

**THE PROPHET AND THE POET;  
THE RELATIONSHIP OF THOMAS CARLYLE  
WITH ROBERT BROWNING, ALFRED TENNYSON  
AND ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH**

**by  
David Stanley Gadziola**

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**Name of Candidate:** David Stanley Gadziola  
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**Thesis and Abstract Approved:**

  
Samuel E. Brown  
Associate Professor  
Department of English

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## BSTRACT

**Title of Thesis: The Prophet and the Poet: The Relationship of Thomas Carlyle with Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, and Arthur Hugh Clough**

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Thomas Carlyle attempted to put into practice both his theories of poetry and his ideas concerning Heroes and Hero Worship by seeking to influence several of the poets of his acquaintance to write poetry according to his order. Though he failed, he nevertheless left a significant mark on the poetry of Robert Browning, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and Arthur Hugh Clough.

Carlyle's attitudes toward poetry were strongly conditioned by his conviction that its primary purpose was to affirm the eternal truths of the universe, to describe the human condition and its attendant emotions, to be a 'song.' Poetry, for Carlyle, was essentially 'musical thought,' the poet the man who thought in a musical manner. His touchstone for poetry was the Book of Job, which Carlyle described as 'true and 'all men's book.' Poetry, however, should never enter into argument, for argument is the province of prose. Seeing his own age as a slight and prosaic one, he urged that its thought be spoken, not 'jingled into rhyme' to the detriment of poetry. Ultimately only the Hero writes poetry, for only he possesses those qualities -- intellectual Perspicacity, with force and honesty of 'ill' -- which make poetry possible.

The Poet, as a type of the Hero, is not merely the unacknowledged legislator of mankind but a man pre-eminently fit for the tasks of legislating and guiding and compelling action and belief. It is because neither Browning, Tennyson, nor Clough seemed willing or able to meet the standard Carlyle set that he was finally frustrated in his attempt to see them write poetry according to his pattern. Nevertheless, if his poetics did not affect their writing, his ideas and personality did.

Carlyle and Robert Browning maintained basically friendly relations for more than forty years. In this time Carlyle became progressively disenchanted with Browning's poetry, feeling that Browning never fulfilled his promise, that what he wrote was obscure and not always entirely truthful. For his part, Browning refused to write poetry to Carlyle's description of it, but made frequent use of Carlyle's ideas -- especially religious ones -- and of Carlyle's personality in such poems as How It Strikes a Contemporary, Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, and the Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville.

Alfred Tennyson perhaps came closer than anyone else to becoming a true disciple of Carlyle, for they shared many political and social beliefs. But Tennyson too avoided full commitment to Carlylean belief, though, like Browning, he assimilated many Carlylean doctrines -- largely political -- and shaped them into his poetry, notably in such major works as the Idylls of the King and In Memoriam.

Arthur Hugh Clough neither enjoyed long enough an association with Carlyle to feel the full cycle of Carlylean attitudes nor published enough poetry in his lifetime to disappoint Carlyle. Yet he too, as the youngest of this group of poets, escaped the early influence of Carlyle only to

produce poetry with a significant number of Carlylean ideas (largely concerned with social doctrines), notably in The Bottle of Tobac-na-Vuolich.

All three of the poets under consideration were first drawn to Carlyle by such early works as Sartor Resartus and Heroes and Hero-Worship. All went through a period of close association with Carlyle in which he attempted to convert them to his theories of poetry. All of them rejected the offered theories, but took instead the social, political, and historical doctrines of Carlyle and the personality of the man himself as themes and elements for their poetry. In so doing, they denied Carlyle's teaching that Poetry is an act of affirmation, not of argumentation, but acknowledged a great intellectual debt to the man himself.

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## INTRODUCTION

And were there an artist of a right spirit; a man of wisdom, conscious of his high vocation, of whom we could know beforehand that he had not written without purpose and earnest meditation, that he knew what he had written, and had embodied in it, more or less, the creations of a deep and noble soul, -- should we not draw near to him reverently, as disciples to a master; and what task could there be more profitable than to read him as we have described, to study him even to his minutest meanings? For, were not this to think as he had thought, to see with his gifted eyes, to make the very mood and feeling of his great and rich mind the mood also of our poor and little one? "Goethe's Helena" (1828)<sup>1</sup>

