek, arch smile and lilac kerchief:

    I know that graceful figure fair,
    That cheek of languid hue;
    I know that soft enkerchiefed hair,
    And those sweet eyes of blue. (5-8)
The speaker may know but he cannot, through language, show Marguerite to his readers in a way that gets beyond the vague and generalized composite image that emerges over the course of the poems.

Nor is Marguerite’s human language any more successful. “Parting” records the failure of Marguerite’s words to detain the speaker from the more powerful voices to be found in nature. At first the speaker is entranced:

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear
Bouyant as morning, and as morning clear?
Say, has some wet bird-haunted lawn
Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?
Or was it from some sun-flecked mountain brook
That the sweet voice its upland clearness took? (18-23)

But he soon turns to the sublime language of nature:

Hark! Fast by the window
The rushing winds go,
To the ice-cumbered gorges,
The vast seas of snow!
There the torrents drive upward
Their rock-strangled hum;
There the avalanche thunders
The hoarse torrent dumb.
--I come, O ye mountains!
Yeast torrents, I come! (25-34)

Culler, has characterized the poems of the Switzerland series as variations on the theme of youthful passion and intensity in love ultimately issuing in suffering, loss and solitude (122-123). The same can be said of the image of language communicated by the poems as a group. Again and again, but with different degrees of emphasis and intensity, the poems offer an image of the inadequacy of language to variously preserve, maintain or communicate the intensity, immediacy and uniqueness of the lover’s experience and emotions.
In the much discussed and celebrated “To Marguerite—Continued,” Arnold offers, perhaps, his most famous image of human isolation:

Yes! In the sea of life enisled
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live alone. (1-4)

The isolation between the lovers, and among all of humanity, is poignantly heightened by the failed and fruitless attempts at communication imaged by the nightingales who, like Hardy’s darkling thrush, bravely pour out their songs across an equally desolate setting:

And in their glens, on starry nights
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes from shore to shore
Across the sounds and channels pour. (9-12)

Arnold’s quintessential image of human isolation is tragically heightened by this detail of a beautiful but we suspect futile attempt at communion, which further speaks to his own growing sense of uneasiness regarding the adequacy of his own medium. The emblematic image of the nightingales faithfully if futilely singing is, however, not Arnold’s final comment on the difficulties of communication in “Switzerland. In “A Farewell” the silence between the embracing lovers speaks to their isolation from each other. But since they clearly desire to communicate, the silence is also indicative of the inadequacy and even failure of language as a communicative instrument: “Locked in each other’s arms we stood;/In tears, with hearts too full to speak” (11-12).

It is true that the story of the relationship between the speaker and Marguerite in “Switzerland” is not told episodically and consecutively through the various lyrics that make up the series. Each lyric, emphasizing different aspects of the affair, encapsulates the entire experience. But, at the level of the Switzerland’s exploration or concern with
language and communication more generally there is, nonetheless, a kind of narrative
development from one lyric to the next. It is a narrative of deterioration which begins
with the speaker’s relatively optimistic if short-lived attempt to record and communicate
his feelings for Marguerite (“A Memory Picture”) to a growing sense of the inadequacy
of his own language and hers (“Meeting” and “Parting”) to a conviction of the futility of
language’s attempts to overcome human isolation (“To Marguerite—Continued”) and
finally to silence (“A Farewell”). By the time he had finished the “Switzerland” series,
Arnold’s faith of the communicative efficacy of language had been dealt a blow that was
particularly unwelcome as he began to formulate a redefined poetics whose very success
would partially rest on rediscovering or recovering the very efficacy which had just been
so radically questioned.

The sense of linguistic inadequacy that emerges from the “Switzerland” series is
also an important concern of “The Buried Life.” Alan Grob has noted that the poem is
connected to the Marguerite series and serves “many readers as a kind of philosophic
coda to it” (150). The poem is, perhaps, best remembered for the extended metaphor
equating the buried life of the genuine or best self with the subterranean stream. Prior to
the introduction of this figure, the first twenty-nine lines of the poem are, on the other
hand, concerned with language and its ability to join lovers together or effect their
alienation from each other. Despite the sense that the verbal battle between the speaker
and his beloved may be pleasant and even playful, the opening of the poem speaks to the
inability of language even to adequately express the complexity and individuality of the
speaker’s feelings:

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o’er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile!
But there’s a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.

... 
Alas! Is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel? (1-15)

Broadening outwards, this opening movement goes on to suggest that not only is there a fundamental deficit in language’s ability to find appropriate and accurate signs for the expression of emotion, but that our awareness of such a deficit and the consequent inevitability of misprision leads to a self-imposed silence that extends beyond the immediate context of the two lovers:

I knew the mass of men concealed
Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved; (16-19)

Even in the latter portion of the poem which is dominated by the conceit of the buried stream, the speaker echoing his own indictment of language from the third line of the poem returns to this fundamental problem with language that was coming to preoccupy Arnold:

But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had the skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpressed. (57-61)

The specific requirement of love poetry for sincerity of expression has expanded to a more philosophical dilemma about language more generally. Riede helpfully
summarizes this state of affairs in his discussion of the poem: “The problem is not in the levity of ‘light words’ but in a general incapacity of language to name emotional states, to communicate feeling” (183). Faced with such a dilemma, the resourceful poet might resort to the indirection of figurative language, but for Arnold at this point, figurative language is closely associated with the aesthetics of Tractarian Reserve that he had recently rejected or, at least was in the process of rejecting. Yet vestiges of Arnold’s interest in Tractarian aesthetic might well lie behind the extended metaphor of the buried stream. This is the position of Park Honan who argues that the poem is infused with a Tractarian ethos:

An even more powerful poem, “The Buried Life,” actually suggests the Tractarian poetics of Newman, Pusey, and Keble—especially in the ambiguity of its imagery. By its “indefiniteness” Pusey once declared at Oxford, a Biblical symbol gains “reality, comprehensiveness, energy…No deep saying was ever uttered which was not capable of a variety of applications and meanings”. (Honan 227)

However, it is more likely the case, as critics have observed in attributing confusion, inaccuracy and sloppiness to the metaphor, that the poem, like “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” registers an attitude of indifference or even suspicion to the possibilities of troping in language so valued by the Tractarian insistence on Reserve. The alternative is equally unpalatable, however, as Riede again points out: “The difficulty is that Arnold is seeking a language purged of metaphorical or connotative, meanings…Such a purely denotative language might describe an object as in itself it really is…but can hardly describe a feeling” (183). “Switzerland” and “The Buried Life” are important moments in Arnold’s evolving attitude to language. As the first poems that Arnold composes following his abandonment of the aesthetic and linguistic attitudes of
his youth, they are valuable as records of Arnold’s distressing recognition of a stark
linguistic reality—language lacks the basic ability to represent and communicate
accurately, let alone sincerely and honestly, individual feelings and ideas. For a poet
who was increasingly beginning to reorient his poetics to emphasize the importance of
poetry’s effect in “animating” and “ennobling” the reader, such a recognition was at the
very least unsettling and disorienting. Arnold would continue to analyze the complexities
of the situation in which he found himself in Empedocles on Etna. Before turning to this
work, it is necessary to contextualize Arnold’s linguistic disillusionment.

The nature of Arnold’s anxiety about his medium at this point in his career has
been characterized by Riede as the sense that “there are simply no words (or signs of any
other kind) to denote the fine shades of individual feeling.” This attitude to language was
in large part articulated and clarified for Arnold by the British philosophical empirical
tradition, most notably the work of John Locke. It is surprising, considering the attention
that has been paid to the eclectic nature of Arnold’s intellectual influences, that the
importance of the British empirical tradition, and Locke in particular, has been but
perfunctorily acknowledged by Arnold’s critics.97

Arnold encountered An Essay concerning Human Understanding and the
philosophy of language contained in it while he was a student at Rugby or as an
undergraduate at Balliol College. Furthermore, he may well have been coming at these
ideas indirectly in two very different ways through the work of Locke’s eighteenth
century admirer Condillac and his harshest critic Victor Cousin, who was an important
arbiter of Victorian attitudes to Locke.

In the third book of An Essay concerning Human Understanding, Locke makes an
important distinction about language that he refers to as the “double use of words.” In many ways the entire discussion or language that occupies Book III is organized around this distinction as it moves from a thorough investigation of how words are used to record thoughts to how they are used in communicating thoughts. To put it another way, the discussion of language gradually shifts from an investigation of the relationship between words and ideas to an analysis of the possibilities and difficulties in the exchange of signs between speakers in acts of communication. In working his way through the arguments on language to be found in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, there is much that Arnold likely found of interest especially in Locke’s discussion of the functional offices language performs in the organizing, abstracting, abbreviating and consolidating of ideas and mental processes. Increasingly, however, the communicative possibilities and problems between speakers come to dominate Locke’s interest in the final chapters of the third book of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, where Locke makes explicit a note of skepticism that has underwritten the entire discussion of language:

> The chief End of Language in Communication being to be understood, Words serve not well that end, neither in civil, nor philosophical Discourse, when any word does not excite in the Hearer, the same Idea it stands for in the Mind of the Speaker. (*Essay* 3.9.4)

Because words are the arbitrary signs for ideas in the mind according to Locke, and every person’s ideas remain to a certain extent particular, the chance for a perfect correspondence of ideas between speaker and auditor through language is negligible—the odds of achieving or even approaching the semantic idealism that is crucial for Locke’s epistemology are impossibly long. Paul Guyer neatly summarizes this dilemma:

> If our words immediately signify only our ideas, and stand for outer objects as well as the ideas of others at best indirectly, then indeed, we can
never be quite sure that another means exactly the same thing we do ourselves, or is saying the same thing about an object that we are, and we had better be careful about hastily assuming he does. But this skeptical consequence is hardly a refutation of Locke’s view: instead, it is exactly the practical lesson that he wishes us to learn from his theoretical inquiry. (121)

Arnold’s exposure to Locke’s *Essay* and the hopeless semantic idealism that issues from its discussion of language certainly adds a linguistic dimension in the persistent theme of human isolation and alienation in Arnold’s poetry in the late 1840s and early 1850s including “Switzerland” and “The Buried Life” discussed above. This linguistic dilemma, so wistfully expressed in the “Switzerland” series, seems to reach a climax in *Empedocles on Etna*.

*Empedocles on Etna* is Arnold’s first major long poem—an achievement that garnered Arnold recognition as a major poet but which also hastened the reformulation of his poetics, which were finally codified in the 1853 “Preface” to the *Poems*. As Arnold’s most sustained analysis of the complexities and debilitations of “this sick disease of modern life,” the poem deploys a dramatic structure in which the voices of Pausanias, Callicles and Empedocles play off each other over the course of three scenes. The poem’s lasting interest, however, issues from two extended excerpts—Empedocles’s long speech to Pausanias on human limitation and, in the poem’s second act, the contrapuntal exchange between Empedocles and Callicles on the former’s condition. These are also the sections of the drama that are of importance to the poem’s exploration of questions related to language. Both of these sections of the poem present variations of the linguistic theme that occupies Arnold in the “Switzerland” poems and “The Buried Life,” while also further elucidating the nature of Arnold’s unease with his medium.
The composition of Empedocles on Etna spans the years between 1849 and 1852 and the arrangement of the drama’s three scenes does not necessarily reflect the order of composition. This extended period of composition is noteworthy as well in that Arnold was likely at work on some aspect of the poem as he wrote the poems just discussed—“Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’,” “Switzerland,” and “The Buried Life.” Thus, the shared linguistic concern of Empedocles on Etna with these poems is perhaps not as surprising as it might initially seem given their very different subject matter and setting.

Just as “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” registers Arnold’s rejection of Tractarian poetics and ideas about language, so to does Empedocles on Etna announce uneasiness with such positions. The medical motif that runs through the poem applies not just to Pausanias, a physician in search of knowledge from Empedocles, but also to Callicles, the young poet who is the only one of the three characters to appear in all three scenes. In the first scene of the poem Pausanias commissions this young, strayed reveler to sing (out of sight) to Empedocles with the hope that Callicles’s poetry will have a medicinal effect in alleviating the mysterious suffering of Empedocles:

He hath his harp and laurel with him still,
But he has laid the use of music by,
And all which might relax his settled gloom.
Yet thou may’st try thy playing, if thou wilt—
But thou must keep unseen; follow us on,
But at a distance! In these solitudes,
In this clear mountain-air, a voice will rise,
Though from afar, distinctly; it may soothe him. (1.82-89)

Indeed, this linking of poetry with medicine is not an isolated occurrence. In “Memorial Verses,” another poem composed during this 1849-1852 period, Arnold laments the loss
of the healing power of Wordsworth’s now-silenced voice. The connection between poetry and medicine is, of course, an ancient one, but its most recent advocates had been the Tractarians, most notably Keble’s *Lectures on Poetry*. The abject failure of Callicles’s songs to soothe Empedocles join Arnold’s comments on Senancour in “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” and the awkwardness of the imagery in “The Buried Life” as part of his quiet rejection of Tractarian ideas, already intimated in the last poems of his Oxford period.

The second scene of *Empedocles on Etna* is dominated by Empedocles’s long speech to Pausanias. Exploring the limitations of the human conditions, the harshness of the world, the indifference of nature and humankind’s creation of malignant and benevolent conceptions of the divine, Empedocles’s speech here seems to fulfill the task that Arnold had set out on his 1850 list of poetic projects: “Empedocles: refusal of limitation by the religious sentiment.” The speech has not been a favorite among readers of Arnold and its style, in particular, has received a great deal of negative comment. This speech, in many ways, is the product of Arnold’s discomfort with figurative language in his post-Tractarian period. In the preceding discussion of “The Buried Life,” Arnold’s awkward construction of the poem’s central conceit was seen as indicative of his desire to employ a language without tropes or connotation. Empedocles’s speech in Scene II of this poem while not completely devoid of figurative language certainly aspires to such a purely denotative state. Its baldness and directness, in this respect, has been noted by Riede who argues: “The aridity of Empedocles’ language, moreover, represents a kind of apotheosis in Arnold’s poetry of what results when language is forced to express no more than the conceptual “truth” of scientific reason” (80). Furthermore, the speech, in
appearing to have little or no effect upon Pausanias, raises the poem’s concern with the failure of language to function with efficacy, and in the final scene of the drama, the sense of language abetting the failure of communication will be apparent. As Riede points out:

[T]he drama is designed to emphasize failed communications in more obvious ways as well. The two central characters, Callicles and Empedocles, never see each other, and at no point does Callicles even hear what Empedocles is saying. Empedocles at the top of the mountain, does hear Callicles’ songs and they seem at first to have the desired effect of soothing him (1.2.483), but in the end they vex him and help drive him to suicide. Indeed, Empedocles’ consistent misunderstanding of Callicles’ songs wonderfully epitomizes the problem of the modern poet who can never make himself properly understood, cannot communicate by poetry. (81)

These abortive exchanges between Callicles and Empedocles are important in another way as well, particularly in Scene III when Callicles sings to Empedocles of Typho and Zeus. In an excellent discussion of Callicles, Paul Zeitlow has pointed out that the poet Callicles consistently “looks outward, away from the self” (243). His language is marked by a concrete quality either through the recording of sensory impressions:

The sun
Is shining on the brilliant mountain crests,
And on the highest pines; but farther down,
Here in the valley, is in shade; the sward
Is dark, and on the stream the mist still hangs;
One sees one’s footprints crushed in the wet grass,
One’s breath curls in the air… (1.9-15)

or in the specificity of the mythic narratives he tells, such as that of Typho:

The lyre’s voice is lovely everywhere;
In the court of Gods, in the city of men,
And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain-glen,
In the still mountain air.
Only to Typho it sounds hatefully;
To Typho only, the rebel o’erthrown,
Through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone
To imbed them in the sea.
Wherefore dost thou groan so loud?
Wherefore do thy nostrils flash,
Through the dark night suddenly,
Typho, such red jets of flame?
Is thy tortured heart still proud?
Is thy fire-scathed arm still rash?
Still alert thy stone-crushed frame?
Doth thy fierce soul still deplore
Thine ancient rout by the Cilician hills,
And that cursed treachery on the Mount of Gore? (3.37-54)

Upon hearing Callicles’ mythic tale Empedocles immediately moves to interpret it deploying the powers of generalization and abstraction:

He fables, yet speaks truth!
The brave, impetuous heart yields everywhere
To the subtle, contriving head;
Great qualities are trodden down,
And littleness united
Is become invincible.
These rumblings are not Typho’s groans, I know!
These angry smoke-bursts
Are not the passionate breath
Of the mountain-crushed, tortured, intractable Titan king—(3.89-98)

While it is true that Empedocles has the tendency to misinterpret the songs of Callicles, what is also worth noting is the fact that what Empedocles does is abstract or generalize from the specificities of Callicles’s songs. Culler notes: “When Callicles sings the myth of Typho, Empedocles…translates the fable into abstract moral terms” (105). The interaction between Callicles and Empedocles, or more specifically Empedocles’s characteristic act of translation, enacts the empirical-epistemological drama of the power of the mind to build an idea through the operations of abstraction upon the specificities of concrete sense experience. This move from the concrete and the specific to the abstract is also a central dimension of an empirical understanding of language. The reciprocal
inability of Empedocles and Callicles to connect with each other is crucial here. The concrete, specifics of Callicles’ language are misinterpreted by Empedocles as he abstracts and generalizes from them. Empedocles’ language, most notably in the long speech from Scene II, is itself characterized by abstraction and generality and results in his inability to articulate exactly what it is that troubles him. Both Callicles and Pausanias comment in the poem that they do not know, in part because Empedocles cannot communicate to them, what the nature of Empedocles’ suffering is. The poem then is the nadir of Arnold’s thinking about language. Having realized the inability of language to represent feelings and ideas with clarity and accuracy, _Empedocles on Etna_ had highlighted the fraught nature of communication and the exacerbation of this situation by the tendency of language away from the concrete and toward the abstract. Without a sense of language and yet increasingly convinced for the need of poetry to speak directly to its audience, Arnold turned back to figurative language, but in a distinctly un-Tractarian fashion to address his difficulties. Once again he turned back to Locke.

In the autumn of 1850, Arnold writes to Clough discussing his immediate reading plans while fulfilling the less than arduous duties required of him as private secretary to Lord Lansdowne. Park Honan cites the letter as evidence that Arnold was reading _An Essay concerning Human Understanding_ along with Spinoza’s _Ethics_ (279), but it would be advantageous to pause and examine the relevant part of this letter:

> I go on to read Locke on the Conduct of the Understanding: my respect for the reason as the rock of refuge to this poor exaggerated, surexcited humanity increases and increases. Locke is a man who has cleared his mind of vain repetitions, though without the positive and vivifying atmosphere of Spinoza about him. (1:176-177)
The phrasing of the letter suggests that Arnold is already familiar to some degree with Lockean philosophy and is preparing to build on this knowledge not by rereading *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* but rather by reading *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*. Arnold’s very words, “Conduct of the Understanding” allude not to *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* but to a much shorter, lesser known yet still popular text by Locke entitled *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*. These two works, while closely related, should not be confused with each other. *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* is a kind of special appendix to the *Essay* and recapitulates some of that text’s main points, but it also introduces some new material and significantly amends some of Locke’s ideas on language from the *Essay* at a moment when Arnold’s own thinking about language was floundering and torn between the forces of his recognition of the referential inadequacy of language and his desire to reassert his poetic vocational ambitions through a more didactic, direct and rhetorically efficacious poetry that would animate readers rather than indirectly awakening vague and indistinct feelings and ideas.

Two chapters from the *Conduct*, “Words” and “Similes,” are germane to Arnold’s developing thoughts on language and the similes of *Sohrab and Rustum*. In *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke contrasts the natural imperfections of words with those conscious and unconscious abuses which increase the opacity of language and the tenuousness of successful communication. The chapter entitled “Words” from the *Conduct* restates what Locke considers to be one of the chief abuses of language in the *Essay*: “They who would advance in knowledge...should lay down this as a fundamental rule, not to take words for things...till they can frame clear and distinct ideas of those
entities...Words are not meant to conceal, but to declare and shew something” (65-66).

This confusion of the relations between words, ideas and things is, for Locke, the prime source of linguistic ambiguity—a result that is clearly at odds with Locke’s repeatedly stated ideal of clarity and precision in the handling of words. Consequently, the guiding principle behind Locke’s catalogue of remedies for the abuses of language is grounded in a desire to reduce such obscurity and sloppiness in the use of words. In the Essay, the most highly criticized abuse of words is rhetoric, partially because it is the most deliberate, and while Locke does admit that rhetoric is effective, his famous attack at the end of Book III of the Essay concludes:

I confess, in Discourses, where we seek rather Pleasure and Delight, than Information and Improvement, such Ornaments...can scarce pass for Faults. But yet, if we would speak of Things as they are, we must allow, that all the Art of Rhetorick, besides Order and Clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of Words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong Ideas, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgement; and so indeed are perfect cheat. (3.10.32)

Such an estimation of rhetorical language hardly endears Locke to poets of any age and obviously poses immediate and practical problems for any poet, including Arnold.

