COMMENT AND CRITICISM

1. THE SEA OF FAITH AND THE BATTLE BY NIGHT IN DOVER BEACH

There can be little doubt that the two principal figures of speech around which Dover Beach was built came originally, as C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry point out, from Sophocles and Thucydides. But there is strong evidence that Arnold drew the figures directly from a source much closer at hand: a poem by his intimate friend Arthur Hugh Clough. Thomas Arnold had edited Thucydides during the years 1830–35. Since Clough as well as Matthew Arnold was a Rugbeian and since Clough was devoted to both Thomas Arnold and the classics, he was almost certainly familiar with the headmaster's edition of Thucydides. The following is an excerpt ("in Thomas Arnold's rendering") from the Greek historian's account of the battle of Epipolae: "They saw one another as men naturally would by moonlight; that is, to see before them the form of the object, but to mistrust their knowing who was friend and who was foe." Tinker and Lowry suggest that the passage was "the most important sentence for [Matthew] Arnold." It was equally important for Clough.

In 1848 Clough published at Oxford a lengthy philosophical narrative entitled The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuosich, in which the protagonist, Philip, like both Clough and Arnold, is deeply perturbed by religious and political doubts. Near the end of the poem Philip writes to Adam the Tutor:

I am sorry to say your Providence puzzles me sadly;
Children of circumstance are we to be? you answer, On no wise!
Where does Circumstance end, and Providence where begins it?
In the revolving sphere which is upper, which is under?
What are we to resist, and what are we to be friends with?
If there is battle, 'tis battle by night: I stand in the darkness,
Here in the mêlée of men, Ionian and Dorian on both sides,
Signal and password known; which is friend and which is foeman?
Is it a friend? I doubt, though he speak with the voice of a brother. . . .
Yet it is my feeling rather to ask, Where is the battle?
Yes, I could find in my heart to cry, in spite of my Elspie. . . .
Would that the armies indeed were arrayed, O where is the battle!
Neither battle I see, nor arraying, nor King in Israel,
Only infinite jumble and mess and dislocation,
Backed by a solemn appeal, "For God's sake do not stir there!"

The words by night and armies appear in Dover Beach; and the idea of darkness, jumble, mess, dislocation, and ignorance of identities and of the place of battle are all implied by Arnold. Dover Beach is nearer in phraseology and in details to

2 In later editions the spelling of the place-name was changed to "Tober-na-Vuolich."
3 Page 51. It will be noticed that Clough's wording (especially "which is friend and which is foeman") is much closer to that of Thucydides than is the wording of Dover Beach; and it is noteworthy, too, that Clough makes his combatants "Ionian and Dorian."
the passage from *The Bothie* than to the passage from the *History*. Furthermore, it would be rather strangely coincidental for both Arnold and Clough to draw on Thucydides for the same figure within two years of each other\(^4\) and for both of them to use the figure to depict religious turmoil.

The evidence presented thus far indicates that Arnold was borrowing from Clough (either inadvertently or intentionally) instead of from Thucydides. The evidence which seems to clinch the indebtedness of Arnold to Clough is the metaphor concerning the sea. Seven lines below the passage already quoted from *The Bothie*, Clough wrote (p. 52):

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

Whence Clough derived this second comparison, it is impossible to say. Perhaps he, too, had been reading Sophocles. The important fact is that in a poem well known to Arnold\(^5\) he had juxtaposed two striking figures of speech: one comparing man’s religious struggle to a confused battle by night, and the second comparing man’s faith (although Clough’s figure refers to faith in democracy) to an ocean tide.

**Buckner B. Trawick**

*University of Alabama*

**2. POPE’S *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK* CONSIDERED AS A FIVE-ACT EPIC**

*In his* discussion of Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* Joseph Warton begins his comments on the fifth and last canto by saying that “the denouement, as a pedantic disciple of Bossu would call it, of this poem, is well conducted.”\(^1\) Warton has here given us a clue to a different way of considering *The Rape of the Lock*, and this article will expand on the idea he implies, that the poem can be considered as an epic on the five-act dramatic pattern and that Pope consciously used this organization.

The great Bossu frequently uses the dramatic terms *nœud* and *dénouement* in his *Traité du Poème Épique*, especially in the second book, but he never actually

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\(^4\) For 1850 as the date of composition of *Dover Beach*, see Tinker and Lowry’s article in the *TLS*, Oct. 10, 1935. The early date makes Arnold’s indebtedness to *The Bothie* even more likely.


\(^1\) *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 5th ed. (London, 1806), 1, 239.