Though Thomas Carlyle filled many roles in his lifetime -- essayist, historian, biographer, social critic, polemicist, prophet -- he filled all of them on the basis of essentially the same fundamental assumptions. Thus, in his role as critic, Carlyle formulated definitions of poetry and functions for the poet which depended largely upon his metaphysics. Poetry, for Carlyle, was like Duty in that it consisted largely of recognising and serving the Transcendental Real, the Ideal which lay behind and informed this world. And because Carlyle's theories of poetry and poets were primarily determined by his metaphysics, they effectively denied to the poet the exploitation -- among other things -- of purely contemporary topics, for Carlyle insisted that poetry be directed to what was eternal in Man, the Universe, and the powers which shaped both. For Carlyle, poetry was not argumentation but affirmation. The result of his insistence upon so rigidly-defined a

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<sup>1</sup>The Works of Thomas Carlyle, ed. H. D. Traill (London: 1896, 1919), XXVI, 151. Hereafter cited as Works. Unless otherwise noted, all citations from Carlyle's works are from this edition.

role for the poet led him more than once into conflict with the poets of his time whom he sought to influence.

For Carlyle did seek to influence poets: beyond merely articulating definitions of poetry, confidently affirming what poetry was, sternly denouncing what it was not, Carlyle further sought to be the friend and cultivator of poets, to be in effect a master to a group of poetic disciples. The purpose of this study is to examine Carlyle's relationship with three of the poets of his age -- Browning, Tennyson, and Clough -- in order to demonstrate, first of all, that Carlyle sought, albeit unconsciously, to influence them in their writing of poetry by establishing with them something like a master-disciple relationship. Further, however, it is possible to demonstrate that, in his attempts to influence the poets, Carlyle was merely being consistent with his own central doctrines -- especially the doctrine of Heroes -- both in trying to subordinate these men to himself and in trying to make of them the best that was possible.

The objects of this study, then, are these: 1) to examine Carlyle's continuing attempts to influence the poets of his age, and, through that influence, to influence their mode of composition; 2) to demonstrate that his attempts were ultimately unsuccessful, for the poets involved failed to respond to fairly obvious invitations to accept Carlyle's influence, though they continued to regard Carlyle as a friend if not a mentor; 3) to show that all three of them nevertheless were more influenced by Carlyle than they might have cared to admit, for in their poetry there is enough of Carlyle -- his ideas, his systems, his very personality -- to suggest that he had a greater effect than at first seems evident. Carlyle, in short, proved formidable, a man to be argued with, a man whose measure had to be taken. However much Tennyson, Browning,

and Clough may have disavowed Carlyle's theories of poetry, they nevertheless found themselves in their poetry reflecting his ideas with significant frequency.

In fact, the whole history of Carlyle's relationship with the poets shows a pattern, basically composed of six steps:

1) The poets, who were all younger than he (Tennyson was fourteen years younger, Browning seventeen, Clough twenty-four), sought out Carlyle in the first instance, seeking his acquaintance because he was an established man of letters whose writings had worked upon them greatly.

2) Carlyle seemed to welcome these advances, for he typically encouraged the younger men both by seeking out their company and by privately praising their poetic efforts. At the same time, at least in the cases of Browning and Clough, he seemed to make some effort to turn them to the writing of prose. He praised Browning's essay on Shelley highly, and went somewhat out of his way to comment admiringly on Clough's prose descriptions of New England.

3) Carlyle attempted to be of service to the poets in establishing their practical affairs. He had a hand, for instance, in securing a pension for Tennyson and in getting Clough a position in the Education Office. While he may not have been activated solely by ulterior motives, the advantages of having these men under some obligation to him must not have been entirely lost upon him.

4) Eventually Carlyle became extremely dissatisfied with the poetry these men were producing and gave them up as lost to poetry.

5) Having failed to win disciples, Carlyle kept friends. His relationship with all three poets remained essentially placid and friendly.

Whatever their disagreements about the art of poetry, they remained good friends.

6) In every instance, what Carlyle failed to win from the poets on the side of poetic theory he gained on the side of socio-political ideas. Though the poets would not honor him as the Hero he saw himself to be, they honored him in another way by making him and his ideas central elements in a large number of poems. The incidence of poems in which the poets either elaborate Carlylean doctrines or argue with them evidences fairly significant influence. The tendency to poeticize Carlylean ideas is perhaps most notable in Tennyson and Clough, but Browning does it also. The most significant sources of Carlylean ideas are his earlier works, especially Sartor Resartus, The French Revolution, Past and Present, and On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, all works in which Carlyle may be said to have made the fullest and freshest articulation of his ideas.