Locke makes a crucial revision, however, in the Conduct’s chapter “Similes,” when he comes to reexamine figurative language: 

For those are always more acceptable in discourse, who have the way to let in their thoughts into other men’s minds with the greatest ease and facility...Nothing contributes so much to this as similes...Well chosen similes, metaphors, and allegories, with method and order, do this the best of anything, because being taken from objects already known and familiar to the understanding, they are conceived of as fast as spoken; and the correspondence being concluded, the thing they are brought to explain and elucidate is thought to be understood too...Figured and metaphorical expressions do well to illustrate more abstruse and unfamiliar ideas which the mind is not yet accustomed to. (73)
Ultimately, Locke’s ideal of a stabilized sign relation and the efficacious and rational exchange of ideas in communicative acts is enough to overcome his earlier dogmatic rejection of tropes as questionable means to such an end. He does, however, place certain important restrictions on figurative language, namely that its adoption be used in the service of some essential functions of language including the “dispatch” of communication and it be used with “method and order.”

Locke’s discussion of the relative value of the simile as a linguistic resource prepares us, I think, to read the second phase of Arnold’s major poetry of the middle years of the century. If “Switzerland,” “The Buried Life,” and *Empedocles on Etna* had circled around a diagnosis of Arnold’s fundamental linguistic dilemma following his gradual abandonment of Tractarian aesthetic and linguistic principles, then poems including “Dover Beach,” “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse,” “The Scholar Gypsy” and most importantly *Sohrab and Rustum* are the record of his struggle to find an adequate response to the problem. It is surely more than a coincidence that similes (and their placement) begin to feature ever-more prominently in Arnold’s poetry following the announcement of his intentions to read Locke’s *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* in October 1850, most notably in “Dover Beach” and “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” which employ similes that seek to elucidate the at times abstruse and unfamiliar ideas (to appropriate Locke’s terminology from the *Conduct*) that the poems turn upon. Locke’s qualifications of “method and order” in the use of metaphors, allegories and similes also offer provocative connections with Arnold’s well known practice of concluding a poem with a simile, most famously in “The Scholar Gypsy.” However, it is also Locke’s begrudging acknowledgment that the effective employment of the simile can be of use in
the service of inter-subjective communication, whether that communicative act is
conceived of as occurring between two speakers or between poet and reader that will lead
us to the similes of *Sohrab and Rustum*, which are not merely Homeric ornamentation but
are at least partially indebted to the view of the trope that Arnold encountered in *Of the
Conduct of the Understanding*.

“Dover Beach” is perhaps Arnold’s greatest poem and certainly one of the major
lyric statements of Victorian poetry. Accordingly it has received voluminous comment,
including much comment on the language of the poem. However, when “Dover Beach”
is approached in the context of Arnold’s extended meditation, inspired by his excursions
in Lockean linguistic philosophy, on the nature of language as a communicative
instrument and the problems it raises as a communicative instrument, further comment
seems warranted. I think there are several important insights that the poem yields when it
is approached from this perspective. The poem opens with a much commented upon
description of the land and seascape as seen from the speaker’s position at the hotel
window

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; -on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. (1-6)

Critics have discussed the language’s allusions to Wordsworth and the comparison
between the tranquility that permeates the description compared to the nightmarish
anarchy of the closing images. What is noteworthy also is that the opening description
introduces one of two modes of language present in the poem. The short declarative
sentences and clauses vividly and economically evoke the scene with a realistic precision.
There is an understated denotative quality to the language that suggests an advancement on the commitment to denotation that dominated Empedocles to Pausanias composed during these same years. In the opening lines, words are a perfectly adequate instrument to convey descriptions of an external landscape. This mode of language, however, gives way in the second half of the poem as it is no longer suitable or adequate for Arnold’s purpose. The real interest of “Dover Beach” like any other Greater Romantic Lyric is, of course, not the external topography that opens the poem, but the larger abstract thematic issues that dominate the latter half of the poem—in this case the Victorian crisis of dealing with the diminishment or absence of religious faith in the world, its existential consequences and the fragile potential of human love to serve as an anodyne to such a situation. In building a poem around such a complex set of ideas, Arnold simultaneously tasked himself with finding an adequate and clear means of expression. Fresh off his most recent exposure to Locke on similes, he chooses to eschew the denotative language of the opening in favor of a series of similes, metaphors and analogy that have a sort of Matryoshka doll-effect:

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world. (21-28)

Linda Ray Pratt indicts this part of the poem: “Then in one of the most awkward and obscure images in his poetry, Arnold metamorphizes his metaphor” (82). This is, in a sense, certainly true, but as a tentative attempt to apply the insights of Locke on the
similes, the very complexity and at times near incomprehensibility of the nested similes and metaphors speak to a kind of provisional experimentation on Arnold’s part as he hesitatingly and guardedly adopts the simile in the spirit of Locke’s *Conduct* to trace the abstruseness of the larger thematic concerns of the poem for the reader. “Dover Beach” is in many ways a poem about language in that it is about the making of metaphors in the service of human communication and the necessarily incomplete and inadequate nature of such an activity. The two modes of language play off each other in highlighting the poem’s contribution to Arnold’s extended meditation on language—suggesting both the dilemma and the roots of the solution that he would continue to work out in succeeding poems.

Another poem that emerges from Arnold’s Continental honeymoon, “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” parallels “Dover Beach” in the experimental quality of its deployment of tropes in the aftermath of Arnold’s exposure to Locke’s counsel in the *Conduct*. Like “Dover Beach,” “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” is Arnold’s extended meditation on the loss of religious faith amidst the tumult of the modern world and was occasioned by a honeymoon visit that he made to the monastery in September 1852. The speaker’s feeling of marginalization is established by its contrast to the comforts and/or apparent certainties of orthodox religious faith, work and action, and emotional expressiveness. The poem’s most famous lines—“Wandering between two worlds, one dead,/The other powerless to be born,” (91-92)—suggest, the speaker’s understands the experience of modernity as a kind of exile and the fact that he resorts to the simile here to communicate speaks to the sense of Arnold’s feelings of exile from his own medium. Cut off from anything in the language that might adequately and
accurately express his understanding of his condition, the speaker resorts to figurative language, most memorably in one of the earlier examples of Arnold’s well-known practice of concluding a poem with a simile, which may well be his attempt to incorporate the Lockean caveat of “order and method” to his adoption of the figure:

We are like children rear’d in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall
Forgotten in a forest-glade
And secret from the eyes of all;
Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,
Their abbey, and its close of graves.
But where the road runs near the stream,
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun’s beam—
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war.
And through the woods, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some old forest-lodge at morn;
Gay dames are there in sylvan green,
Laughter and cries—those notes between!
The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;
That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm’d surprise.
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!
O children, what do ye reply?—
‘Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry
And call us? but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow
Whose bent was taken long ago.
‘Long since we pace this shadow’d nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine,
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar’s depth divine;
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.
‘Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground
How should we flower in foreign air?
Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease!
And leave our desert to its peace!’ (169-210)

The sheer length and diffuseness of the simile perhaps undermines its efforts to express with any degree of precision Arnold’s abstruse understanding of the modern condition, but the strategic placement at the end of the poem is, of course, reminiscent of another, more tightly regulated and ultimately more effective deployment of the simile in “The Scholar Gypsy.”

Along with “Dover Beach,” “The Scholar Gypsy” has staked its claim as Arnold’s most accomplished poetic achievement. Arnold’s reading of Glanvill’s *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) had introduced him to the figure of the Scholar Gypsy—a poor Oxford undergraduate who had forsaken town and gown to wander with a local band of gypsies in the hopes of learning their secret knowledge. In the first movement of the poem the speaker, evoking the conventions of the pastoral, embarks on a quest to find the Scholar Gypsy who despite his self-imposed outsider status is a ubiquitous presence in the Oxfordshire and Berkshire landscape, appearing in various locales in all seasons. Abandoning the pastoral mode, the latter half of the poem modulates into an elegy in which the Scholar Gypsy becomes a consolatory symbol of spiritual and imaginative health and wholeness in the midst of Arnold’s most extended and corrosive poetic diagnosis of the doubt, fluctuation, pain and self-division that are the hallmarks of a diseased modernity.

The aspect of “The Scholar Gypsy” that has generated a virtual cottage industry within Arnold criticism is the concluding simile.¹⁰² The speaker’s admonition to the
Scholar Gypsy to flee the crippling encroachments of modern life is compared with the Tyrian trader who flees the contaminating approaches of the merry Grecian coaster:

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
--As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Aegean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes and Chian wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine—
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,
The young light-hearted masters of the waves—
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O’er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales. (231-250)

While critics have debated the effectiveness of the simile, particularly its relationship to the main body of the poem, once again the simile should also be understood in the context of Arnold’s engagement with Locke’s qualified advocacy of the trope in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*. When read in conjunction with “Dover Beach” and “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse,” the Tyrian reader simile can be seen as a progression in Arnold’s use of the figure—achieving greater clarity in comparison to the similes of “Dover Beach” and greater conciseness compared to the concluding simile of “Stanzas from the Grade Chartreuse.” The similes of all three poems are in turn advancements from the central conceit of “The Buried Life” as Arnold explores the range and possibilities of the figure in his poetry.
There is admittedly something jarring about rendering the judgment that Arnold’s three most celebrated poetic achievements are in a certain sense provisional and experimental—preludes to a poem such as *Sohrab and Rustum*. But this is indeed the case if we think of the poems in terms of their exploration of the simile in the aftermath of Arnold’s reading of Locke’s *Conduct*. As Arnold’s revised poetics come into focus in the latter parts of 1852 and the first half of 1853, the insights about language garnered from Locke come to play a crucial role in *Sohrab and Rustum*, the poem he used to work out the ideas later codified in the 1853 “Preface” to the *Poems*.

Arnold’s interests begin to shift from exposing and exploring to solving some of the challenges and obstacles of inter-subjective communication in a didactic poetry that, by employing an accessible language that is concerned with audience, will be, to invoke the terms of John Stuart Mill, not overheard but rather in the nature of oratory.\(^{103}\) As Arnold’s thoughts about what poetry should do for readers and how it should do it change, there is a parallel and necessary permutation within his conception of language. Locke’s revised view of language from the *Conduct* has much to contribute to this permutation. Locke’s revived possibilities for language, and particularly similes as a way to reduce the vagaries of communication, informs Arnold’s own casting about for language strategies in service of a newly emerging poetics. “Switzerland,” “The Buried Life” and *Empedocles on Etna* had demonstrated how “it is impossible to say exactly what one means, and to be precisely understood” (Riede 89), but Locke’s *Conduct* had offered a strategy (pursued in “Dover Beach,” “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” and “The Scholar Gypsy), via the simile, to reduce the imprecision in the use of words. The word “precisely” is of critical importance here. Communicative efficacy comes to reside
in accuracy and precision as Arnold, undoubtedly influenced by the emerging ascendency of scientific discourse in Victorian England, looks for more uniform and limited relationship between signifier and signified that will distinguish his work from what he perceived to be the vague, affective emotionalism of his Romantic predecessors and especially a great many of his Victorian contemporaries as well as his earlier Tractarian inflected work. It is, then, somewhat fortuitous that at a moment when Arnold was deeply concerned about employing language more accurately and precisely that he finds a seemingly unlikely ally through his return to John Locke’s philosophy of language, but in this case the ideas expressed in Of the Conduct of the Understanding.

Perhaps the most interesting and immediate evidence of Arnold’s evolving attitude to his medium is revealed by examining the linguistic self-reflexivity of Sohrab and Rustum to complement what has already been said in this vein about Empedocles on Etna. Both poems are examples of failed communication although the attitude that Sohrab and Rustum takes to language is different in tone, I think, than its predecessor. The poem is filled with verbal parleying, challenges, boasts, orders, decrees and rumors that ultimately bring Sohrab and Rustum to the battlefield. The actual physical trial between Sohrab and Rustum is bracketed by lengthy verbal exchanges and the physical combat is frequently punctuated with traded insults and taunts, themselves often about words and language such as Rustum’s sneer to Sohrab: “Curled minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words” (458). In many respects, the poem’s martiality is as much verbal in its war of words as it is physical in its clash between the Tartar and Persian warriors. Paradoxically, the poem’s dramatization of the efficacy of language is simultaneously balanced by its dramatization of the failure of speakers to control or realize the
implications and effects of the words they employ. The tragedy of *Sohrab and Rustum*, such as it is, is generated by a failure of language, namely the mistaken rumors which lead Rustum to believe he is without a son as well as the successive moments of non-recognition throughout the poem’s central incident. Yet, by eschewing the dramatic form for *Sohrab and Rustum*, Arnold also creates a very different situation from *Empedocles on Etna*. Empedocles and Callicles are physically separated and the poem holds Empedocles’ arid, scientific, logical language in contrast to the lyrical and mythical language of Callicles. In *Sohrab and Rustum*, on the other hand, the two central characters meet face to face and speak to each other oratorically—gone is Callicles’ poetry, overheard by Empedocles—and still misinterpret each other with disastrous consequences. All this serves to foreground the growing intensity of Arnold’s interest in the dynamics of communication propelled by a new poetic creed and facilitated by Arnold’s various reading engagements in Locke’s language philosophy.

The similes of *Sohrab and Rustum* are the site in the poem where the Lockean insights of the *Conduct* are applied and adapted in poetic practice. Moments after his realization that he has mortally wounded his son, Rustum’s suicide attempt is stayed by Sohrab who, as the narrator of the poem notes: “saw his thought.” This moment is, I think, emblematic of Arnold’s idealized, and perhaps utopian, reader response. In fact, a few years earlier, Arnold had complained to his future wife Frances Lucy Wightman in the poem “Calais Sands” that he could only “guess thy thoughts.” Locke suggests in the *Conduct* that similes become the most effective vehicles for the transmission of new and unfamiliar thoughts, and as Arnold seeks to write a poetry that will acculturate his readers
to the nobility and enduring value to be found in the classics, the similes of *Sohrab and Rustum* become a way of investing the language of the poem with accuracy and precision at key moments in that momentous and, for Arnold, vitally important task.

Perhaps the most famous simile in the poem, the Victorian lady simile, makes this strategy most evident. Sohrab initially appears, unknown, before his father, and Rustum’s internal reaction is documented through an epic simile:

> As some rich woman, on winter’s morn,  
> Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
> Who with numb blackened fingers makes her fire—  
> At cock-crow, on a starlit winter’s morn,  
> When the frost flowers the whitened window-panes—  
> And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
> Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed  
> The unknown adventurous youth... (ll. 302-309)

The mental state that is externalized in the simile is curiosity. For Arnold, however, that word is far too vague and ambiguous. Everyone’s (especially the reader’s) idea signified by the word “curiosity” is particular to a certain extent. As Amrollah Abjadian has shown, there are several important similes in *Sohrab and Rustum* and they “are not only active similes, underlying and mingling with the action of the poem, but they also externalize and objectify the internal states of the character” (414). Arnold has a very specific type of curiosity in mind that he is attempting to communicate to the reader, and the fact that this simile is not orientalized is important. The images of the trope belong more to mid-Victorian England than ancient Persia. The simile dramatizes an encounter between the middle and lower classes and adds a specific note of social disparity to Rustum’s curiosity. A curiosity, furthermore, that is itself intriguingly mixed with the vexed issues, anxieties and ambivalences that congregate around the Victorian notion of
If Arnold were to eliminate the simile, however, and simply state that Rustum views Sohrab with condescending curiosity (or some other adjective-noun combination), the reader would be more arrested by such words than the simile. The figure not only externalizes the mental state, but it points to the fine shading and coloring of that emotion which an adjective and noun might not be able to communicate with ease, accuracy and even adequacy. The simile is an attempt to overcome the dilemma which the poet confronts, armed with the imperfect medium of language which struggles to communicate, accurately and effectively, “The nameless feelings that course through our breast.” It is a means to present the particularities of that specific idea that Arnold wants to show the reader. Paradoxically, then, the simile, which calls attention to itself in various ways (its epic-ness, allusiveness etc.), also seeks to alleviate the obtrusiveness caused by vague words and ease difficulties in conveying to the reader an idea that may not in itself be easily expressible or even nameable. While Arnold is certainly not the first to use a simile in this way, his use of the simile in such a way in the aftermath of his exposure to *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* and his exploitation of the elaborateness inherent in the epic simile as opposed to its more humble relation, the simple simile, suggest that Arnold is interested in *Sohrab and Rustum* in using the epic simile to invest his language at crucial moments in the text with the precision and accuracy in delineating the mental states of his various characters so that the didactic force of the tragic fragment will be both more obvious and effective to Arnold’s imagined audience.

In suggesting that the similes should be read as the results of Arnold’s adoption of Lockean ideas on language in the service of an evolving poetics, I am at least partially
calling into question the traditional ways that the similes, and by extension Sohrab and Rustum, have been read. The majority of readers have sought to read the poem in concert with the 1853 “Preface” to the Poems. Taking their cue from the 1853 “Preface,” which received as much if not more comment than the poem itself, the initial focus of most of the reviewers concerned the poem’s use of classical subject matter and style. Most critics disliked Arnold’s insistence on the classics and charged both poem and poet with impiety, as John Duke Coleridge did in a review which angered many of Arnold’s friends; or elitism, as in Coventry Patmore’s review. Critics that have written specifically on the similes of the poem have also judged the similes according to the terms laid out by Arnold’s “Preface.” The aesthetic inadequacies of Sohrab and Rustum are certainly discernible, but they are often exaggerated by the tendency to hold the poem to the letter of the precepts of the “Preface.” Yet the tendency to turn to the “Preface” in this manner overdetermines, I think, the relationship between the poem and this problematic essay.

The 1853 “Preface” to Arnold’s Poems is certainly one of the most commented on and debated prose essays in Arnold’s collected works and it is also one of his most frustrating pieces, filled with contradictions, inconsistencies, untenable positions and a variegated intellectual indebtedness to modern and ancient European literature and literary theory. By replacing Empedocles on Etna with Sohrab and Rustum Arnold was, inevitably, going to draw the response that the poem and “Preface” were interconnected. To some extent they are, but it is interesting how often it is assumed that Arnold necessarily wanted the two pieces to be so closely linked—the relationship seems to me to be more fluid than is generally acknowledged. Critics, beginning with the poem’s first
reviewers, have assumed a more intimate relationship between Sohrab and Rustum and the 1853 “Preface” than Arnold would likely accept. Arnold wrote the 1853 “Preface” after he had composed Sohrab and Rustum. His initial hopes for the poem were high and, writing to his mother in the midst of composition of the poem, he noted with pleasure and anticipation that:

All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done—and that it will be generally liked—though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it—a rare thing with me, and, as I think, a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others. (1:266)

However, as he composed the “Preface” in the second half of 1853, his letters in the late summer of that year point to an interesting qualification of his earlier halcyon descriptions of the poem in letters to friends and family such as the one to his mother cited above. He reveals to Clough after writing out the poem for the printer’s fair copy: “I have written out my Sohrab & Rustum and like it less” (1:270). In many ways Arnold remained happy with the poem but his unease with it reveals that his thinking was already moving in new ways and the first real outlet for this would be the “Preface.” Rather than demanding an unswerving fidelity of “Preface” to poem simply because they appear in print together and Sohrab and Rustum seems to replace Empedocles on Etna, we might consider the possibility that Sohrab and Rustum had to be written first in order for Arnold to write the “Preface” to which it has been linked. Those looking for greater correspondence between the dictates of the Preface and an Arnoldian poetic performance would be advised to look forward in Arnold’s career to Balder Dead and Merope. Indeed nowhere in the Preface does Arnold suggest that Sohrab and Rustum is the “Exhibit A”
of a new poetics—he only repeatedly stresses that *Empedocles on Etna* certainly falls short (Culler 205). By considering the relationship between *Sohrab and Rustum* and the Preface as much less determined than is usually assumed, the palimpsestic nature of the similes emerges more clearly. The similes, taken as a group and in some cases individually, are palimpsestic in the sense that I read the key similes in the poem as the culmination and flowering of Arnold’s indebtedness to Locke. At the same time, other similes come to anticipate some of the requirements outlined in the 1853 “Preface” such as the need for accurate construction even as they actually hinder others including Arnold’s repeated call in the “Preface” for the subordination of expression. The poem is transitional—situated at a great remove from *Empedocles on Etna* but not achieving the polish of *Balder Dead*—a poem that Arnold ranked even more highly than *Sohrab and Rustum* for a time after he had composed it. Rather than reading the similes by looking forward to the “Preface,” it is instructive to read them as emerging from Arnold’s reading in Locke’s philosophy of language as well as the specific occasion for the poem.

In this sense, the general spirit rather than the specific precepts of the “Preface” is useful. The “Preface” is written by a poet for poets and thus despite its appearance in a volume for the general public, Arnold does have a specific subsidiary audience in mind. As much is indicated in the text’s repeated insistence on action and the proper choice of subject matter, but Arnold also shares Aristotle’s concern in the affective power of literature, finally making explicit the gradual shift in Arnold’s poetry already mentioned at various points earlier. Despite the references to Schiller and Goethe that bracket the essay, the “Preface,” following in the tradition of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, seeks to align mimetic and rhetorical theoretical orientations to combat the excesses of the dominant
expressivist tendencies of the early Victorian period. So the “Preface” is for poets but it is about the kinds of effects literature can and should have on readers. The animation and ennoblement of the readers was to be accomplished, in Arnold’s view, through the representation and effective communication of a reformulated subjectivity. A frequent charge against the “Preface” and the poems that surround it, is that they constitute a turn away from the subjective emphasis of Arnold’s early poetry to the more objective stance embodied in the narrative and dramatic forms of Sohrab and Rustum, Balder Dead and Merope. Lionel Trilling characterized the “Preface” as a “renunciation of subjectivity” (150), but it is not so much that the Preface and especially preceding poems such as Sohrab and Rustum seek to renounce subjectivity as they seek to redefine it; to delineate it more precisely; to communicate it more clearly and in broader if somewhat cruder strokes for a perceived larger audience. If the “Preface” and Sohrab and Rustum are Arnold’s response to the morbid introspection of Empedocles on Etna, then Arnold was not quite ready to abandon subjective explorations in his poems, especially in his first major effort after Empedocles, Sohrab and Rustum.

He was however quite ready to forgo “the modern English habit (too much encouraged by Wordsworth) of using poetry as a channel for thinking aloud instead of making anything” (1:141). This was the approach of the Spasmodic poets and, as Sidney Coulling and others have pointed out, Arnold was responding in the Preface to this specific literary phenomenon. The Spasmodics as the early Victorian disciples of the later Romantics had extended and expanded a Romantic exploration of the self and exercised, as J.H. Buckley notes, an impressive influence over early Victorian taste. It was the extended, self-absorbed, solipsistic work of long forgotten names such as Phillip
James Bailey and Alexander Smith and even his own earlier work including *Empedocles on Etna* that Arnold is dogmatically attacking in the Preface. So far from renouncing subjectivity in the 1853 “Preface,” Arnold’s interests have shifted to reformulating, perhaps simplifying it so it can be communicated with precision and accuracy in order to serve a more effectively didactic social function. An emerging neo-classical poetics, then, would be well served by an attitude to language that had grown increasingly neo-classical; regarding language as the vehicle for pre-existing thoughts to be used in the service of accurately and exhaustively elucidating a reformulated subjectivity which sacrificed the complexity of Romantic and nebulosity of Spasmodic subjectivism but also avoided their solipsistic and perceived socially evasive tendencies as well. The first place these ideas are raised, explored and tentatively worked out is in *Sohrab and Rustum*. This interest in a reformulated subjectivity and the Preface’s concurrent concerns with the effects of poetry on audiences works in concert with Arnold’s conception of language and places a great deal of pressure on that language and its communicative efficacy which had been increasingly preoccupying Arnold as Locke’s influence grew from his exposure to *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* to *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*. The similes have both a general and a specific local dimension. They are Arnold’s attempts to incorporate the Lockean insights on language he had encountered in the *Conduct* to give his language greater precision and accuracy at a time when he felt this was a necessary component for his new poetics.

At the same time the similes are not simply direct importations of Locke’s ideas into Arnold’s poetic practice. In this particular case the precision and accuracy that Locke’s insights offer Arnold through the simile are brought into contact with Arnold’s
gradually clarifying desire to present a reformulated subjectivity. Thus, the similes are evidence of a general intellectual development in Arnold’s thinking on language (his complicated indebtedness to Locke) brought to bear on a specific poetic issue (the reformulated representation of subjectivity that is a crucial component of Arnold’s poetic transition, finally codified in the “Preface”). It was not enough for Arnold to lament with Tennyson “Vague words! But ah how hard to frame/In matter-moulded forms of speech” (94.45-46) or proclaim as Tennyson did that his words enfolded an emotion or state of mind that could be “given in outline and no more.” (5.9-12). For Arnold the effort had to be made to be more precise in tracing out the thoughts and ideas that were for him the basis of modern poetry. Otherwise his poetry would simply express that “congestion of the brain” he so frequently complained about and which might be a fitting label for the excesses of the Spasmodic movement. The problem then becomes for Arnold, to use the words of Locke from Of the Conduct of the Understanding, “to know the right way to lay our thoughts before others with advantage and clearness.” The problem with a Spasmodic poem such as Tennyson’s Maud is not that the sensibility it represented was mad but rather that the means by which it was represented rendered it mud. The success of the Spasmodics gave new impetus to their opponents, including Arnold, who discerned a need for accuracy and precision in communication—a direction that Arnold’s poetry was already moving in as I have previously suggested and which may have accelerated this general development.

The similes are Arnold’s attempt to put into practice the advice on the trope he encountered in Of the Conduct of the Understanding to assist in reworking his medium in a way more amenable to the new poetic creed that was taking shape and which demanded
a more precise, accurate use of words to effect the kind of didacticism that Arnold
increasingly saw as the object of poetry in the modern age—particularly in the light of the
praise bestowed upon such garish, Spasmodic poems as *Festus* or *A Life Drama*. That
the similes achieve such ends, if only incompletely, requires a closer look at some
individual examples from *Sohrab and Rustum*.

Arnold himself seems to have been aware that the similes of the poem held the
potential to be jarring and distracting, and he defended their quantity in a letter to J.D.
Coleridge: “Homer sows his similes very thick at times” (1:279). Two of the more
memorable similes in *Sohrab and Rustum* concern the assembled hosts of Tartar and
Persian troops, and the feelings of the two armies when Peran-Wisa makes known
Sohrab’s offers of a single combat:

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved
But as a troop of pedlars from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow;
Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch’d throats with sugar’d mullberries—
In single file they move and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o’erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear. (ll. 154-169)

The contiguity of the similes, in this case, raises the issue of other employments of the
trope, alluded to above, and while I would not deny the point that the similes can be
considered as a kind of intratextual network that employs a condensed array of symbolic
images or that they contribute to the structural symmetry of the text, I would suggest that the similes are primarily Lockean. The epic similes make visible and concrete what is inevitably invisible and abstract. This might be seen as a questionable tactic since J. Douglas Kneale, arguing in a different context about Wordsworth, has pointed out that the epic simile presents problems that threaten its intended clarifying and instructional effectiveness:

> The conventional “as...such” or “as...so” structure, elaborated over several lines, clearly demarcates the splitting of the figure into its constituent parts of vehicle and tenor respectively, and it distinguishes between the subordinate “as” and the dominant “such.” But here is the paradox of the epic simile: while the vehicle is meant to be in service of the tenor—in other words, while the poet temporarily turns from the subject in order to trope it through comparison with something else—the comparison itself becomes foregrounded, amplified, elaborated, its ironies sounded, its potential for foreshadowing explored. (86)

In contrast, Arnold’s conception of the figure is rooted in Locke’s estimation of the trope as a potential agent of clarification in communication. The usurpation of the tenor by the vehicle that is the hallmark of all epic similes and which might lead to the very obfuscation that Arnold is trying to avoid is elided as Arnold uses the vehicle to specifically define rather than elaborate on a clearly understood tenor. The “epic” status of the similes allows Arnold to exploit all the resources of narrative and imagery to present the fine subtleties of the ideas and subjectivities he wishes to represent with vividness and concrete precision in what is an almost taxonomic manner. In the *Conduct* Locke does not classify the various types of figures, but I think that Arnold’s preference for the simile over metaphor and allegory as a technique for linguistic precision is in line with a recent estimation of the trope:

> Unlike metaphor which requires the reader to the work of constructing a
logic of categories and analogies, a smile states explicitly that two terms are comparable and often presents the basis for that comparison. ‘Her lips are red as wine’ does not leave the reader with the work that a metaphor requires. The simile is therefore in general a more controlled figure than metaphor producing less excess of meaning. (McLaughlin 83)

It is precisely this excess of meaning that Arnold is attempting to combat with a new attitude to language that focuses on precision and accuracy. The epic simile is specific and controlled and has a specific appeal to the poet as facilitator, and, of course, in the case of *Sohrab and Rustum* it fits in especially well with the epic posturing of the poem.

The same process is at work later as Rustum approaches the front of the Persian army. The narrator attempts to elucidate the emotions felt by the Persian troops:

> And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
> Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on the shore,
> By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
> Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
> Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
> Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
> So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. (285-90)

The same attempts to convey the particularities and fine shading of the emotions and feelings are evident. The mental state delineated is easily identified in a general sense as relief, but again Arnold is interested in communicating a precise shade of that relief in the simile. The personal narrative that the simile depicts adds an exactness and a precise dimension to the general mental state which otherwise might be interpreted in any variety of ways (and in a sense still is, but to a lesser degree). This is further accomplished by the domestic elements in the simile which transfer the reader’s thoughts from the alienating world of the battlefield to the familiar atmosphere of the family. The Persian setting of such a scene undermines its complete familiarization but Arnold also admitted
in a letter that the simile originally lacked such a specific locale, further confirming the palimpsestic nature of the use of the figures in this poem. We should also remember that Locke argues in the *Conduct* that part of a simile’s effectiveness is its use of the familiar and the known (73). Arnold’s domestication of the subject matter might be read as an attempt to achieve such familiarity.

The use of the epic simile as a way of investing language with the accuracy and precision necessitated, as it is here in the specific instance of *Sohrab and Rustum*, for a particular delineation of subjectivity is, however, subject to all sorts of interesting tensions which emerge most clearly if one examines one of the most elaborate of the similes in the poem. As Rustum begins to have uneasy doubts mixed with a kind of anger, the emotion is described in a lengthy epic simile:

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow’d her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting and a great way off descries
His huddling youth left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with an arrow in her side,
In some far off stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers–never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by–
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not. (556-575)

In this simile the concurrent use of the trope as part of an intratextual network to
reinforce the “accurate construction” of the poem and the various intertextual echoes to Milton and Shelley make themselves most obvious. But, in ways similar to the other similes that have been discussed, Arnold is attempting to delineate a particular kind of tragic ignorance. This simile and the others are witness to the referential inadequacy of language while at the same time they attempt to delineate an idea with precision or clarity. The similes attempt to efface the ambiguity from an unnamed, vague or shadowy signifier by a multiplication of signifiers via the form of the epic simile. Arnold confronts the referential adequacy of his medium in the similes, but this confrontation is much more than the rather ubiquitous poetic topos. It is rooted in Arnold’s interest in investing his language with accuracy and precision through the simile. A constructive contrast can be seen later in the Victorian era when Thomas Hardy would confront the same problem. But while Hardy resorts to the historical insights provided by the new philology in England, Arnold turns to philosophy. Confronted with a poverty in language, Arnold responds in the similes with gestures of linguistic abundance and plenitude. Faced with the lack of a precise word, Arnold compensates with an extended wealth of words—a dubious strategy at best.

George Eliot, echoing the ambivalence of Lewes and others, may well have been thinking of this effect of the similes when she described Arnold’s poetry in an unsigned review for the *Westminster Review* 1855: “The thought is always refined and unhackneyed, sometimes new and sublime, but he seems not to have found the winged word which carries the thought at once to the mind of the reader” (129-30). Arnold, perhaps unconsciously, realizing that such a “winged word” did not exist was willing to sacrifice communicative dispatch for a perceived semantic accuracy, precision, and
clarity. Further, it was precisely the hackneyed, vaguely cliched thoughts and
dilettantism of the Spasmodics that Arnold was seeking to distance himself from,
begining with *Sohrab and Rustum.* In the end, however, we share Eliot’s discomfort as
the similes never quite seem to work. I think this is in part because Arnold asks them to
do too much. While my focus here has been on the ways that the similes contribute to
Arnold’s evolving conception of language at a time when his poetics demanded a
renewed medium, I have gestured, in passing, to some of the ways that critics have seen
the similes operating in *Sohrab and Rustum.* The division of critical opinion about the
similes of the poem suggests that they must be read as palimpsests, to which I have added
yet another philosophical/linguistic layer. The similes ultimately are not as successful in
an overall sense because the various layers of the palimpsest clash too readily and
obviously with each other. In being forced to bear structural, intertextual and mimetic
responsibilities (often within a single simile) they can be easily dismissed when the focus
is on one of these functions alone. The similes buckle under the weight of too many
responsibilities. Despite the fact that they increase the amount of language in the poem,
they are in a curious way an ultimate attempt in the subordination of expression by
gesturing to a word that does not exist as Arnold struggles with this problem of
referential inadequacy. The buried life may well be inaccessible but the similes trace in
outline for an audience that is perceived in need of animation and ennoblement what is
there and do so with a kind of authoritative and scientific precision.

The best discussions of Arnold’s language, applying the insights of post-
structuralism, have effectively demonstrated the inconsistencies, inadequacies, and
ambivalence in Arnold’s conceptions of language and his various linguistic performances
Neither Locke nor Arnold ever asserts that a perfectly transparent, adequate, precise and effective medium is attainable and David Riede is certainly right when he argues that “Arnold’s ideal of a transparent language is, of course, simply impossible to attain or even approach” (97). Yet, in adopting Locke’s qualified endorsement of the simile as a strategy for transparency, Arnold did try to approach it. While “doubt,” “distrust,” and even “disillusionment” remain the watchwords for characterizing Arnold’s attitude to language, examining the way in which Arnold struggles with the communicative efficacy and referential inadequacy of his language as he does through the first phase of diagnosis (“Switzerland,” “The Buried Life,” and *Empedocles on Etna*) to a phase of experimentation (“Dover Beach,” “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” and “The Scholar Gypsy”) to the attempted solution in the similes of *Sohrab and Rustum* is of particular importance. It reveals, among other things, that Arnold’s distrust of his medium was not so debilitating as to drive him to a despairing passivity about his use of words and did not preclude him from casting about for potential solutions to particular linguistic problems such as the ones he confronts in *Sohrab and Rustum*.

And yet Arnold could never escape his sense that he had confronted but failed to adequately solve this fundamental problem of language. Indeed he seems to have been haunted by it. Arnold’s final major poem composed in the spirit of the 1853 Preface was his attempt at drama in the form of *Merope*. *Merope* has been subjected to critical derision ever since its appearance with virtually no one choosing to offer a defense of it, with the exception of Arnold himself, and even then rather half-heartedly. It is not my intention to enter into an extended discussion of the play since it really is something of a
dead end in Arnold’s poetry and the elegies of the late 1850s and beyond really represent a new and final direction in Arnold’s poetry and view of language. However, there is one aspect of *Merope* that is interesting in terms of the questions about language that Arnold had grappled with and attempted to solve in his poetry from the first half of the 1850s. An early part of the drama depicts a conversation between Merope and her husband’s murderer Polyphantes. The extended scene is noteworthy in that in the course of the debate, Polyphantes (by far the most interesting character in the play) works assiduously to defend himself against the charge of murder leveled by Merope. His defense, intriguingly is a linguistic one:

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Murder! but what *is* murder? When a wretch
For private gain or hatred takes a life,
We call it murder, crush him, brand his name.
But when, from some great public cause, an arm
Is, without love or hate, austerely raised
Against a power exempt from common checks,
Dangerous to all, to be but thus annulled—
Ranks any man with murder such an act?
With grievous deeds, perhaps; with murder, no!

...Murder let others call this, if they will;
I, self-defence and righteous execution. (201-209; 276-277)
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Suspicious of Polyphantes as a “coiner of words,” Merope responds: Alas, how fair a color can his tongue/Who self-exculpates, lend to foulest deeds. (278-279). In many respects, Polyphantes’ defense here suggests that Arnold was right back where he started, still puzzled and grappling with the slipperiness of language. The very same problem that had led him to adopt the simile remained with him at the end.

In *Victorian Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, Isobel Armstrong describes Clough and Arnold as “the radical in crisis” and “the liberal in crisis” respectively. These were
indeed years of crisis and tension for the two poets which resulted in some of their most
effective and developed poetic achievements. The years were marked by quiet crises as
well in Clough’s and Arnold’s views of language. Clough’s growing political
disillusionment after 1849 mirrors the loss of the idealistic commitment to linguistic
comprehensiveness in *The Bothie* which is transformed, by the end of *Dipsychus*, into a
more historically and philologically-oriented attitude to the English language. Armstrong
suggests that during this period “Clough significantly altered the aesthetic basis of a
radical, dissident poetry” (167), and I would add that tied up in such an altering (one
might even say it is more of an abandonment) is an evolution in Clough’s attitudes to his
medium. Clough, as we have seen, had arrived at a new position at *Dipsychus* so that his
final poems, most notably *Mari Magno*, would also signal a new direction in what was
increasingly becoming an ever restless quest to find a linguistic resting point. Arnold’s
poems from this period, like Clough but in a different key, also confront a chimerical
idealism—philosophical/linguistic rather than political. The poems register an increasing
awareness of the referential inadequacy of language as Arnold begins to reorient his
poetics increasingly toward readers in ways that might animate and ennoble them in what
Armstrong, again, labels as “an essentially liberal, therapeutic account of poetry as a way
of escaping from the symptoms of cultural sickness and alienation” (167-168). Turning
to the insights of Locke (ironically the very source that had brought the problem of
semantic idealism into relief for him), Arnold experiments with a revised understanding
of figurative language seen here not as a Tractarian mode of concealment but as a quasi-
scientific means of investing language with an accuracy, specificity and transparency that
might mitigate if not eliminate the vagaries of communication. By *Merope* the quixotic
nature of the endeavor was becoming apparent and without a suitable medium to communicate his ideas in a didactic ennobling poetry, Arnold would move in a new direction in his late elegies—a direction that would ultimately produce the critic and not the poet.
CHAPTER 4
POET PEDAGOGUES: CLOUGH’S AND ARNOLD’S LATER POETRY

In this point our language offers the strongest contrast to Italian and French and most strongly manifests its origin and affinity to German from which on the other hand it is distinguished by its facility for admitting foreign words.

Clough, “Lecture on Language”

Its business is, as I have said, simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas.

Arnold, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time”

The two epigraphs selected for this final chapter capture the respective spirits with which Clough and Arnold approached their medium at the end of their poetic careers. For Clough, in his attempts here to situate English as a medial language, the keywords are reconciliation and renovation. For Arnold, already making his first essays into criticism, the key words will be preservation and perpetuation. As it was at so many earlier points in their respective careers, Clough’s and Arnold’s respective views of language, encapsulated by the aforementioned keywords, take shape in the specific context of Victorian education. With the exception of a few short periods, such as Clough’s spring and summer Italian vacation in 1849, his year in New England or Arnold’s halcyon days as Lord Lansdowne’s private secretary, Arnold and Clough were throughout their entire lives connected in some way with Victorian education. From the Rugby study hall to the Oxford colleges to Clough’s unhappy stints at University College
and the Education Office to Arnold’s over thirty year career as a school inspector and member of various royal commissions on education, both poets consistently moved in the atmosphere of the schoolroom. It is not surprising, in a sense then, that the last parts of their respective careers as poets and the language of the poetry they produced at the end was informed by their accruing experiences in the expanding institutional and bureaucratic machinery of Victorian education.

In Clough’s case his responsibilities at University Hall between 1850 and 1852 lead him to rethink and even reconnect to some of his earlier ideas about the English language. The immediate result is a series of lectures and other teaching materials that suggest the contours of Clough’s thinking about English and provide a context to read the language and ideas about language in his final poem *Mari Magno*. The language of *Mari Magno* might be said to be Clough’s delayed implementation of his own teaching about language into his poetry, since approximately nine years separates the material on language that I will be discussing initially and the composition of *Mari Magno*.\(^{111}\)

Arnold, meanwhile, grows increasingly dismayed by his perceptions of the interrelated spiritual, educational and cultural decline of the country—a perception reinforced for Arnold microcosmically every day by his visits to one dismal and depressing school after another.\(^{112}\) The failure of *Merope* and the sense that Arnold had made little progress in solving the problems of semantic idealism and the referential inadequacy of words hasten Arnold’s decline as a poet and also his own sense that his muse had abandoned him. Yet, he was increasingly convinced of the centrality of poetry for the nation’s cultural and ultimately spiritual health. Caught in the dilemma of
asserting a kind of didactic importance of poetry but aware that he could do less and less by way of poetry, Arnold’s late poetry seeks, in many ways, to make the best of an increasingly untenable situation.