Carlyle failed at the tasks of establishing what amounted to a master-disciple relationship with Tennyson, Browning, and Clough and of convincing them of the virtue of his theories of poetry. One possible explanation of his failure is not difficult to see if one examines the standards which Carlyle set for poetry. It is not easy to determine what, exactly, he would have a poet be and do: he speaks of the poet as a type of the Hero, but since the Hero himself is finally to be identified only by the fact that he behaves like a Hero, the classification is not really of much positive help. His advice that a poet is one who creates songs is not obscure if it means only that poetry should be metrical, but when he goes on to insist that the universe itself, and indeed all Nature, are musical, then he is depending upon a comprehension of the nature of things as idiosyncratic as -- or even identical with -- his own.



## CHAPTER I

### CARLYLE'S POETICS

Genius, Poet: do we know what these words mean? An inspired Soul once more vouchsafed us, direct from Nature's own great fire-heart, to see the Truth, and speak it, and do it; Nature's own sacred voice heard once more athwart the dreary boundless element of hearsaying and canting, of twaddle and pettroonery, in which the bewildered Earth, nigh perishing, has lost its way. Hear once more, ye bewildered benighted mortals; listen once again to a voice from the inner Light-sea and Flame-sea, Nature's and Truth's own heart; know the Fact of your Existence what it is, put away the Cant of it which it is not; and knowing, do, and let it be well with you!--Past and Present (Works, X, 86).

That Carlyle could find place in a work otherwise unconcerned with poetry--and so concerned with other matters--as Past and Present (1843) is merely an indication of the important role which he assigned to poetry and the lofty status which he accorded to the poet.

The poet, rightly understood, is one of the true, perhaps one of the truest, types of the Hero, for, as Carlyle remarks in Heroes and Hero (1840--"The Hero as Poet"):

Hero, Prophet, Poet, --many different names, in different times and places, do we give to Great Men; according to varieties we note in them, according to the sphere in which they have displayed themselves! We might give many more names, on this same principle, I will remark again, however, as a fact not unimportant to be understood, that the different sphere constitutes the grand origin of such distinction; that the Hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into. I confess, I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be all sorts of men. The Poet who could merely sit on a chair, and compose stanzas, would never make a stanza worth much. He could not sing the Heroic warrior, unless he himself were at

least a Heroic warrior too. I fancy there is in him the Politician, the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher; -- in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these. (V, 78-79).

Carlyle further distinguishes between the Vates - Prophet, who "has seized that sacred mystery rather on the moral side, as Good and Evil, Duty and Prohibition," and Vates - Poet, who has seized the same mystery on "the aesthetic side, as Beautiful, and the like" (p. 81). The prophet reveals what we are to do, the poet what we are to love. "But indeed these two provinces run into one another, and cannot be disjointed." (p. 81).

The poet, in short, though he may have special duties, is nonetheless of the true heroic mold. But what of the poem itself, that which the poet produces? Carlyle was apparently at some difficulty in finding an adequate definition, though, - especially in later years, - he seems to have been very sure, at any rate, of what he liked. In the same lecture, Carlyle struggles to the conclusion that there is a good deal to be said for calling poetry "musical Thought":

The Poet is he who thinks in that manner. At bottom, it turns still on power of intellect; it is a man's sincerity and depth of vision that makes him a Poet. See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it (V, 83-84).

"Having music in it, being a Song" -- it is this which characterizes poetry. But such music is not merely the texture of the poem; it is in effect the substance of which poetry is made in the first instance. Poetry is "musical not in word only, but in heart and substance, in all the thoughts and utterances of it, in the whole conception of it" (p. 83). Earlier, however, in Lecture II of Heroes and Hero-Worship, Carlyle had demonstrated vividly what he considered the essentials of poetry by

citing as an example the Book of Job:

I call that . . . one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem, --man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity; in its epic melody, and repose of reconciliation. There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So true every way; true eyesight and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual; the Horse, --'hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?' -- he 'laughs at the shaking of the spear!' Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation: oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind; --so soft, and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit. (V, 49).

The qualities for which Carlyle praises Job--it is "all men's Book," concerned with "the never-ending problem" of man's destiny; it has "sincerity," "simplicity"; it is "true"--point to a conception of poetry which is more concerned with what poetry does than with what it is: though the book of Job is praised for its "epic melody" and its "choral melody," the qualities appear to be by and large subordinate to the master qualities of sincerity and simplicity, the qualities which make it "all men's Book."