The language of Clough’s and Arnold’s late poetry shares a broad pedagogical sensibility although the manifestation of such a sensibility in the language of the poems themselves is markedly distinct. The distinction might be characterized as the difference between renovation and preservation. Clough building upon the historical philological insights that emerge in Dipsychus attempts to refashion an idiom based on an emerging interest and understanding of the interrelated historical and literary development of English. He seeks a renovated English idiom and begins, however hesitantly, to fashion one in Mari Magno which will allow poetry to speak with the accessibility and authority of the novel. In Clough’s July 1853 North American Review essay on Matthew Arnold and Alexander Smith, he had suggested that poets, in response to the popularity of the novel, look to adopt more modern and domestic subjects. It is plausible, I think, that a subtext to that recommendation is the need for an updated poetic language. Meanwhile, Arnold, ultimately frustrated in his attempts to develop an adequately transparent language also, but in a different sense, turns to the language of the literary tradition, with the result that his late elegies are, in one respect, exercises in the preservation of language and Arnold’s poems themselves are the vessels, or perhaps more appropriately, the crucible where this preservation occurs, although with decidedly mixed results.

In the following sections I begin by examining Clough’s writings on language at University Hall before turning to his final poem written during his last year, Mari Magno.
The second half of this chapter explores four of Arnold’s late elegies—“Haworth Churchyard,” “Heine’s Grave,” “Rugby Chapel,” and “Thyrsis” as early critical attempts to fulfill the function for criticism that Arnold lays out in his famous essay in 1865.

**A German Language Mutilated: Clough at University Hall and *Mari Magno***

Clough’s first sustained exposure to ideas about language occurred in the Rugby schoolroom of Thomas Arnold. It is perhaps fitting that this last phase of Clough’s exploration of the nature and possibilities of his medium begins in another schoolroom, albeit the very different one of the University Hall lectern and with Clough as professor rather than prefect. The historical and philological sensitivity to language, specifically the English language, which emerges in the course of *Dipsychus* is developed during Clough’s brief and unpleasant experience as the principal and professor of English language and literature at University Hall in London. Before turning to Clough’s last major work, *Mari Magno*, it is both useful and necessary to examine some of Clough’s published and unpublished lecture notes and teaching materials. This material looks both backwards and forwards. It consolidates and codifies the insights about language emerging in *Dipsychus* and lays the groundwork for the linguistic concerns of *Mari Magno*. In short these lectures, lecture notes and examinations are the bridge between the height of Clough’s poetic production (1848-50) and his final burst of poetic activity (1860-61) and help fill in that decade long lacuna in Clough’s poetic oeuvre—a decade spent wandering from the unhappiness of University Hall to the loneliness of New England to the drudgery of the Education Office.

Within a year of his return from the vacation in Venice that had occasioned *Dipsychus* and its interest in the composite nature of English, Clough produces his
longest and most detailed meditation on language. In addition to his roles and responsibilities as principal, Clough assumed, for an extra £30 per annum, the chair of English Language and Literature. It would seem that Clough’s lecture on language was written in partial fulfillment of these new responsibilities. This lecture on language has received relatively meager attention from Clough’s critics and biographers. Katharine Chorley, for example, suggests that the manuscript currently housed at the Bodleian library may be better described as a series of unpublished notes rather than a fully developed and coherent lecture.115 This is certainly possible, however the lecture’s lack of careful organization and development may simply be an indication of Clough’s lecturing style and confirms what former students said of his lectures that they were more in the nature of informal talks. This does seem to capture the spirit of the lecture preserved in the manuscript which moves rapidly and recursively from topic to topic and is sprinkled with lively and vivid examples. Part of what contributes to the informality of the lecture is the series of analogies including, memorably, the image of the difficulty of assimilation between the Germanic and Latinate elements of English as a sibling rivalry between haughty and humble step-sisters. Despite the informality of the piece, a broadly discernible bi-partite structure is present in the lecture consisting of an exploration of relationship between the German and Latin/French elements in English and followed by thoughts and observations on the art and craft of lexicography.

The lecture begins, however, not with a discussion of language in a specific sense but rather with some large scale ethnographic distinctions familiar to nineteenth century philology. Clough begins: “If the past belongs to Greece, Italy and Spain, the future would seem to belong to the northern races... the ideas which while we write are stirring
and stimulating the world emanate much more from Northern countries than from Italy and Spain” (Bodleian MS). Then in a gesture to his audience, who are decidedly not the undergraduates of Oxbridge but rather of London, he notes with utilitarian emphasis:

> It is evident that the 2\textsuperscript{nd} education which occupies our first youth and fills the first years of our manhood would in our days be incomplete without the study of the Northern languages... The higher Professions; all courses of education directed towards politics, commerce of the higher kind, science, instruction, medicine require in our days this completely elementary and intimate familiarity with English and German, is I have already said indispensable to all new progresses of the Northern races. (Bodleian MS)

The first major section of the essay is an exploration of the constituency of the English language, specifically the relative strengths, roles and relations between its Germanic and Latin/French elements. Clough begins with a general Romantic vision of language articulated earlier in the century by von Humboldt and others:

> A language is as it were a People; the Word (expression) of a Race. There is not a single political event, fashion, fancy or popular passion but leaves a trace in the speech; every thing counts; is imprinted, and engraved. It is vain to fix your eyes on an idiom; it is assailed on every side, and driven to the future by the waves that carry it. (Bodleian MS)

The essential characteristic of the English language and those who speak it according to Clough is that English is

> [O]f all the Teutonic tongues...the most independent in its alliances and its importations. It has, like the people that are called it, the commercial tendency; it takes credit and makes loans, it gathers with both hands and expresses itself with all its power. Chinese words come in its ships from Canton; and it accepts them. North American forests have sent it various articles of their sort of merchandise; it has opened its doors to squaw, squatter and wigwam. (Bodleian MS)

Despite such a vision, when Clough comes to circle, as he does repeatedly around the question of the origins of English, he returns to the usual antagonism between the
Germanic and Latin/French components of the language. The failure of a complete assimilation between the two is clearly assigned to one branch and not the other:

In the assimilation of 2 languages of different cast--between teutonism and latinism there is never a perfect sympathy--Observe too that the neo-Latin tongues, daughters more or less legitimate of latin, discover a greater pride of birth, restrict themselves, more closely within these limits, the more fearful of disparaging alliances, are in short more exclusive + disdainful than the daughters of the teutonic birth the former sprung from a haughty family, long time civilized and... to meet in half-barbarian phrases and marks of a Germanic lineage revolts her, the noble language of Cicero seems destroyed by any degradation while on the other hand a Latin phrase in Luther, a word borrowed from the Romans by Goethe or Schiller is but accordant with their respect for true antiquity to allow a feeling of pain. (Bodleian MS)

Clough is at pains in this first half of the essay to assert the superiority of Anglo-Saxon elements over Latin and French ones as the “true” or most important aspects of English. Faced with the large proportion of Latin and French words in the English vocabulary, Clough elides this fact by suggesting that words that are used more often than any other, such as conjunctions and prepositions are Anglo Saxon and, more importantly, words that express original, essential and primary ideas are Saxon in origin. He writes:

Every particular word on the contrary, we carry for us, from the 1st commencement of society, has its roots in the Teutonic dictionary...The great relations of parentage and family, the feelings of the soul, sensations common to all, facts of social passion, popular proverb are examples in the English language without any exception in Saxon words. Love, pain, feeling, passion indignation and admonition speak only in Anglo-Saxon. (Bodleian MS)

In short the important words in English are Saxon in origin. The Saxon elements of the language are those expressions of the fundamental and original sensations of the speaker. In yet another metaphor Clough envisions these original Saxon elements in an architectural analogy:
It gives a just of the formation of the idiom to represent it to oneself as a original, strong, but plain and unimposing scaffolding with a vast number of brilliant decorations more or less permanently attached and overlaying it. (Bodleian MS)

The Latin and French elements are not original and thus Latin, Modern French and all other languages occupy without a doubt an important but still accessory place in the formation of the English language. This importance is perhaps best seen in the heuristic role that Clough assigns to the vocabulary that these languages give to English:

Strong and primitive notions are expressed in A.S.: the foundation of the language then once laid, a learned labour came to enrich this popular idiom by adding to it the metaphysical tints and words of generalization which were wanting to it. Anglo-Saxon had expressed the various movements of the human body; then came the later word movement to express the general notion of the different actions. At the summit of such terms as buzzing, humming, hissing, speaking, crying, rattling, squawking was set finally that one metaphysical term comprehending them all, the Latin word sonus or sound: and so for all the terms expressing a metaphysical generalization. (Bodleian MS)

This invasion of Latin, which as Clough notes was antecedent to 1066, was succeeded by a more negative and insidious influence, namely Norman French, which threatened and damaged the original purity of the language. Clough’s concern with the origins and lost purity of English finds expression in the climactic concluding passage to the first part of the lecture:

The French conquest carried into the heart of the idiom of Alfred and Caedmon an infusion of bastard Latin. The inflections were dropped; practical inversion vanished; adjectives stripped themselves of their terminations; the old language suffered the fate common to all conquered and sacrificed languages. Many beauties inherent in the Teutonic idioms disappeared all at once. Compound words became far less numerous than in German: the sentence moved more swiftly, but more nakedly; and men’s tongues were afraid of combining words without termination or inflexion, often born of different races and seldom easy to pronounce. Such was the birth of the English language...a German language mutilated. (Bodleian MS)
In many ways this first part of the lecture looks back to *Dipsychus* and the discernible subordination of Dipsychus’s language, associated with the perceived artificialities of Latinate, classical elements, to the Spirit’s more plain-spoken directness.

If the lecture were to end at this point, we might neatly pigeonhole Clough with certain strands of nineteenth century thinking on language, most notably the Anglo-Saxon purists. However, the second section of the essay serves almost as a kind of unannounced palinode as Clough assiduously revises and reverses himself. This process is set in motion by his speculations on the art and craft of lexicography which complicates the straightforward vision of English as an original Anglo-Saxon corrupted by an “infusion of bastard Latin” as Clough puts it. In his comments on dictionaries Clough expresses the basic Sisyphean dilemma that dictionaries attempt to stop and fix language which is perpetually evolving, and that Richelieu’s French Academy of the preceding century, in attempting to legislate language, is in fact confused in its attempts to claim authority. Committed to a historical approach to lexicography, Clough’s ideas here parallel those of the committee for the New English Dictionary (later the *OED*) who were holding their initial meetings elsewhere in London a few years after Clough’s lecture to his pupils at University Hall. Clough, addressing the challenge involved in labeling words appropriate asks:

Are we to admit the language of all periods: how draw limits: what restriction can we lay down for ourselves? Abridgements and derivatives and compounds? At what point do archaisms begin to be permissible and cease to be obsolete. How soon may a neological term be suffered to have taken out its letters of naturalization? And what constitutes these?– How shall we draw a distinction between ephemeral expression which fashion brings and fashion takes away and those which germinate from a permanent form of manners, which implant themselves in the idiom,
such a manner as never to be eradicated. (Bodleian MS)

Suddenly the rather straightforward narrative of the evolution of English no longer seems so convincing to Clough as he admits that neither Chaucer nor Thomas Browne can be understood without a dictionary, so Saxon and Latin is their language respectively. Further, Clough wonders whether a sentence such as “The operations assume a new aspect or form: they evolve and unite with rapidity” where the words are predominantly Latin is less English than “Kings are the slaves of their thrones, they dare not follow their own hearts.” where the words are predominantly Germanic. Earlier Clough had confidently asserted that the word “club” was more English because Anglo-Saxon than “colonel” or squadron” which are descended from Latin through Italian. Now he is not as confident and the origins and nature of English have become increasingly elusive.

Indeed, towards the end of the essay, Clough verges on suggesting that perhaps a better place to look for the origin of English is with Dryden and the Restoration. Consequently the veneration of Anglo-Saxon in the first part that seemed to transform Clough into a linguistic purist is complicated in the second half of the lecture. Indeed he gently mocks the dogmatism of the Anglo-Saxon purists:

It should further be observed that all Norman and many latin ones have become quite as thoroughly English as the purest Saxon. Table, and Chairs and plates and fork are certainly as good and proper English as bench and stool and dish and knife. Those who, as I think in the spirit of the worse pedantry, bid empty words of Saxon in preference to words of Latin origin find it hard to make us say board instead of table: and I suppose have to invent new compounds for fork and chair...to draw a tooth may be a better expression than to extract a tooth because to draw is more plain spoken an image than to extract. But it cannot be denied that to extract is more precise, because the word draw has a host of applications—it is not one single image but a great many—The word leaf (of a book) is more of an image to begin with ; but page is more precise. (Bodleian MS)
All of this leads to Clough’s revised estimation towards the end of the lecture which is also the climactic passage to the second part: “It is difficult often to discover exactly the pure Latin, French, Saxon or even I admit origins of an English word. Sometimes the word has a double stamp—as is the case with Lord; Lord is a word half Norman and half old Gothic” (Bodleian MS). In stressing awareness and an acceptance of the mixed character of English he notes the advantageousness of English’s composite nature for the practicing writer:

A writer of heart and conscience, who makes a good use of the English idiom possesses for every single idea two separate oracles of best the Roman or Homeric, and the Teutonic or English shade: Milton and Shakespeare employ beautifully the double lyre; they have played an organ of two pedals, whose secret has never been known to the idioms of the south. (Bodleian MS)

Clough’s Lecture on Language is a remarkable performance. In the course of the lecture, he dismantles the hierarchy that had initially been established between the three main constituent parts of the English lexicon—Anglo-Saxon, French and Latin. The lecture becomes a celebration of the tri-lingual character of English. In holding up this aspect of the language, Clough is, in a certain sense, reanimating and relocating the elusive Broad Church ideal of a comprehensive language (that had dominated so much of Clough’s experimentation with language in poems such as The Bothie) away from a synchronic understanding to a diachronic one. Having set up a theoretical construction of the nature of English in the lecture, Clough was also reexamining English literary history for instructive teachers who might confirm him in his understanding of the language. The key figure for Clough here is Geoffrey Chaucer. A year after the “Lecture on Language,” in the summer of 1852, Clough creates an examination for his students in
University Hall. This examination, contained in the Clough MSS collections at Balliol College, consists of seven questions concerned with the English language and its history, particularly the period of its development during the age of Chaucer. I transcribe the relevant portions of the examination below:

EXAM I

June 24, 1852

1. Translate into modern English [excerpt from Chaucer, The Knight’s Tale]

2. Translate into modern English [Chaucer] “A knight ther was ...”

3. What is the date and structure of The Canterbury Tales

4. Classify the languages derived from Latin. Mention any important facts relating to their formation and the history of their earliest literature

5. Of the various elements of the English language and the successive processes of its formation, which is more particularly that of Chaucer and his age? Compare it in this respect with succeeding epochs

6. Give the personal and possessive pronouns found in Chaucer. Mention any substantives, adjectives or adverbs in which Chaucer sounds the “e” mute

7. Give the etymology of the following words: advance, alas, chance, change, couch, cry, domain, dice, display, doubt, dungeon, encumbrance, escape, fowl, fellow, loathe, mercy, mischief, parliament, pay, ransom, rob, room, season, squire, starve, sudden, trespass, yellow

(Balliol MS)

The examination questions suggest the importance of Chaucer’s English for Clough. He seems to represent to Clough the writer whose language represents the ideal balance and harmony among the constituent sources of English. Also, among the books in Clough’s library at this time was a three-volume edition of Chaucer’s works prefaced by a one hundred page essay on Chaucer’s language entitled “An Essay Upon Language” (Balliol MS)
Although the essay does not bear evidence of Clough’s annotations, it intersects with some of the conclusions that Clough had reached in his Lecture on Language. The essay is divided into two parts, with the overall occasion for the essay being an effort to refute the claim that Chaucer corrupted the English language. The first surveys the arrival and spread of Norman French and seeks to defend Chaucer’s use of French from charges of affectation. The second part of the essay seeks to understand the relationship between the French and Saxon elements in Chaucer’s age, arguing that while French’s main contribution was lexical, Saxon syntactical contribution remains important. (Balliol MS).

Beyond examinations and Clough’s library, other lectures from the University Hall period offer insights into Clough’s linguistic understanding at this time. Despite his celebration of the heterogeneity of the language, Clough was aware of the centrifugal pressures of such compositeness and his praise of Chaucer in a lecture entitled “On the Development of English Literature” is rooted in the ways the poet, linguistically and otherwise, accommodated such tensions:

English literature begins with Chaucer. The most substantive and dominant element in our blood and in our language is, it may be perfectly true, the Anglo-Saxon. But it cannot be said that either in our blood or language this element had established its permanent relations to other—to Celtic, Danish, Norman, immigrant, invasive and rebellious elements—had taken amidst these and communicated to these a distinct direction of its own, before the era of King Edward III and the close of the 14th century. The same (and this is much more important) may be affirmed of the English national mind. In the Age of Chaucer, it may be said that the English people such as ever since then it has been—and such as never it had been until then, had—for good or for evil or more truly for both entered in various ways—in religion, in morals, in domestic habits, in government, in social relations—in relations to other members of the European body, upon a definite and positive course. The position which we still hold as a Northern, part Scandinavian, part German people, ever
resisting, and yet ever submitting most largely to accept the subtle influences of Southern civilization and refinement…was ours in the era of the first French Wars. (124-125)

Clough’s last sentence which emphasizes an ongoing but paradoxically productive tug-of-war, both culturally and linguistically, between Northern and Southern elements resurfaces, with variations, in other comments from the University Hall period.

In a series of lectures “Dryden and His Times,” Clough specifically celebrates Dryden’s contributions to the English language. Where Chaucer had cultivated and accommodated the tri-lingual character and possibilities of the language, Dryden had restored the language which, in Clough’s view, had fallen into corruption in the years prior to the Restoration. Importantly, Dryden had managed not a revolution but rather a renovation of the language.

Dryden then has the merit of converting this corruption and dissolution of our old language into a new birth and renovation. And not only must we thank him for making the best of the inevitable circumstances and tendencies of the time, but also praise him absolutely for definitely improving our language. It is true that he sacrificed a great deal of beauty of English writing, but that sacrifice was inevitable: he retained all that was practicable to save, and added at the same time all the new excellences of which the time was capable….To have organized the dissolving and separating elements of our tongue into a new and living instrument, perfectly adapted to the requirements and more than meeting the desires and aspirations of the age; this is our author’s praise. (94-95)

Dryden’s accomplishment is a variation on Chaucer’s—in this case an accommodation of the older and the archaic with new instantiations of English compared to Chaucer’s accommodation of the genetic components of Saxon, Norman and Latin. In both cases, the struggle of each author is characterized by the successful unification of disparate elements into a new and effective idiom. Further, in the course of the Dryden lectures
Clough calls for someone to renew Chaucer’s and Dryden’s work for the mid-nineteenth century.

There has been a kind of dissolution of English; but no one writer has come to reunite and revivify the escaping components. We have something new to say, but do not know how to say it. The language has been popularized but has not yet vindicated itself from being vulgarized. A democratic revolution is effecting itself in it, without that aristocratic reconstruction which pertains to every good democratic revolution. Everybody can write, and nobody writes well. We can all speak, and nobody knows how. We have forgotten or rejected the diction of our grandfathers and shall leave, it seems likely, no new diction for our grandchildren. (95-6)

In many ways Clough’s stated ideal of greater linguistic inclusiveness, in whatever form that might take, is a reanimation of the spirit if not the specifics of the Broad Church orientation to language that had so concerned him at Rugby and even as late as The Bothie. Mari Magno, Clough’s maritime Canterbury Tales, with its series of stories about marriage and obstacles to marriage is a poem that is in a very basic sense concerned with questions of union and reunion. It is perhaps fitting then that these stories are the backdrop for Clough’s attempts to answer the linguistic charge he poses to his students in the excerpt quoted above. In the language of his final poem, Mari Magno, Clough attempts, with mixed success, to respond to his own challenge to “reunite” “the escaping components” of the language and to cultivate an idiom that could simultaneously acknowledge both the “democratic revolution” and “aristocratic reconstruction” that he deems to be necessary if current writers and speakers are to bequeath a linguistic inheritance to posterity.

Mari Magno elicited divided opinions among its first Victorian readers when it initially appeared in the first posthumous edition of Clough’s works. J.A. Symonds
confidently predicted that it would, in time, be recognized as Clough’s masterpiece while Henry Sidgwick dismissed it evidencing the “the genius of twaddle” (290). While *Mari Magno* is in many ways a poem whose merits are underestimated by readers since those initial reviews, it must be admitted that there is more validity in Sidgwick’s censure than Symonds’s prediction.

Clough began the poem in April of 1860 as he journeyed to southern Europe in the hopes of improving his health. He was still at work on it, adding new material and extensively revising early drafts, when he died in Florence a year later. However, as the preceding discussion of Clough’s writing and lecturing on language and literature suggests, *Mari Magno* is more than the poem of Clough’s final year. Of course, unaware of its eventual status as Clough’s last words in poetry, *Mari Magno* is not solely a retrospective airing of the questions and issues that had occupied Clough in the preceding years either. The poem also gestures forward and raises concerns that would ultimately remain unaddressed.

*Mari Magno* is a series of seven tales on the theme of marriage. These seven narratives are linked by a frame whereby the tales are part of story-telling competition entered into by a group of passengers on a ship crossing the Atlantic. The story-tellers are the narrator (a young man traveling to America), a rising lawyer (who is also the traveling companion and elder friend to the narrator), an English clergyman, a young American writer and the ship’s second mate (an unfinished eighth tale was to be told by an artillery captain/officer). Part *Canterbury Tales*, part *Decameron*, part *Arabian Nights*, the poem begins with “The Lawyer’s First Tale” which traces a history of adolescent awkwardness, youthful misunderstandings and missed opportunities in love.
between two third cousins. The following night “The Clergyman’s First Tale” details the
ravaged indecisiveness and over-intellectualizing tendencies of Edmund and Emma to
define love in their youth and their eventual reconciliation in marriage later in life. “The
American’s Tale” follows and, in an anecdote recounting a strange incident in an
American hotel, illustrates the role of chance or fortune when it comes to love. The next
evening the narrator recounts “My Tale”—an incongruous account of a carriage ride
through the south of France that has little to do with the theme of love and marriage that
connects the various stories. These four tales formed the core of Clough’s original
conception of the project. Later in 1860 he composed “The Mate’s Tale” which, like
“The American’s Tale,” explores the role of chance in love in recounting how an ill-
treated French governess returning to her home from employment in Ireland finds a
husband in a kindly sea-captain. Later still, Clough conceived of two additional tales.
The first of these is, along with “The Lawyer’s First Tale” the most well known of the
series, “The Clergyman’s Second Tale” and is a story of infidelity and forgiveness in
which a young man, Edward, unwillingly leaves his family to travel south in order to
recover his health. Once there, he commits adultery, confesses all to his wife and lives a
self-imposed separation from his family in London. The illness of their daughter is the
occasion for reconciliation between Edward and his wife. The final tale, “The Lawyer’s
Second Tale,” recounts the Bothie-like romance between an Oxford tutor named Philip
and a Highland maid named Christian. Deceived by a duplicitous uncle and aunt, Philip
and the now-pregnant Christian are separated when the latter emigrates to Australia
where she marries and raises a family. Philip, meanwhile, rises to prominence among the
English cognoscenti and marries a wealthy widow. Years later, Christian returns to
England with her adolescent son, meets with Philip’s wife and arranges a reunion between father and son. The son chooses to remain in England and although Christian refuses a meeting with Philip, she writes an extensive letter declaring her love, exposing the treachery of her relatives and bidding him a final farewell.

The poem’s tragi-comic tales of love and marriage speak to the larger, more overarching theme of union and/or reconciliation (or the lack thereof), and it is in this larger concern of the poem that we can ground an assessment of the poem’s language. The content of the various tales of the poem, dealing with love, relationships and marriage, is part of a larger exploration of unity (or disunity) and reconciliation (or estrangement) that was also the leitmotif of Clough’s comments about English and the contributions of Chaucer and Dryden to English discussed earlier. Both the self-reflexive moments with regard to language in the poem and the language of the poem itself speak to this overarching concern of *Mari Magno*.

Although the theme of marriage unifies the tales, the opening Prologue of the poem where the various story-telling passengers are introduced stresses the numerous differences among them. One difference that emerges is in their way of talking, their style and their uses of words. From the “manly voice” of the clergyman to the “acrid” speech of the lawyer, the difference among the various speakers is emphasized. This difference extends beyond the matters of tone or style that are mentioned with respect to the lawyer and the clergyman. When the mate is introduced the narrator notes: “A young man fair of feature, partly Scotch/And partly Irish in his voice and look,/His portion thus in our diversion took” (“My Tale” 327-329). Most interesting is the
introduction to the young American writer, returning home, uncorrupted from his European travels:

What racy tales of Yankeeland he had.
Up-country girl, up-country farmer lad;
The regnant clergy of the time of old
In wig and gown; tales not to be retold
By me. I could but spoil were I too tell: (“Prologue” 28-32)

The narrator emphasizes the unique, among the passengers, way in which the American speaks and the evocation of compounds such as “up-country” and “Yankeeland” demonstrate sensitivity to the differences of American English which, despite the popular misconception among detractors of American English, was generally recognized and characterized as an earlier, more Saxon/Germanic incarnation of modern British usage.119

The passengers may all speak different styles and dialects of the English language but they are united by the story-telling competition itself. The Prologue in foregrounding the different voices of the story-tellers is reminiscent in many ways of the parliament of voices emphasized in the early sections of The Bothie and Clough was, in a different and more generalized way, reconnecting to the Broad Church linguistic convictions of his youth at the very end of his life.

Elsewhere, in the various tales themselves (particularly the core of the first four stories), there are moments where issues pertaining to language or uses of language are emphasized. In almost all of these instances the Mari Magno’s larger thematic explorations of questions of reconciliation and union or the lack thereof are also featured. In “The Lawyer’s First Tale,” for example, the lawyer describes the sermons of his uncle, a rural vicar. Occasionally, he would draw on a traditional, well-known sermon and at other times he would compose his own individual sermons. The lawyer remembers being
struck by the dissonance between the two—a dissonance that is as much a question of language and style as it is of content:

His sermons frequently he took
Out of some standard reverend book;
They seemed a little strange indeed,
But were not likely to mislead.
Others he gave that were his own,
The difference could be quickly known.

(“The Lawyer’s First Tale” I 79-84)

The sermons drawn from earlier times carry the weight and authority of tradition but also seem strange, presumably because the language in which they are written has changed in the interval between their composition and the present. This is compared to the more personal, immediately recognizable but idiosyncratic individual performances of the vicar himself. The necessity of the aristocratic reconstruction of the democratic revolution in language that Clough speaks of in the lecture on Dryden is dramatized here in Mari Magno, although the space of ten years has changed the terms somewhat. Elsewhere in the same tale the lawyer-speaker takes up an issue with regard to language that is a common feature in many of Clough’s poems from his juvenilia to The Bothie to Amours de Voyage-naming. The vicar’s five daughters are named according to family traditions:

‘Twas Patty first, and Lydia next,
And Emily the third, and then,
Philippa, Phoebe, Mary Gwen.
Six were they, you perceive, in all;
And portraits fading on the wall,
Grandmothers, heroines of old,
And aunts of aunts, with scrolls that told
Their names and dates, were they to show
Why these had all been christened so. (“The Lawyer’s First Tale” I 40-48)
However, like the sermons, the vicar, at times, offers his own individual, innovative revisions of these names as they are transformed into nicknames:

All through the house you heard him call,
He had his vocatives for all:
Patty Patina, Pat became,
Lydia took languish with her name,
Philippa was the Gentle Queen,
And Phoebe, Madam Proserpine;
The pseudonyms for Mary Gwen
Varied with every week again;
But Emily, of all the set,
Emilia called, was most the pet. ("The Lawyer’s First Tale" I 87-98)

A variation on this juxtaposition between the formal and the familiar with regard to language is also found in “The Lawyer’s Second Tale” when the lawyer again focuses on the issue of names: “Christian her name, in full a pleasant name,/Christie and Chirstie scarcely seem the same” (“The Lawyer’s Second Tale 9-10).

Elsewhere in “The Lawyer’s First Tale” the issue is not names but rather the question of genuine and sincere uses of language. Reflecting on an exchange of valentines with his cousin Emily, the lawyer notes:

Mine, though they praised it at the time
Was but a formal piece of rhyme.
She sent me one that she had bought;
‘Twas stupid of her, as I thought:
Why not have written one? ("The Lawyer’s First Tale" I 157-161)

The lawyer’s rhymes, though formal, are at least sincere in the sense that they are personal and original compared to the purchased words of Emily’s valentine. The moment, though a passing one in the poem, is emblematic of the collision between the educated speech of the formal lines and the more democratic associations of the mass-produced store-bought valentine.
Another set of self-reflexive moments in *Mari Magno* where language is a central concern are the moments in the various tales when the relationship between thought and language is explored. Much of “The Clergyman’s First Tale” consists of the speaker’s transcription of a series of fragmentary notes where the story’s central characters, (Edmund and, to a lesser extent, Emma) attempt to work out a definition for love or adequately articulate their complex, conflicting thoughts. The clergyman emphasizes this process in introducing the notes: “Seen in these scattered notes their date that claim/When first that feeling conscious sought a name” (“The Clergyman’s First Tale” 45-46). The same dissonance is seen in “The Lawyer’s First Tale” as well:

A thousand thoughts within me stirred  
Of which I could not speak a word;  
Strange appetites for something new,  
Which I was wretched not to do;  
Passions, ambitions lay and lurked,  
Wants, counter-wants, obscurely worked  
Without their names and unexplained.  

(“The Lawyer’s First Tale” II 147-155)

At the very end, it seems, Clough was beginning to speculate on some of the very issues that had troubled Matthew Arnold in his major lyric, narrative and dramatic poems of the preceding decade. However, they remain tantalizing speculations that are not pursued elsewhere in the poem and Clough was denied the chance to pursue them beyond this last poetic effort.

It should be stressed again that *Mari Magno* is not a poem about language, but in writing a series of poems about love (and its discontents), the larger issues of union/separation and reconciliation/estrangement that inform the content and love-plots
of the tales also inform those moments in the poem where questions of language or examples of language use are dramatized in the examples I have been exploring. Interestingly, the emphasis in these moments tends to fall preponderantly on dissonance—the differences or disconnections between thought and language; tradition and innovation when it comes to language use; formality and informality; sincerity and artificiality. The narrator himself carefully elucidates distinctions between the very ways that the tellers of the tales speak and the intimacy and immediacy of the frame narrative situation itself—the telling and exchanging of stories to a small audience—is juxtaposed by the tales themselves which are filled with impersonal letters, telegraphs and notes or direct conversations that more often than not result in misunderstanding and confusion (often cleared up by a letter or note sent later). In a series of poems ostensibly about union and/or reconciliation, the poem as a whole, in its moments of self-reflexive considerations of language, emphasizes miscommunication, disconnection and difference.

If we turn from the poem’s frequent moments of linguistic self-reflexivity to the language of the poem itself, Clough’s efforts to follow the precepts he had laid out almost a decade earlier begin to emerge, albeit gradually and incompletely. One of the most immediately discernible things about the language of *Mari Magno* when it is considered in the context of Clough’s major poetry is what might be called its circumspection. Unlike *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* there is nothing here like the dramatic juxtaposition of different registers and dialects, although as I have suggested the spirit of such an attitude to language lies in the background of *Mari Magno*. The sustained allusive rephrasing of the Authorized Version and Shakespeare in *Amours de Voyage* is
not repeated in this last major poetic project. Despite the multiple narrators, the poem does not dramatize (although this is a self-reflexive concern of the poem) the collision between the refined, literary, abstract, Latinate language of Dipsychus and the material, colloquial, inclusive language of the Spirit as was the case in *Dipsychus*. Paradoxically, the most remarkable aspect of Clough’s language in *Mari Magno* may be that it lacks any one discernible, particular feature that draws the reader’s attention. Rupert Christenson has characterized the language of the poem as “Rattling along in a patter of no great linguistic density or subtlety (‘prose written in verse’ said one critic)” (85). The language of the poem is remarkably unremarkable.

This is not, I believe, evidence of a diminishment of Clough’s poetic talents. Clough was still capable of producing linguistically arresting poetry. In a series of unpublished poems composed during this last year of his life, Clough continued to experiment with the possibilities of producing quantitative poetry using the English language. Such experimentation led to Clough’s efforts, similar in spirit but different in specifics from the language of Hardy’s poetry decades later, to test the limits of poetic diction. In poems such as “Trunks the forest yielded with gums ambrosial oozing,” “From the far sources mid mountains airily climbing,” and “Acteon” Clough sought to test the poetic possibilities of the following words: “odoriferous,” “umbrage,” “transpicuous,” “soporiferous,” “ebon,” “dimpling,” “pellucid,” “limpid,” “irriguous,” “lentisk,” and “arbutus.” Perhaps such notebook draftings and experiments point to a new direction Clough might have envisioned for his language.

Returning, however, to *Mari Magno*, the unremarkable nature of the language is saved from tediousness by Clough’s occasional infusion of syntactic and lexical archaism.
(elements of an aristocratic reconstruction) into the predominantly prosaic, almost
novelistic (and hence more democratic) language of the various tales. The deployment of
such a strategy links Clough with George Crabbe, whose manner and matter critics have
identified as an important influence in Mari Magno. Clough himself indicated his
interest in Crabbe in a letter to his American friend, the Harvard professor F.J. Child (also
one of the period’s leading Chaucer scholars) a few years earlier in 1856: “I have been
reading pretty nearly through Crabbe lately, there is no one more purely English (in the
Dutch manner), no one who better represents the general result through the country of the
last century” (2: 522). While critics have commented on Crabbe’s influence in terms of
how Clough handled the material for his tales, the importance of Crabbe’s approach to
the English language has not received much comment. Speaking of Crabbe’s language,
Robert Chamberlain has observed:

Like Spenser, whom he so much admired, Crabbe had and retained a taste
for the strange flavor of contemporary language laced with outmoded
diction. When he borrows “nymph” and “swain” from the poet’s
idylls…he is often employing a kind of semantic irony. (29)

This feature of Crabbe’s language is, in many ways, consonant with Clough’s desire for a
renovated English idiom that would have as its guiding characteristic a paradoxical, some
might say oxymoronic, progressive conservatism. In Mari Magno Clough “laces” the
novelistic, prosaic language that dominates the poem. One example of many that gives a
sense of this strategy occurs in the section entitled “My Tale” where the narrator,
describing a meal he ate while traveling through the south of France, notes that he and his
fellow travelers ate “To appease our hunger, and allay our drouth” (“My Tale” 39). This
irruption of the archaic “drouth” (along with similar examples elsewhere) is jarring to the
reader. Elsewhere the “lacing” takes the form of syntactic archaism coupled with alliteration that infuses an aura of Chaucer’s English into the more modern English that is juxtaposed or intertwined with it. Again, one example of many communicates the nature of Clough’s idiom here. The poem opens:

A Youth was I, an elder friend with me,—
August it was now ending—o’er the sea
We went; the wide Atlantic ocean o’er,
Two amongst many, the strong steamer bore. (Preface 1-4)

Although Clough will never be accused of replicating “Whan that April with his showres soote/The droughte of March hath perced to the roote,…” this, of course, is not his intention. Syntactic inversion in of itself is not evidence of a specific linguistic philosophy on Clough’s part, but in a poem that reads very much like a novel in verse, perhaps even to a greater degree than Aurora Leigh, Clough’s modern English is flecked with these light touches of the language’s heritage. Whether this works as poetry is a different question, but it is place where Clough’s language ended up and his final interpretation of the Broad Church orientation to language he had devoted himself to three decades earlier.

The Consolations of Paraphrase: Arnold’s Late Elegies

Matthew Arnold’s post-Merope poetry has, for the most part, suffered one of two undesirable fates. Either critics have chosen to ignore or severely downplay the importance of these later poems, or the poems have received harsh and disparaging treatment. These approaches are in keeping with the standard narrative of Arnold’s career which records the simultaneous decline in Arnold’s poetic power and production and the concurrent emergence of the critical sensibility of the future Victorian sage.
Arnold’s later poems represent, to be sure, an uneven achievement at best. When suitably and sufficiently engaged, Arnold triumphs with efforts such as “Thyrsis,” but such high points are the exception rather than the rule. It is in many ways an occasional poetry rather than the poetry of philosophical, political, and social high seriousness.

What, then, can be said about the poems that Arnold wrote during the last three decades of his life when he was busy with other writing projects and burdened by the travel and bureaucratic rigors of his school inspectorship? The poems still reward close study, particularly if they are approached from the perspective of what they can reveal about Arnold’s language and attitudes to language at this stage in his life.

When Arnold finds success in his poetic twilight, it is almost always as an elegist and the following discussion of Arnold’s late poetry will focus on four of his major elegies “Haworth Churchyard,” “Heine’s Grave,” “Rugby Chapel,” and “Thyrsis.” These elegies offer the best insights into the final stage of the evolution of Arnold’s poetic language. I will argue that the elegies are broadly linked by their variations on a particular aesthetic/linguistic feature that Arnold employs in much the same manner that he does with the simile in his earlier lyric, dramatic and narrative poems. Whereas the simile was the most obvious manifestation (and attempt to realize in poetic practice) of Arnold’s instrumental, epistemological, taxonomic orientation to language in the service of a didactic, audience-focused poetics in the early 1850s, the aesthetic features of these later poems are symptomatic of Arnold’s evolving and intensifying interest in a Coleridgean lingua communis that preserves and disseminates “the best that has been thought and known in the world” and is thus consonant with much of his critical effort in prose during these same years.
“Haworth Churchyard” is a useful place to begin this examination of Arnold’s later poetry because it offers the clearest example of this recurrent aesthetic/linguistic feature that is crucial to gauging Arnold’s changing interests. Further, the unusual circumstances surrounding the poem’s composition and publication led Arnold to make several important revisions to the poem over two decades, and thus the poem itself in its deletions and additions offers insight into the evolution of Arnold’s questions and ideas about language during these later years.

Charlotte Brontë died at the end of March in 1855. At the same time, Harriet Martineau was also gravely ill and her death seemed imminent. Matthew Arnold had made the acquaintance of both women several years earlier at a dinner party at the home of Wordsworth’s son-in-law Edward Quillinan on December 21, 1850. By all accounts Arnold failed to make a favorable impression on Brontë and Martineau. The feeling was apparently mutual since Arnold was consistently uncharitable when speaking of either of the authors and their work in his later correspondence. “Haworth Churchyard” itself, as Culler puts it is “a somewhat ungracious poem by way of elegy” (239). Indeed Arnold’s relationships with all of the subjects of the four elegies I am considering (Brontë, Martineau, Heine, Dr. Arnold and Clough) are all marked by different degrees of ambivalence. Why then would Arnold feel compelled to elegize Brontë and Martineau? Evidently “Haworth Churchyard” is, like any elegy but particularly so in this case, concerned with larger issues.

Shortly after Brontë’s death, Arnold indicated to a junior editor of Fraser’s Magazine his forthcoming submission of a poem on the two authors. “Haworth Churchyard” appeared in Fraser’s Magazine in May 1855, but Martineau’s unexpected
recovery caused Arnold great embarrassment and prevented him from reprinting the poem in the collected editions of his works until 1877. In the interim he extracted lines from the 1855 version of the poem to publish under a new title (“Early Death and Fame”) and when he came to republish the poem in 1877 he removed lines containing topical allusions tied to the politics of the Crimean War. Finally, he appended an Epilogue to the poem. Both the 1855 and 1877 versions of “Haworth Churchyard” and the intervening revisions need to be considered in order to assess the poem’s role in Arnold’s thinking about his medium.

“Haworth Churchyard” opens with the speaker recounting his meeting with Harriet Martineau and Charlotte Brontë four years earlier in the Lake District:

Where, under Loughrigg, the stream
Of Rotha sparkles through fields
Vested for ever with green,
Four years since, in the house
Of a gentle spirit, now dead—
Wordsworth’s son-in-law, friend—
I saw the meeting of two
Gifted women. (1-8)

In the course of recording the events of the evening, the speaker recounts the familiar Victorian social courtesy of signing the hostesses’ album:

The two held converse; they wrote
In a book which of world-famous souls
Kept the memorial; bard,
Warrior, statesman, had signed
Their names… (18-22)

As the speaker scans the various entries, his eye lights upon one in particular that seizes his attention:

[C]hief glory of all

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Scott had bestowed there his last
Breathing of song, with a pen
Tottering, a death-stricken hand. (22-25)

Arnold’s focus here on the image of Sir Walter Scott’s verses, which, as Kenneth Allott reports, were likely the last he ever wrote, introduces a central concern of the elegy as a whole, namely the question of the survival and status of a writer’s works following the death of that writer. More specifically, the elegy is interested in the survival and status of a writer’s language including her or his last words. In the 1855 version of “Haworth Churchyard,” the lines quoted above are followed by two more which suggest that such considerations contribute to the elegist’s grief and mourning: “I beheld; the obscure/Saw the famous. Alas!” (26-27). These lines also seem subtly to suggest that what is particularly painful for the speaker is that the language of one of the most famous of recent bards, Scott, is juxtaposed indiscriminately with the words of the obscure, including some of the now “obscure” lesser bards, warriors and statesmen found in the same album. In “Haworth Churchyard,” then, Arnold is particularly concerned with the broader issue of literary immortality and, specifically, the status and survival of a writer’s language and last words. Indeed, when Martineau’s recovery precluded subsequent publication for two decades, Arnold, as I mentioned previously, extracted these very lines from “Haworth Churchyard” that explored this issue and published them as a separate poem under the title “Early Death and Fame.”

If this is the larger, general issue that Arnold establishes from the outset of “Haworth Churchyard,” the later sections of the poem and the revisions Arnold made to it over the years, including the addition of an Epilogue as late as 1877, suggest the conclusions he reached and the attendant implications for language. One of the most
striking aspects of the latter third of “Haworth Churchyard” is the fact that Martineau and Charlotte Brontë disappear from the poem and are replaced by others, most notably Emily Brontë. Beginning at line 90, Arnold turns to Emily Brontë and immediately, as was the case with Scott earlier in the poem, makes reference to her dying song, reintroducing the more general concern with which this elegy is engaged. Drawing on details supplied by Charlotte Brontë in her Preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, Arnold identifies these dying words as Emily Brontë’s poem “No coward soul in mine.” However, as the speaker of the poem notes, these words are unacceptable despite being admittedly powerful:

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--[S]he, who sank
Baffled, unknown, self-consumed;
Whose too bold dying song
Stirred like a clarion-blast, my soul. (97-100)
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Deeply concerned with the survival and status of a writer’s language, particularly their last words, Arnold combines the role of poet and critic by taking it upon himself to ensure the survival of the writer’s language by incorporating the very words of Emily Brontë into his own poem. “Haworth Churchyard” concludes by describing the graves of Charlotte, Emily and Branwell Brontë:

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Sleep, O cluster of friends,
Sleep!—or only when May
Brought by the west-wind returns
Back to your native heaths,
And the plover is heard on the moors,
Yearly awake to behold
The opening summer, the sky,
The shining moorland—to hear
The drowsy bee, as of old,
Hum o’er the thyme, the grouse,
Call from the heather in bloom!
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Sleep, or only for this
Break your united repose! (112-124)

This passage, of course alludes to the concluding sentences of *Wuthering Heights*:

I sought, and soon discovered, the three head-stones on the slope next to the moor—the middle one grey, and half buried in heath…I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watching the moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth. (300)

In many respects, Arnold, here beginning to adopt simultaneously the roles of poet and critic, moves beyond allusion into what might be called poetic paraphrase. In 1877 when he added the epilogue to “Haworth Churchyard,” his paraphrasing is even more direct as he refers to the occupants of the graves in Haworth churchyard as “Unquiet souls” and makes reference to the “never idle workshop of nature” which also seems to echo not so much Senancour but rather Charlotte Brontë’s famous observation that *Wuthering Heights* was “hewn in a wild workshop” (328).

The significance of “Haworth Churchyard” is that it establishes a recurrent pattern in Arnold’s later elegies. Again and again we see Arnold incorporating, with various degrees of directness, actual words, phrases, bits of language from the works of the elegies’s subjects. Often, as was the case with the similes, these paraphrases are the way in which the poem concludes. Arnold utilizes the traditional movement of the elegy from grief to consolation to link the consolations of immortality to the elegist’s preservation and perpetuation of the deceased’s linguistic performances in the elegy itself. Arnold’s poetry itself is enlisted in his critical project of disseminating the “the best that has been thought and known in the world.” A crucial aspect of that critical project is Arnold’s long resisted and belated engagement, in these elegies, with the lingua communis. The
paraphrasing impulse that becomes a dominant aesthetic/linguistic feature of Arnold’s late poetry, and which has its roots in “Haworth Churchyard,” is the poet’s attempt to use his self-admitted diminishing poetic talents to some useful end and to transform his own poems into a vehicle whereby not just the “best that has been thought and known in the world” but also “the best that has been said in the world” (suitably or dubiously depending on your perspective, improved or modified by Arnold himself) is communicated to present and future readers. Indeed it is worth noting that Arnold’s famous maxim from his essay “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” originally was the “best that has been thought and said in the world.”

“Heine’s Grave” offers a more extended and decidedly less elegant example of the tentative steps that Arnold takes in “Haworth Churchyard.” There are also some important differences in this poem compared to his elegy for Harriet Martineau and the Brontës. Once again, as Johnson notes the poem “is surprisingly unkind for an elegy” (67). “Heine’s Grave” was composed sometime between September of 1858 when Arnold visited Heine’s grave in Montmatre and April 1863 when he was preparing his Oxford lecture on Heine. The poem opens, as do all of Arnold’s late elegies, with a description of place that is in some way central to the subject of the elegy. In this case it is Heine’s grave in Paris:

‘*Henri Heine*’—tis here!
That black tombstone, the name
Carved there—no more! and the smooth,
Swarded alleys, the limes
Touched with yellow by hot
Summer, but under them still,
In September’s bright afternoon,
Shadow and verdure, and cool.
Trim Montmartre! the faint
Murmur of Paris outside;
Crisp everlasting flowers,
Yellow and black, on the graves. (1-12)

The permanence suggested in the image of Heine’s name carved into the black marble of the tombstone is juxtaposed against the images of the mutability and decay inherent in the natural surroundings. This gives way, as was also the case in “Haworth Churchyard” to anxieties regarding literary immortality. In this case, the focus is also increasingly on the survival of the writer’s words. In discussing Heine’s satirical writing on England, the speaker notes that the lessons and language of England’s greatest writers are being ignored and forgotten by a crass and ignorant nineteenth-century England:

We, too, say that she now—
Scarce comprehending the voice
Of her greatest golden-mouthed sons
Of a former age any more—
Stupidly travels her round
Of mechanic business, and lets
Slow die out of her life
Glory, and genius, and joy. (77-84)

In “Haworth Churchyard,” the speaker’s poetic paraphrasing of the language of Wuthering Heights represents an attempt to preserve it in order to arrest or at least retard the process of cultural decay intimated in the lines quoted above. Something quite similar happens in “Heine’s Grave.” Arnold devotes almost one third of this poem (particuarly ll. 125-200) to what is little more than a poetic paraphrasing of selected passages from Heine’s works. This act of paraphrase is also of course an act of translation as Arnold seeks to make Heine’s words available to a broader English audience. He combs Heine’s collected works for touchstones, which, in his hands, might be translated and polished and then incorporated into his poem. His paraphrasing of
Heine spans the German writer’s entire career from his *Neue Gedichte (New Poems)* of 1844 to his famous collection of verse *Romanzero* (1851) to his multi-volume *Reisebilder* (1826-31), an account of his summer travels that mixes autobiography with social and literary criticism. One such example, which might be selected from many, is from the “Die Harzreise” section of the *Reisebilder*. Arnold writes:

Heine! Thou climbest again!
Up, through the tall dark firs
Warming their heads in the sun,
Chequering the grass with their shade—
Up, by the stream, with its huge
Moss-hung boulders, and thin
Musical water half-hid—
Up, o’er the rock-strewn slope,
With the sinking sun, and the air
Chill, and the shadows now
Long on the grey hill-side…(155-165)

This is a paraphrase and translation of a passage in Heine that one Victorian translator rendered as:

The mountain is strewn with great blocks of granite…The golden sunbeams shot most charmingly through the dense dark green of the pines…Swelling banks of moss everywhere; for the stones are all grown over feet-damp with moss…Delicious coolness and a dreamy murmur of unseen springs; here and there one can see how the water is trickling, crystal clear under the stones. (Allott 476)

Here and elsewhere in the poem Arnold combines the roles of poet, critic and translator as he simultaneously transforms, preserves and exposes his interpretation of Heine’s language to an English audience in a variation of the practice inaugurated in “Haworth Churchyard.” In so doing it is a supplement to Arnold’s critical efforts and Arnold conceived of the poem as a kind of pendant or accompaniment to his lecture, and eventual critical essay, on Heine. As Riede has argued with respect to this poem (and
others from Arnold’s later years): “Arnold’s most ambitious late poetry aspired to the condition of criticism. ‘Heine’s Grave’ is not unlike a chopped prose version of the essay on Heine” (212). Indeed, Arnold’s diary indicates that he was working on completing both the poem and the lecture in the early spring of 1863, and so they are part of one combined assessment of Heine’s achievement. Riede again offers a useful characterization of what Arnold is engaged in with this poem: “He is writing verse criticism in the same mode as his prose criticism—an urbane, knowledgeable tone supported by quotation and allusion” (213). Quotation, allusion and differing degrees of paraphrase become the means by which the language of these later elegies is detained by a desire for the preservation and transmission of an expanded version of the lingua communis. Arnold’s vision of the lingua communis is expanded here by incorporating and translating the words of non-English authors and is a much different vision of Clough’s interest in the lingua communis in Amours de Voyage for example. Arnold’s engagement with allusion and his tendency to translate and paraphrase rather than ironically revise, as Clough does in Amours de Voyage in particular, might be seen as Arnold’s conscious or unconscious response to his friend, just as the concerns about the inadequacy of language to name might be read as Clough’s belated, and again perhaps unconscious response, to the problem which he perceived Arnold to be struggling with in his earlier poetry.

“Rugby Chapel,”Arnold’s elegy for his father Dr. Thomas Arnold, offers an interesting variation on the paraphrasing/ translating linguistic strategy of “Haworth Churchyard” and “Heine’s Grave.” Indeed, it complicates Arnold’s strategy in these previous poems in interesting ways. The flurry of public attacks and defenses of Thomas
Arnold that attended the publication of Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* in April 1857 rekindles Arnold’s interest in producing a poetic memorial to his father, now dead for almost fifteen years. While he vehemently rejects the charge of fanaticism leveled at Dr. Arnold by Fitzjames Stephen, Arnold is, at the same time, ambivalent about entrusting the defense of his father’s legacy to Hughes and his novel, just as he had been similarly chary about A.P. Stanley’s hagiographic *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* in 1845.

The poem opens, as Culler notes, where *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* ends—in the Rugby Chapel. as seen in the twilight of an autumn’s day (272):

> Coldly, sadly, descends  
> The autumn-evening. The field  
> Strewn with its dank yellow drifts  
> Of withered leaves, and the elms,  
> Fade into the dimness apace,  
> Silent; hardly a shout  
> From the few boys late at their play!  
> The lights come out in the street,  
> In the school-room windows; but cold,  
> Solemn, unlighted, austere,  
> Through the gathering darkness, arise  
> The chapel walls, in whose bound  
> Thou, my father! art laid. (1-13)

Such a particularized local setting and detail, however, quickly gives way to the poem’s central conceit which employs the familiar comparison between life and an arduous, uphill pilgrimage. This controlling metaphor for the poem, likely drawn from Arnold’s memories of his own walks in the Lake District, is reminiscent of the twin journeys represented in “Resignation.” What is most interesting from the point of view of Arnold’s ideas about language is, once again, how he chooses to bring the poem to a conclusion. At the end of the poem the speaker proclaims:
See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending?—A God
Marshalled them, gave them their goal.
Ah, but the way is so long!
Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.
--Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Stagger for ever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste. (171-187)

These lines offer a succinct summary of Thomas Arnold’s Broad Church position regarding the need for a greater spirit of ecumenicalism within the Church of England which he outlined in his controversial 1833 pamphlet *Principles of Church Reform*, the work that brought Arnold to national prominence. Such a summary is not surprising as father and son were in basic agreement on this issue. Culler points out that “[F]ar from feeling any imperfect sympathy with his father, he had developed a strong sense that in his school work and his religious and social essays he was continuing the work that his father had begun” (272).

The poem also continues the words of Thomas Arnold but in a more aesthetically satisfying way than “Haworth Churchyard” and particularly “Heine’s Grave.” The use of martial imagery in the conclusion of the poem is, more than coincidentally, precisely the same type of imagery that Thomas Arnold had used himself in 1833. He had argued in striking terms that the relationship of the various denominations within an expanded National Church should be as “different tribes” that would “act together as it were in one
army and under one command, yet should each retain the arms and manner of fighting with which habit has made them most familiar” (qtd. in O’Connell 78). Arnold’s adoption of his father’s cherished martial imagery is not unique to “Rugby Chapel.” Critics have pointed out its appearance in the concluding nightmarish image of “Dover Beach” as well as in Clough’s *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* among other poems. In “Rugby Chapel,” however, it is enlisted specifically to celebrate one of his father’s central convictions. While Thomas Arnold was not gifted with the literary talents of an Emily Brontë or a Heinrich Heine, Arnold still looks to incorporate into the consolation of his elegy, a perpetuation not just of his father’s ideas but also his particular manner of communicating those ideas. Thomas Arnold’s contributions to the lingua communis may be modest and passing, but in faithfully paraphrasing one of his central ideas about the nature of the English church, Matthew Arnold finds a way to celebrate it and communicate it to readers a quarter of a century later who also likely had not read the words of Thomas Arnold himself. In a poem that commemorates Thomas Arnold’s mission more than his personal life or character, Matthew Arnold, far more subtly than “Haworth Churchyard” and “Heine’s Grave” but also quite effectively, enshrines his father’s most memorable linguistic/aesthetic achievement. Unlike “Haworth Churchyard” and “Heine’s Grave” which are relatively bereft of literary allusion beyond Arnold’s at times heavy-handed ventriloquizing of the language of the subjects of the elegies, “Rugby Chapel” is a virtual echo chamber of allusions. Riede has pointed out the allusions and echoes in the poem to Arnold’s previous poetry as well as the language of Exodus and Matthew among others (156-158). Thus not only does Arnold fulfill his critical role as preserver, interpreter and ultimately disseminator of the best that has been
said or uttered in the world by his adoption and adaptation of the words of his elegiac subjects, he places these transplanted linguistic fragments in juxtaposition with the language of the Authorized Version and other monuments in England’s lingua communis--perhaps with the pollyanna-like hopes of ennoblement by association.

“Rugby Chapel” is an advance on the strategy that Arnold initially deploys in “Haworth Churchyard” and “Heine’s Grave” and it reaches its apotheosis in “Thyrsis.” The allusions and echoes of Arnold’s poetic predecessors reach something of a saturation point in this poem as Riede observes:

He [Arnold] is less in control, however, of the numerous allusions to poets in the English tradition—Milton, Gray, Tennyson, and, especially Keats. Bloom, in fact, complains that Arnold is driven out of his own poem by a language that is imitative of Keats’s odes to the point of plagiarism. Though unfair, Bloom’s comment does suggest the extreme difficulty Arnold had in controlling alien voices within his poems. (213)

In becoming a poet of paraphrase and quotation, Arnold had submitted in the quest to fashion a distinctive voice for himself as a poet. He is more concerned with preserving and transmitting rather than creating it seems at this point in his career. Having, in a sense, convened key voices and linguistic fragments from the Western literary canon as he had done in a more limited way in “Rugby Chapel,” it remains to be seen how Arnold guided Clough’s linguistic contributions into this literary parliament. This, obviously, posed something of a problem given Arnold’s oft-repeated and at times openly antagonistic attitude to Clough’s poetry, particularly on stylistic grounds. “Thyrsis” poses a problem for Arnold if he hopes to follow the pattern of his other late elegies in enfolding some sort of celebration and enshrinement of his subject’s use of language in the consolation of the poem.
As critics have never failed to point out, there is a certain coldness and distance in Arnold’s elegy, and the poet himself came to lament the impression that the poem had created as he noted in a letter to Shairp:

“Thyrsis” is a very quiet poem, but I think solid and sincere. It will not be popular, however. It had long been in my head to connect Clough with that Cumnor country, and when I began I was carried irresistibly into this form…one has the feeling, if one reads the poem as a memorial poem, that not enough is said about Clough in it…Still Clough had this idyllic side too; to deal with this suited my desire to deal again with that Cumnor country. (3:35)

Arnold’s mourning and celebration of Clough is indeed very quiet, and his recognition of Clough’s achievement is even more muted and private.

Early in “Thyrsis,” the speaker remembers the time spent in the Cumnor landscape with Clough as one in which both served a poetic apprenticeship:

Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assayed.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd’s holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away. (35-40)

Indeed, reduced to a poetry of paraphrase, quotation and allusion, there is a certain poignancy in Arnold’s admission that “My pipe is lost.” Further, it was at Oxford the speaker argues, that Clough’s “piping took a troubled sound/Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;/He could not wait their passing, he is dead” (48-50). Arnold’s specific use of Thyrsis and Corydon from among the many shepherds of Greek pastoral poetry may well be a gesture to the epigraphs of The Bothie, the poem by Clough on which Arnold focused so many of his negative comments and which he always mistakenly judged to be the fruit of Clough’s disastrous final years at Oxford.
Having essentially designated the bulk of Clough’s poetic oeuvre a mistake, Arnold would seem to be at an impasse in his efforts to celebrate Clough’s linguistic performances in a similar manner to his acknowledgements of the achievements of Emily Brontë, Heinrich Heine, and, more indirectly, Thomas Arnold. Yet, it was apparently some of Clough’s poetry that Arnold took with him to Oxford during one of the periods of the poem’s extended and sporadic composition. As Arnold noted in a letter to Blanche Clough: “I cannot tell you how glad I am to have the lines you have sent me. I shall take them [some poems of Clough] with me to Oxford, where I shall go alone after Easter;--and there among the Cumnor hills where we have so often rambled, I shall be able to think him over as I should wish.” (2:121). One of the two most memorable images or tropes from “Thyrsis” is the extended comparison between Clough’s premature flight from the sheltered environment of Oxford to the multitudinous modern world with the premature flight and parting cry of the cuckoo. The other, of course, is the famous signal elm that the speaker, in his grief, for a time fruitlessly quests after, only to eventually discover and set in motion the move to consolation in the elegy. It is undoubtedly true that the tree is primarily symbolic, perhaps representing as Culler suggests the imaginative power within to write or to want to write poetry (260). While there have been inconclusive attempts to locate an actual specific locale in the Cumnor Hills for the elm, the true location of the elm combined with the details of the cuckoo are to be found elsewhere--in Clough’s poetry itself.

Among those verses of Clough that Arnold would have seen and been previously familiar with from the Rugby Magazine and might well have had with him during one of his visits to Oxford (although there is no evidence of this) was the poem entitled “To ___,
On Going to India.” In this valedictory address, a youthful Clough finds consolation in the midst of his sorrow over an imminent separation from a school friend who is on the verge of departing for Australia (a different southern country than the one mentioned by Arnold in “Thyrsis”). Clough notes two features of a familiar natural landscape:

The west is waxing pale,  
And the deep hollow of the hamlet dale  
Is donning fast afar its misty shroud,  
And from the covert of our old elm tree  
The cuckoo calleth loud  
And now the last time, brother unto thee… (6-11)

Unable to find anything in the language of Clough’s mature poetry that he considered worth paraphrasing in order to preserve and perpetuate, Arnold may well have turned to the Clough that he had known before Oxford—the star Rugby pupil—and the images of the poetry from that period. It is in this Clough and in this poetry, rather than what he perceived to be in tortured Clough and equally tortured poetry of Balliol and Oriel, that Arnold seeks and finds consolation and poetry worth preserving. In the end, Clough’s survival as a poet is accomplished by Arnold’s appropriation of images from his earliest poetry and their translation and transformation into the central symbols and tropes of Arnold’s elegy. In the letter to Blanche, quoted above, Arnold expresses his desire to think over Clough as “I could wish.” This is the Clough that Arnold wishes to remember. While the poem ends by looking forward, “Thyrsis” has in one sense worked its way back from Arnold’s misperception of Clough on his departure from Oxford and finds consolation in the earlier idea of the Rugby Clough, Thomas Arnold’s star pupil and pride of the school. Because Arnold had actually spent very little time at Rugby with Clough, it is also Arnold’s imagined ideal of his friend before they were friends. It is not
surprising therefore that the dominant image of the poem (the signal elm) and one of the more notorious images (the cuckoo with which Clough is unfairly compared) are what Arnold may have chosen to select from Clough’s work and juxtapose with the touchstones of Milton, Gray, Keats and Tennyson among others. Clough’s immortality in poetic terms is guaranteed by Arnold’s decision to incorporate that which he considered to be the best in Clough into his own verse—a verse already saturated in the voices of the literary tradition that Arnold would devote much of his critical effort to disseminating to a wider public.

Arnold’s late elegies are a testament to his continued and changing interest in language, but they also suggest that Arnold, on some level, saw himself more as an arbiter of the lingua communis than a contributor to its continued growth; more guardian than innovator or more critic than poet, which indeed he was following Meropo. Arnold seems to recognize this role for himself in an occasional poem from this period, “The Progress of Poesy”:

Youth rambles on life’s arid mount,
And strikes the rock, and finds the vein,
And brings the water from the fount,
The fount which shall not flow again.
The man mature with labour chops
For the bright stream a channel grand,
And sees not that the sacred drops
Ran off and vanished out of hand.
And then the old man totters nigh,
And feebly rakes among the stones.
The mount is mute, the channel dry;
And down he lays his weary bones. (1-12)
It is probably unfair to describe Arnold’s efforts in his later poems as a feeble raking of the stones. In another poem from this period, Arnold admits in the similarly titled “Persistency of Poetry”:

Though the Muse be gone away,
Though she move not earth today,
Souls, erewhile who caught her word,
Ah! still harp on what they heard. (1-4)

In a certain sense this is what Arnold is doing in these last poems—harping on. In all of these later elegies Arnold finds a way—sometimes privately, subtly, skillfully and elegantly and at other times in a heavy-handed and obvious—to draw attention to the language or linguistic performances of the subject of the elegy. Further it is this language—appropriately selected, polished and “translated” by Arnold himself and in “Rugby Chapel” and “Thyrsis” juxtaposed with previously-established touchstones—that is the guarantor of true literary immortality. Like Clough, Arnold was frightened by the perceived degeneration of the language and his late poetry of paraphrase and allusion, while different in scope and attitude than Clough’s efforts in *Mari Magno* and the earlier writings on language and literature, joins Clough’s late poetry in seeking a renewed sense of harmony and balance between the forces of tradition and innovation.

Arnold’s last major poem is yet another elegy. “Westminster Abbey” was occasioned by the death of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley in 1882. It is perhaps fitting, given Arnold’s interest in these late elegies in the lasting contributions that writers can make to the language, that this last poem is located in Westminster Abbey, the home not only of Stanley’s deanery but also the graves and memorials to those writers recognized by the nation for their contributions to the English language.
AFTERWORD

In many ways the account of Arthur Hugh Clough’s and Matthew Arnold’s career-long attempts to find a suitable verbal medium for their respective poems, pursued over the preceding four chapters, is a depressing one. Frustrated in turn by their own interesting but impractical sense of idealism about the nature and possibilities of language and their unsettled intimations of the ineffectiveness and unwieldiness of their medium, Clough and Arnold fight what at times seems a quixotic battle to formulate idioms that would do justice to their own political and poetic ambitions.

However, as the title of one of Clough’s most famous poems counsels “say not the struggle nought availeth.” Although their attempts to realize their linguistic ideals in poetic practice seems doomed to failure from the outset, there is something instructive in identifying and considering the specific contours, failures, provisional triumphs and remaining questions involved in such a struggle. In the “failure” of Clough andArnold there is, for the reader of the two poets and the Victorian period more generally, abundant recompense.

First, Clough’s and Arnold’s encounter with Victorian philology, as it has been traced in the preceding pages, illuminates just how varied, rich and contradictory discourse it is during the Victorian period. Unable or unwilling to commit themselves to a more limited and perhaps coherent subfield of that discourse as well as writing at the
moment when the field of Victorian philology was at its most fluid and transitional, Clough’s and Arnold’s situation in analogous to the image of the night battle that closes “Dover Beach”: “And we are here as on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,/Where ignorant armies clash by night” (35-37). While I do not wish to equate the discourse of Victorian philology with ignorance, I do want to suggest that Clough and Arnold, like the speaker and his beloved in “Dover Beach,” found themselves caught in the midst of contending and clashing philological factions, many bearing the banners of institutional and/or cultural capital. Rather than choose sides, as Hardy and Hopkins did, Arnold and Clough remained undecided or at best provisional in their attachments. Like philological bricoleurs, they draw upon and creatively adopt and adapt the philological ideas and insights of diverse thinkers and orientations as they were mediated through institutional and textual frameworks. Although this occasionally, or even often, involved them is strange or overly optimistic and idealistic ideas and attitudes to language that were destined to fail when practically applied, the process itself and the twists and turns and recursive wandering that characterizes it is of interest.

Second, by beginning to establish some of the connections between Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough and Victorian philology, I have attempted to situate or to use Edward Said’s term “affiliate” the poetry of both men in a specific Victorian context that has largely been ignored in previous discussions of the two poets.122

Finally, the aforementioned “affiliation” of Clough’s and Arnold’s poetry has helped to illuminate the specific, historical grounding in which certain key and much discussed aesthetic features of the two poets’s exists. Their shared experiments with meter, rhyme and genre; Clough’s interest in allusion and the spirit of parody or the
deployment of slang, jargon and dialect; Arnold’s various engagements with the simile all have a specific historical context that can be identified and are not solely the products of individual genius and style.

In the introduction to this study I suggested that to follow Clough and Arnold through their careers and their struggles with language was analogous to Clough’s image, in “Qua Cursum Ventus,” of the two ships at sea pursuing parallel but independent paths to the same ultimate port. This remains the case and the preceding chapters have shown both the similarities and differences in their engagement with Victorian philology. Both poets engage with Tractarian views of language and the idea of Reserve in particular. However, the extent of that engagement varies and in Clough’s case it is tied to the need to cultivate an aesthetic sensibility and lyric voice, while for Arnold it is consistently linked to the need to establish authority as a poet or in relation to his audience. Both poets produce their greatest poetry in the years when they confront their most cherished ideals about language and come to realize the need to accommodate such ideals to a sense of reality and practicality. Again, for Clough this is conceived of in a political sense (the desire to adopt a Broad Church orientation to language and the realization of the problems involved in realizing it) while for Arnold this idealism is philosophical (the question of semantic idealism and the referential inadequacy of words). Finally, both poets come to recognize and appreciate the role of literary artists in preserving and purifying what Dennis Taylor, in his study of Thomas Hardy, quoting T.S. Eliot calls “the dialect of the tribe.” Again, however, this recognition occurs at different points in their careers.
With the poetic achievements and linguistic virtuosity of poets such as Tennyson, Browning, Harding and Hopkins and the philological achievements, most notably, the Oxford English dictionary project, it is not surprising that, for these and other reasons, the nineteenth century was popularly known as the century of words. The preceding chapters have attempted to illuminate and explore, through the efforts of Arnold and Clough, two important figures that lived in that age of words and attempted to make their own contributions to it. Their efforts, in this respect, do not speak to us of a triumphant success. Their story is one of struggle, effort, frustration, occasionally brilliant successes, and intermittent bitter disappointments. It is a story that is compelling and important for that.
NOTES

1 Aarsleff mentions Latham in conjunction with another early English philologist, J.C. Prichard: “Latham was known both for his very popular English Language (1841) and for his Natural History of the Varieties of Man (1850)” (208). Turley elaborates on Latham’s specific contribution: “Although it has no pretensions beyond offering a general survey of linguistic study, Latham’s English Language is unimpeachably contemporary with respect to advances in philological study. It makes lengthy reference to Grimm and is at pains to reflect philology’s revision of English’s status rather than bemoan any neglect of the classical languages” (154).

2 The diverse convictions, aims and projects of the early Victorian poets and poetic theorists were loosely held together by the need to counter the challenge posed to the utility of poetry by Jeremy Bentham in Book III of The Rationale of Reward (1825) as Alba Warren, long ago, pointed out: “Thus in spite of their disparate aims, the theorists of poetry were united in their desire to defend poetry against the onslaught of the Utilitarians, who derided it as a waste of time, with the assertion that poetry was a serious business and that the reading, writing and appreciation of poetry was an important activity not to be undertaken in the spirit of the dilettante” (5-6).

3 Clough is also, of course, acknowledging the special relationship based on history and proximity between Eton and Windsor. A special bond had formed between the Royal Family and Eton since the time of George I, and both George III and George IV were known to make frequent visits to the school.

4 In Boys Together: English Public Schools, 1800-1860, John Chandos identifies this general formative role of the School as the “schoolboy mystic” and describes it in the following terms: “The tribal character of the mystic is what distinguishes its expression from other European and from American records of juvenile society. Most writers of western culture have at some point explored the vivid wonders of childhood memory. The French, in particular, have been attentive to the eye and ear and nose of childhood...but in these instances (as in English literature prior to the mid eighteenth century), school is merely the environment in which the young individual struggles and is examined; the events never shape as the celebration of a valuable corporate experience.” (Chandos 20)

5 Arnold’s controversial and public battles with Utilitarians, Evangelicals and Tractarians alike probably cost him a bishopric but also gained him enough national notoriety to garner an audience with Queen Victoria and a Royal Visit to Rugby by the dowager Queen Adelaide. This exciting, combative environment stands in contrast to Tennyson’s nondescript Lincolnshire grammar school or Browning’s solitary rambles in his father’s library in Camberwell.

6 Arnold and Clough never could offer an indictment of the experience as, for example, Coleridge memorably does in “Frost at Midnight” with its images of the “stern preceptor’s face” and the “swimming book” or Shelley does with Eton.

7 When circumstances require the following titles will be used to differentiate among the following three members of the Arnold family only when they are referred to in close proximity with each other. Dr. Thomas Arnold will be referred to as Thomas Arnold, his eldest son Matthew will be referred to as Arnold
and his second son and namesake will be referred to as Tom Arnold rather than the Thomas Arnold the Younger.

8 Thomas Arnold and John Keble had cultivated a friendship since their days at Corpus Christi and Oriel, and in January 1823 John Keble served as the infant’s godfather at the request of his friend.

9 Neither Arnold nor Keble produced a single, extended treatise on language in the manner of Locke or Tooke or Herder and so orientation seems a better appellation to their linguistic thought.

10 Arnold made this ranking of desired schoolboy qualities only once in his career in the context of a specific article on school discipline in the *Quarterly Journal of Education*. It has, nonetheless, become a straw man ever since Strachey’s portrait and has been taken to be Arnold’s repeated and final position on the matter in order to propagate a particular vision of Rugby.

11 Interestingly, Benjamin Jowett claimed it was actually Clough who coined the term “Broad Church” while at Oxford in the years just prior to 1850.

12 Such a view of language undergirded the efforts of Condillac and the universal grammarians in France as well as James Harris’s *Hermes* (1751) and the views of Samuel Johnson in England.


14 In *Essays on a Liberal Education*, Frederic Farrar noted: Without a conception of rhythm, without a gleam of imagination, with a touch of fancy, boys are set down to write verses, and these verses are to be in an unknown tongue in which they scarcely possess a germ of the scantiest vocabulary; or a mastery of the simplest construction; and further, it is to instinct imitation of poets of whom, at their best, they have only read a few score of lines…the pupil is required under all the inexorable exigencies of metre to reproduce an artificial and phraseological Latin the highly elaborate thoughts of grown men, to piece their mutilated fancies, and reproduce their fragmentary conceits. In most cases the very possibility of doing so depends upon his hitting upon a particular epithet, which presents the requisite combination of longs and shorts, or on his evolving some special and often recondite turn of thought and expression…It is a literal fact that a boy very rarely reads through the English he is doing, or knows when it has been turned into Latin, what it is all about; hence, for the next year or two his life resolves itself into a boundless hunt after epithets of the right shape, to be screwed into the greatest number of places; a practice exactly analogous to the putting together of Chinese puzzles, only producing a much less homogeneous and congruous result’ (Fitch 40).

15 Sydney Smith, Frederic Farrar and others pointed to some of the absurdities of classical instruction, and more specifically the exclusively grammatical emphasis of the teaching—“the syntax, the parsing, the quantities and the accents”(Wymer 96)—was a repeated focus of these attacks.

16 Hughes’s later extended interlude in the novel where he offers a description of the vulgus also seems to augur against the progress of liberal language ideas at Rugby. See Part 2, Chapter 3 from *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*.

17 Late in the novel, Brooke lists his goals in what could be the motto of the average Rugbeians, including Tom (and Hughes), that populate the novel: “I want to be A 1 at cricket and football…I want to carry away just as much Latin and Greek as will take me through Oxford respectably” (Hughes 313). These are the sentiments that a student such as Clough could never utter.
In his account of Wordsworth’s education, Richard Clancey singles out, as exceptional, the lack of a requirement in classical composition at Hawkshead. Fifty years later, Rugby was still an exception.

In many ways Thomas Arnold’s views parallel those of Keats who, as Turley notes: “animated by an admiration for the classical aesthetic began to feel and articulate a sense of linguistic and cultural oppression” (97).

Arnold first encountered the practice of idiomatic translation from his own headmaster at Winchester, Gabell. Richard Clancey identifies James Prince Lee, headmaster at King Edward’s School and later Bishop of Manchester, as a key advocate of this type of translation, but Lee had first served as an assistant master at Rugby under Thomas Arnold where he likely learned the practice.

This was a duty expressed elsewhere by Schlegel: “the care of the national language I consider at all times a sacred trust and a most important privilege of the higher orders of society. Every man of education should make it the object of his unceasing concern to preserve his language pure and entire, to speak it, so far as it is in his power, in all its beauty and perfection” (Dowling 29).

The passage from Guesses at Truth is: “How absurd then for a man to call himself a poet or maker! The ablest writer is a gardener first and then a cook. His tasks are, carefully to select and cultivate his strongest and most nutritive thoughts, and, when they are ripe, to dress them, wholesomely, and so that they may have a relish” (24).


In one travel diary Arnold displays a sensitivity to this issue when he writes: This Village is the first Place in which I have seen the Descriptions over the Shops written in Italian: for though the People here can speak it—the prevalent Language is still French, or rather a Mixture between the Two, which they call and Language of the Valley of the Aosta. As far as my Ear can catch it, it is likely the Dialect in which the Prayers and Confessions of the Vaudois are written” (Balliol MS)

Elsewhere, in a letter he asks his friend and fellow Broad Churchman, Richard Whately if he could provide “a good Erse grammar; and that book that you were mentioning, about the Welsh being Picts, and not the Aborigines of Wales?” (McCrum 55). Clough’s letters echo Arnold’s self-respect for spoken language such as the differences he sensed, for example, between British and American English, something which also fascinated Arnold to the end of his life. Further, Stanley records that one of the topics of conversation at the fateful last Rugby graduation dinner in June 1842 was the nature of provincial dialects.

Carlyle described the language of Arnold’s prose as manifesting a ‘unresting, unhasting, dilligence.” (Copley 8), while one of his more recent biographers has described his style as: “burning words-rolling and thundering, and fused together like lava down a mountain side” (Copley 8).

The connection between feeling and emotion with Arnold’s language places him in the tradition of Edmund Burke whose prose style in Reflections on the French Revolution had, as Olivia Smith points out, done much to make possible the emergence of a vernacular English that could claim intellectual legitimacy while still maintaining ties to the feelings, emotions and rhythms of speech. See Olivia Smith, The Politics of Language, 1791-1819, pp. 37-43. Arnold read Burke along with newspaper reports during the excitement of the July Days and it was a purple patch from Burke that Matthew Arnold would memorize to impress his father as a young boy.
Two examples, from many that are possible, are useful to indicate the way in which Arnold’s Rugby sermons often speculated on the nature of language, generally in the context of Scriptural language and interpretation. In a sermon from October 21, 1832, Arnold describes the challenges of reading and interpreting the Bible: “But there are so many parts of the Scriptures and especially the Psalms, and of the New Testament, which every one can understand... I believe that they who have read them most frequently, find that every fresh time of reading makes them see more in them than they saw before: and that without going to fantastical and mystic meanings, but merely by taking the fair and plain sense of the Words.” In February 1833, Arnold used his weekly sermon to discuss the language of the Bible again: “Consider the strength of such words as these ‘As the hart fainteth after the Water Brooks, so fainteth my soul after thee O God! My soul thirsteth for God, yea even for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?’ Make what allowance we will for eastern Language—translate this into the very soberest style of European devotion,—still we cannot mistake in it an Earnestness of Love for Good” (Balliol MS).

Mary Arnold’s notebooks of the family’s literary activities contain many Wordsworthian imitations by the various family members including Edward Penrose Arnold’s imitation of “We Are Seven” entitled “The Three Homes.”

Arnold’s interest in or consonance with Wordsworth’s ideas on language leads, as it did with Coleridge, to that larger frame of linguistic reference of which Wordsworth was a part, namely Romantic philology as disseminated by the German Continental scholarship of Michaelis, Herder and others. Wordsworth’s speculations on language provided a competing interpretation of the concept of the Volkstimme, or the notion that the spirit of the people is expressed in their language. Unlike Coleridge who wanted to link it to the written monuments of literature, Wordsworth conceived of the Volkstimme, not as a hegemonizing cultural force as Herder had envisioned, but rather as the voice of a particular socio-economic group—the lower classes—which countered the classically inflected privileged speech of the upper classes.

One thinks of Tennyson’s more complex exploration of the issue during In Memoriam with the passage in section 95 on “matter-moulded forms of speech.”

It is significant, I think, that the modern writer whom Thomas Arnold most admired and sought to emulate in terms of language and style was William Cobbett. He praises Cobbett several times in his correspondence and notes once: “I am thinking of circulating small tracts a la Cobbett in point of style to show the people the real state of things and their causes” (Campbell 218). Arnold’s admiration of Cobbett’s style makes sense since Cobbett takes a similarly comprehensive view of language and, as Olivia Smith notes, his language skillfully uses competing and contrasting styles to suit the occasion and “is essentially an act of healing, of transforming previously domineering and antagonistic images and styles” (231).

At various points in the text, Hare advocates a Wordsworthian plain speech—“When you doubt between two words chose the plainest, the commonest, the most idiomatic” (294)—and an attack on Augustan linguistic values—“a sort of poetic stage wardrobe, to which anybody might resort for as much tinsel and tawdry lace, and as many Bristol diamonds as he wanted” (70). Elsewhere, however, the text alternately cautions against innovation in language (in the manner of Bentham) and suggests the inevitability of new developments and the evolution of language.

Richard Turley discusses the philological significance of archaic, strongly-inflected words such as “stown” in The Politics of Language in Romantic Literature, pp. 181-183.

Crofton Croker (1798—1854) was an Irish antiquary and compiled Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland (1825—28), Legends of the Lakes (1829), and Popular Songs of Ireland (1837).
Thomas Arnold’s earliest letters to his son at school in Laleham (where he had been sent to improve his proficiency in classical languages) offer a running commentary on the latter’s early struggles with Greek and Latin grammar: “I am sorry, my own Crabby, that you are in Trouble about your Greek Grammar;–it puts me very much in Mind of my own Trouble when I was first put into Phadreus” (5). Arnold family materials also show an early interest in the mutability of signification through a series of puns and verbal riddles located in Matthew Arnold’s early notebooks. This is in addition to the oft-reported anecdote of Matthew Arnold’s vexation when a Rugby student presented him with a bough when he had asked for a bow. The slipperiness of language was brought home early and often to Matthew Arnold and he developed an acute sense of this inherent condition of language.

In later years Arnold would complain bitterly about what he perceived to be Keble’s endorsement of the sacerdotal exclusivity of the Tractarians:

I am sure that you are not right in breaking off all intercourse with an old friend;–in separating yourself from a member of your Church on your own individual authority...I cannot see what it is to make divisions in Christ’s Church if this be not doing so; or what is a harsh and presumptuous judgement. But thus to claim as it were the Church’s power of Excomunication, and pronounce for yourself what opinions ought not to be tolerated as if you were set to judge and to govern...You and your friends constantly assume that you are the only persons who love Christ, and that those who differ from you are merely following their own devices, and trying to persuade themselves that these only are not irreconcilable with Christ’s will. (Campbell 159)

John Griffin notes with regard to Keble’s view of nature:: [T]he beauties and varieties of Nature provide the most striking proof for the existence of God. Keble’s argument so far as it may be called such, derives from Butler’s Analogy of Religion and personal experience. Nature presented a link between God and Man and Keble’s poetic meditation on Nature always leads the reader upward to contemplation of God. (60)

Arnold’s original assessment is found in a letter to J.T. Coleridge: “I do not know whether you have seen John Keble’s Hymns. He has written a great number for most of the holidays and several of the Sundays in the year, and I believe he intends to complete the series. I live in hopes that he will be induced to publish them; and it is my firm opinion that nothing equal to them exists in our language.”

Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins translated an edition of the Psalms which remained the standard edition between 1549-1750. Froude’s jibe implies a general old-fashioned, overly traditional quality about Keble’s language–not surprisingly given that Froude was the Tractarian most in tune and sympathetic to the more modern currents of Romanticism.

These two tracts were among the most collaborative of the Tracts for the Times with Keble serving as editor (a rare role for him) and Newman suggesting the title.

Winchester was well-known (and even self-advertised) as a bastion of High Church loyalties and principles. Despite the fact that Thomas Arnold had attended the school, the decision to send Matthew and Tom to the school where Moberley (a Tractarian sympathizer) was headmaster and Keble (a Tractarian leader even since his “National Apostasy” assize sermon of July 1833) lived in such close proximity is puzzling.

Ian Hamilton and Park Honan both mention the visits: “At Winchester, during breaks from school work, the most exciting things that the Arnold boys had to look forward to was paying visits to John Keble’s nearby residence at Hursley. (Hamilton 36) and “Early in the spring with Tom, he emerged from the Commoners dormitory and cut across open rolling downs on a frosty morning towards nearby Hursley. The boys had an invitation from the Reverend John Keble. Matthew’s godfather did everything for them that an enemy of liberalism could do, it seems, to be civil. Stuffed with pastry, the brothers were taken into a gloomy church that had small, dim clerestories and carved angels soaring up under the rafters...He would
cite Keble’s *Christian Year* in school essays and later find in that book—which he certainly associated, in part, with his mother—a very rare “ethereal light” (Honan 30).

Arnold’s famous comment about Keble in later years seems to suggest, through what is surely typical Arnoldian irony, that he saw Reserve as fundamental to Keble’s character: “I dined last night with a Mr. Grove...He showed me a picture of Faraday which is wonderfully fine: I am almost inclined to get it: it has a curious likeness to Keble, only with a calm, earnest look unlike the latter’s Flibbertigibbet fanatical, twinkling expression.”(Ward 51-52).

Georgina Battiscombe makes this point:

In 1827 the ordinary squire or country parson was still fighting shy of Wordsworth’s deliberate simplicity or the romanticism of Shelley and Keats: his education had not taught him to look for freshness in poetry but for correctitude, for the epithet which Horace would have used rather than for the one expressive of the writer’s personal vision...Therefore for many years the average reader preferred The Christian Year to Lyrical Ballads or The Prelude. If a decimal coinage were to be introduced side by side with the traditional one old fashioned people—and the majority of the human race is old fashioned—might well prefer to continue using the battered but familiar half crowns and florins rather than avail themselves of the new and startling simplicity. (Battiscombe 109)

Anthony Trollope also spent time at Winchester in the years leading up to the emergence of the Tractarians and seems to be commenting in the novel on the absurdities inherent in a de jure interpretation of Reserve. Arabin is, in many ways, partially based on Keble himself (Oxford graduate, poet, Professor of Poetry, retiring to a quiet parish in a southern English diocese etc). What is interesting is his reserved nature throughout the novel—his penchant to murmur responses to questions, his “usual unaffected brilliancy” (1:198); his “quiet earnestness” (1:205).


For a sample of what is generally a critical consensus see Hamilton pp. 70-72 and Biswas pp. 201-207.

Clough entered Balliol in October 1837 and received his Second Class in the Schools in June 1841. Matthew Arnold entered Balliol the following October and the following month Clough was unsuccessful in the Balliol Fellowship examinations. Clough was elected a fellow of Oriel in April 1842 while Arnold remained at Balliol until his Second Class in November 1844. Arnold joined Clough as an Oriel fellow in April 1845 and remained in residence for two years before taking employment in London as personal secretary to Lord Lansdowne in April 1847. Clough remained in residence at Oriel until he resigned his Fellowship in September 1848. Arnold’s Fellowship terminated on the occasion of his marriage in June 1851. This abbreviated chronology reveals that Arnold and Clough were not in residence together at Balliol (as was the case at Rugby) and spent two years together at Oriel before Arnold’s departure for London which is the occasion for the commencement of the justly celebrated Arnold correspondence to Clough.

See Chorley p. 38 and Biswas p. 62.

The one poem that Clough composed during his first year at Balliol was “Truth is a Golden Thread” written in October 1838. As Anthony Kenny has pointed out in his recent study of Clough, the Rugby juvenilia constitutes approximately ten percent of Clough’s complete poetic oeuvre—a disproportionately high amount compared to his contemporaries.

For Clough’s personal contacts with notable Tractarian leaders and disciples and reading of Tractarian texts see Clough’s *Oxford Diaries* pp. 5, 6, 10-12, 39, 43. Clough’s complex friendship with W.G Ward is
tangential to the focus of this study, but it is important, however, to note that Anthony Kenny has pointed out that Ward’s own engagement with the Oxford Movement actually postdates Clough’s interest during 1838 and that Ward, therefore, was not as much of an influence on Clough’s intellectual and religious development as has been generally assumed by earlier critics.

52 See Honan, p. 58 and Hamilton, p. 44.

53 See Clough Oxford Diaries for December 1838 and Correspondence 1:56.

54 In 1838 Keble had published a review in The British Critic on Lockhart’s Life of Scott where he had offers the quintessential definition of his (and the Oxford Movement’s) definition of poetry at this time: “Poetry is the indirect expression in words, most appropriately in metrical words of some overpowering emotion or ruling taste or feeling, the direct indulgence whereof is somehow repressed.”

55 See Keble. Lectures on Poetry 2:82.

56 Patrick Scott notes that Victorian students of language often recognized syntactical usage as a means to recognize the individuality of the author’s mind. Syntax is expressive of the poet’s emotions, but could also be used to veil or obfuscate those emotions as well. See Scott, “Flowering in a Lonely Word: Tennyson and the Victorian Study of Language.” Victorian Poetry 18 (1980), p. 371.

57 See Linda Dowling, Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siecle, xiv, 6.

58 Biswas reads these letters to Gell as evidence of Clough’s admiration of the “Tractarian focus on the beauty and necessity for forms” (66).


63 See the excellent discussion of this aspect of the poem in Evelyn Barish Greenberger “Clough’s ‘The Judgement of Brutus’: A Newly Found Poem” (Victorian Poetry 8, 1970).

64 See for example Clough’s use of maritime imagery in the deeply personal lyric documenting the termination of his friendship with W.G. Ward, “Qua Cursum Ventus” or Claude’s famous “Aqueous Ages” passage in III.iv of Amours de Voyage.

Houghton writes: “Why ‘strange’? In what sense ‘distorted’? How can the heart that is dry for him be not so for others? What exactly are the ‘excitements’ that come and how are they connected—if they are—with ‘act and speech’?...Some of the diction, especially in the metaphors is conventional and flat…” (Houghton 31-32).


The connection between Stagirius and St. Chrysostom has been well-established by Arnold’s note to the poem and Culler links the poem to Tractarian scholarly activity in the University during the early 1840s when Arnold was an undergraduate. Stagirius is also the recipient of an epistle from Gregory of Nyssa who wrote to him, interestingly but cryptically, on the subject of allegory and the communication of religious knowledge.


K. Tillotson intimates a similar sentiment but does not explore its implications for “Cromwell” when she writes: “In this poem may be heard, faintly, the voice of Newman” p. 139.

For an account of Newman’s interpretation of Reserve and its differences from Keble’s original employment of the concept see G.B. Tennyson, Victorian Devotional Poetry pp. 116-130.

For one account of Newman’s pulpit style see Noel Annan, The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics, Geniuses pp. 41-44.

The sonnet on Butler is Arnold’s refutation of Butler’s account of human psychology. It is worth noting that Butler’s Analogy was a work highly regarded by the Tractarians and recommended by Keble in particular. From the point of view of Arnold’s interest in Reserve, Butler makes arguments that are consonant and complementary of the Tractarian idea of Reserve in the fourth of his Sermons entitled “Upon the Government of the Tongue.”

Leavis’s characterization of the poem as “an orotund exercise in thuriferous phrases and generalities” is ostensibly a criticism of the lack of clarity in sound or sense of the poem’s language. The poem is indictment for its veiled and mysterious mode of expression, which for Leavis is a fatal flaw. For a poet interested in the possibilities and potentialities of Reserve this may, indeed, be less problematic.

Arnold’s already tenuous faith in the idea that Nature could offer a model or analogue for authoritative utterance would continue to be weakened throughout the 1840s and slightly later poems such as “In Utrumque Paratus” and especially “In Harmony with Nature” suggest as Riede has pointed out with reference to the latter that “Arnold’s separation of humanity from nature sternly denies the possibility of a naturally authoritative language. Nature is not a ‘text’ that can teach the primal language” (53).

See Dowling, p. 17. This aspect of Wordsworth’s thinking on language is more closely allied with the materialist linguistics of Horne Tooke.

Tooke’s ideas about language enjoyed wide circulation through the offices of Utilitarian thinkers such as Bentham and Mill and through the popularity of James Richardson’s The New Dictionary of the English Language which was partially founded on Tooke’s principles.

To give a precise meaning to general names is, then, to fix with steadiness the attribute or attributes connoted by each concrete general name, and denoted by the corresponding abstract. Since abstract names,
in the order of their creation, do not precede but follow concrete ones, as is proved by the etymological fact that they are almost always derived from them, we may consider their meaning as determined by and dependent on the meaning of their concrete; and thus the problem of giving distinct meaning to general language I all included in that of giving a precise connotation to all concrete general names”  Mill, *A System of Logic* 4.2.

79 See John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic* 4.5, 4.6, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4. Mill singles out the word “gentleman” as originally denoting a particularly specific concept that was gradually generalized over time. This might be juxtaposed with the recollections of Clough offered by John Campbell Shairp who remembered that Clough once spoke at length in the Decade (the Oxford literary society) on the topic of “the character of a gentleman” and that “for an hour and a half—well on two hours—he went into the origin of the ideal, historically tracing from medieval times how much was implied originally in the notion…From this high standard he traced the deterioration into the modern Brummagen pattern which gets the name.” (75). J.D. Coleridge would remember the Decade in ways that are consonant with Clough’s radical project in his Oriel poetry: “We thought we stripped things down to the very bone, we believed we dragged recondite truths into the light of common day and subjected them to the scrutiny of what we were pleased to call our minds” (Hamilton 49-50)

80 I am indebted to Professor Donald S. Hair for pointing out the etymological allusiveness of Clough’s poem.


82 See Biswas pp. 201-210.

83 Clough resigned from his fellowship in September 1848 while Arnold, by now well-established in London, remained a nominal fellow of Oriel until his marriage in the early summer of 1851.

84 “Sic Itur” was occasioned not by Clough’s evolving relationship with Arnold but rather with his friend and tutor at Balliol W.G. Ward.

85 The genesis of *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* is in the Long Vacation of 1847 when Clough tutored Warde Hunt and Charles Lloyd in the Scottish Highlands. Clough spent much of April and May of 1848 in Paris with Emerson witnessing the progress of the Revolution. The summer of 1848 was spent between London and Liverpool. Following his resignation from Oriel, Clough returned to his mother’s home on Vine Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool where he almost immediately set to work composing the poem. For an account of the composition history of the poem, see Patrick Grieg Scott’s Introduction to the Victorian Texts edition of *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* pp. 5-11.

86 Much of Clough’s earlier Oxford poetry was published in *Ambarvalia* (1849) which did not appear until after the publication of *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* in November 1848.

87 Clough returns to a mixed title with *Amours de Vouyage*-a French title for a poem set in Italy written in classical hexameters.

88 The spectrum of opinion on Clough’s hexameters ranges from Matthew Arnold’s approbation of them in *On Translating Homer* to Swinburne’s later characterization of them as “ugly bastards of verse.”

Robindra Biswas usefully assesses the nature of Clough’s metrical experiment: “Clough wanted to find a place for quantity, an elastic substratum beneath the more emphatic play of accent... In thus balancing quantity and accent Clough attempted to build his Anglo-Saxon hexameters not on a rigid prosodic formula but on the living fluidities of natural utterance. Clough’s line often suffers as a hexameter, but the loss is amply compensated by the freedom and flexibility gained” (Biswas 269-270).

As Anthony Kenny has convincingly argued in his Introduction to Clough’s Oxford diaries and his recent biography, _Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet’s Life_ , much of Clough’s conviction of his own sinful condition is attributable to the guilt he felt over a masturbation habit that he struggled to repress throughout his Oxford years.

For a dissenting opinion that argues against the idea of the poem as a crucial turning point in Arnold’s career see Grob 20-24.

_The “Switzerland” series is generally considered to include the nine following poems: “A Memory Picture,” “Meeting,” “A Dream,” “Parting,” “A Farewell,” “Isolation. To Marguerite,” “To Marguerite—Continued,” “Absence,” and “The Terrace at Berne.” The italicized poems constitute the core quintet of the series with Arnold adding and subtracting the other poems in later editions of his work._


Riede, for example, points out “Unfortunately the slightly mixed metaphor anticipates the considerable confusion that metaphoric language will encounter in this poem” (184).

77. See for example, Honan, 96; Howard Fulweiler attributes a good deal of Arnold’s “shattering disillusionment” with the creative power of language to his unavoidable misfortune of living belatedly in a post-Lockean era and while Fulweiler is one of the few critics who examines Locke’s importance to Arnold in detail, his exploration does not extend to _Sohrab and Rustum_ and Locke’s _Of the Conduct of the Understanding_. See also William Buckler who notes Lockean epistemology informing “The Future” and J. Hillis Miller who, writing on _Empedocles on Etna_ , has noted that Arnold’s concept of the soul is “like the _tabula rasa_ of Locke and the sensationalists.” Howard Fulweiler, _Letters from the Darkling Plain: Language and the Grounds of Knowledge in the Poetry of Arnold and Hopkins_ (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1972); William E. Buckler, _On the Poetry of Matthew Arnold: Essays in Critical Reconstruction_ (New York: New York UP, 1982) 102; J. Hillis Miller, _The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers_ (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1963).

98. Along these lines we might profitably read the act of naming that the Youth in “The Strayed Reveller” performs in identifying Ulysses (ll. 99-112) as a poetic rendering of this taxonomic function of language that is a large part of Locke’s treatment of words in Book III of _An Essay concerning Human Understanding_, particularly Locke’s discussion of the names of complex ideas or mixed modes (3.5.10).
100. Although the *Essay* was for most nineteenth-century readers the crucial Lockean text, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* was the second most published of Locke’s works, going through ten editions in the century. Henry Hallam speaks approvingly of it, and there is evidence that Gerard Manly Hopkins was familiar with it. The heyday for the *Conduct* was not the nineteenth but the eighteenth century as W.S. Howell has noted: “*Of the Conduct of the Understanding* and its parent work *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* were without question the most popular, the most widely read, the most frequently reprinted, and the most influential, of all English books in the eighteenth century” and, Howell continues, the *Conduct* “was often used in British universities as a textbook on logic.” It is certainly possible then that Arnold was familiar with the work while a student at Oxford and prior to his Lansdowne employment. See Aarsleff; Henry Hallam, “Preface,” *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Thomas Fowler, 2nd Ed. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971) v; Gerard Manly Hopkins, *The Note-Books and Papers of Gerard Manly Hopkins*, ed. Humphrey House, (London: Oxford UP, 1987) 8; W.S. Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971) 277-78.


104. See for example Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000). Jaffe’s arguments on Victorian sympathy and its connections to Victorian liberalism and ideologies of identity lie beyond the scope of this essay, but offer provocative connections with this particular simile with its dramatization of a scene between the well-off and the poor drudge of modern life.


106. See for example Riede, 102-112; Mark Siegchrist, “Accurate Construction in Arnold’s *Sohrab and Rustum*” *PLL* 14 (1978) 51-60; and more recently James Najarian “‘Curled Minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words’: Keats, Dandyism and Sexual Indeterminacy in *Sohrab and Rustum*,” *VP* 34 (1997) 23-42.


108. For a good discussion of the use of the similes as “structural signposts” see Siegchrist but also Culler’s comments on the economy of Arnold’s symbolic vocabulary and the contribution of the similes to the poem’s “symbolic topography” (212). Examples include the repeated comparisons of Sohrab to a lion (ll. 91, 177, 216) and the simile describing the cry of Rustum’s horse Ruksh (ll. 501-506) or the association of Sohrab with flowers and trees (ll. 313-18, 633-39) and Rustum with pillars (ll. 336-38, 859-64). For comments on the allusiveness, epic origins, and oriental nature of the similes see J.R. Broadbent, “Milton and Arnold” *Essays in Criticism* 6 (1956) 404-17; Culler, 214, Riede, 104-106. For the mixed quality of the content and form of the similes see Gabriel Pearson, “The Importance of Arnold’s *Merope*,” *The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations* ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1969) 225-52. Pearson
discusses the “seepage” of contemporary ideas and images into the poem’s classical ethos—an idea related to my claim of the palimpsestical nature of Arnold’s use of the trope in *Sohrab and Rustum*.


The years between 1852 and 1861 are Clough’s near decade of silence. Clough’s almost decade of silence was not spent in poetic composition. Included in this period is the lonely, unhappy year he spends in New England attempting to establish a teaching and/or writing career and his return to England where he settles into the routine of married life and his daily responsibilities in the Education Office as well as increasing duties for Florence Nightingale in the last years of his life. There is much that is interesting in this period from a biographical perspective (see Chorley, Biswas and Kenney), but aside from a few occasional critical essays, the period is a fallow one for Clough’s poetry.

One of the greatest fruits from the late Cecil Y. Lang’s magisterial edition of Arnold’s correspondence are Arnold’s daily letters concerning his inspecting and travels throughout England. This aspect of Arnold’s life, so vividly represented in the correspondence, offers a bracing antidote to the elegant Jeremiah of the prose and confirms Nicholas’s Murray’s reminder (often neglected by subsequent generations) about Arnold that “His social criticism, therefore, was written out of practical personal experience of Victorian England in the grip of an epoch of massive, and visible, change. It was not written from the vantage point of a college study of cloister. The author of *Culture and Anarchy* had snow on his boots” (xii).

Clough’s oft-quoted comment from his review “Recent English Poetry” reads: “Studies of the literature of any distant age, or country; all the imitations and quasi-translations which help to bring together into a single focus, the scattered rays of human intelligence; poems after classical models, poems from Oriental sources, and the like, have undoubtedly a great literary value. Yet there is no question, it is plain and patent enough, that people much prefer *Vanity Fair* and *Bleak House*. Why so? …to be widely popular, to gain the ear of multitudes, to shake the hearts of men, poetry should deal more than at present it usually does, with general wants, ordinary feelings, the obvious rather than the rare facts of human nature?” (144).

Clough spent approximately eight months in New England where his friendship with Charles Eliot Norton flourished. His poetry during this period is composed almost entirely of love poems to his fiancée Blanche Smith and were later collected as *Songs of Absence*. Through the efforts of London friends such as Carlyle, Clough eventually settled an Examinership in the Education Office at £300 per year. He settled with his wife in Kensington and his “drudgery” consisted in examining the reports by inspectors such as Matthew Arnold from 11 AM to 5PM daily.

See also Houghton 48.

Purism, common to almost all periods of English, flourished in the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century. Language change was looked on with suspicion and seen as corruption. Dean Alford’s *The Queen’s English* (1864) is perhaps the most famous apologies for purism until The Society for Pure English founded in 1913 and originally composed of Henry Bradley, Robert Bridges, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Login Pearsall Smith. SPE tracts tended to discuss rather than proscribe English.

Trench’s *On the Study of Words* (1855) laid the groundwork for the *OED* but it was Trench’s paper “On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries” delivered to the London Philological Society in November 1857 that really set the project in motion.

It was Lowell who reportedly told Clough “Its you English who don’t know your own language and your own literary history. Otherwise you would realize that most of what you call “Yankeeisms” are merely good old English, which you have thrown away” (Ward 226).

Critical attention on the relationship between Crabbe and Clough has tended to focus primarily less on stylistic and linguistic connections and more on the ways in which Clough followed Crabbe’s themes and subjects matter in *Mari Magno*. Biswas, for example, notes: “The most striking departure is the verse manner itself, which owes something to Chaucer, but even more to Crabbe whose realism…Clough endeavors to emulate. He lacks Crabbe’s toughness and solidity, but occasionally he approximates Crabbe’s flat earthiness…” (464).

This, of course, is the somewhat reductive but not untrue standard narrative of Arnold’s poetic career and is the “argument” of Hamilton’s biography of the poet.

The exception here is David Riede’s *Matthew Arnold and the Betrayal of Language*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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