Later, in Lecture III, Carlyle makes it clear that it is Thought ("Musical Thought," as above) and not music which is central to poetry. He returns to this point again:

All old Poems, Homer's and the rest, are authentically Songs. I would say, in strictness, that all right Poems are; that whatsoever is not sung is properly no Poem, but a piece of Prose cramped into jingling lines--to the great injury of the grammar, to the great grief of the reader, for the most part! What we want to get at is the thought the man had, if he had any: why should he twist it into jingle, if he could speak it out plainly? (V, 90).

In short, if the music is there, if the Song is there, well and good; if not, speak in prose and do not attempt to sing falsely. "Precisely as we love the true song, and are charmed by it as by something divine, so shall we hate the false song, and account it a mere wooden noise, a thing hollow, superfluous, altogether an insincere and offensive thing " (V, 91).

In light of the definiteness with which Carlyle prescribes for poetry, it is useful to examine his own attempts at composing it. Almost the whole corpus of Carlyle's poetry appears to have been written in his youth or early maturity; he himself dates it from the period 1823 - 1833.<sup>1</sup> These poems appear to be of two kinds: there is a group of poems (such as "The Tragedy of the Night-Moth" and "Adieu") in which he pours out his feelings with a kind of self-conscious tragedy. More in consonance with his poet-ics, however, are those poems in which Carlyle sets forth a moral im- perative drawn from familiar things ("The Sower's Song," "The Beetle," "To-Day," "Fortuna").

The diction of all of these poems is, for the most part, either im- itative or derivative. "The Tragedy of the Night-Moth," for instance, seems filled with the phrases of the 18th-century poetic word-stock: "placid midnight," "pale recluse," and the like; "The Beetle" is reminis- cent of Burns both thematically -- it recalls, though it is less vivid a poem, "To a Field-Mouse" -- and in its diction, especially in the use of Scotti- cisms -- to which, to be sure, Carlyle was fairly entitled. Indeed, there is little in these poems which can be called either original or competent,

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<sup>1</sup>Eight poems, as well as four brief fables, are collected in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays under the heading "Fractions" (XXVI, 469-476).

for quite frequently even the meter breaks down and we are left with lines which cannot, by any process of elision, be made to scan. Nevertheless, for all their shortcomings as poems, these pieces are still significant for what they reveal about Carlyle's poetics when he put it into practice.

The most straightforwardly didactic of these poems is "To-Day," which is short enough -- and significant enough -- to be given in full:

TO-DAY.

So here hath been dawning  
Another blue Day:  
Think wilt thou let it  
Slip useless away.

Out of Eternity  
This new Day is born;  
Into Eternity,  
At night, will return.

Behold it aforetime  
No eye ever did:  
So soon it forever  
From all eyes is hid.

Here hath been dawning  
Another blue Day:  
Think wilt thou let it  
Slip useless away.

Clearly, the message of the poem is simple: it may be said to be a stanzaic version of the Biblical admonition that "this is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." At the same time, its portentous evocations of Eternity and its implied complement, Time, suggest how well Carlyle had been learning his German lessons. The whole poem, in short, is a somewhat less urgent version of the message in Sartor Resartus: "Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work, "

"The Beetle" is of some interest, not only because its opening lines;

Poor hobbling Beetle, needst not haste;  
Should Traveller Traveller thus alarm?

recall Burns's fieldmouse and louse, but also because its themes are an interesting combination of Burns and Goethe. The speaker assures the beetle that he will not "with heeltap send" it "to realms of Night"; rather, he spares it because of what he finds worthy of veneration in it:

Pass on, poor Beetle, venerable  
Art thou, were wonders ne'er so rife;  
Thou hast what Bel to Tower of Babel  
Not gave; the chief of wonders--LIFE.  
(11. 21-24)<sup>2</sup>

This reverence for life per se gives way in the last stanza to a Burnsian flourish of ultimate democratism:

Also of 'ancient family,'  
Though small in size, of feature dark!  
What Debrett's Peer surpasseth thee?  
Thy Ancestor was in Noah's Ark.  
(11. 25-28)

A beetle's a beetle for a' that, apparently, but the point is still clear: here is an object lesson, a moral preachment, drawn from the natural materials and the everyday events of the ordinary world.

"The Sower's Song," perhaps the most interesting of all these poems, is Carlyle's attempt to evoke the "Eternal Melodies" in the terms of Man's age-old relationship with and involvement in the cycle of planting and harvesting, and, to some extent, the joys of labor.

#### THE SOWER'S SONG.

Now hands to seedsheet, boys,  
We step and we cast; old Time's on wing;  
And would ye partake of Harvest's joys,  
The corn must be sown in Spring.

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<sup>2</sup>As a case in point showing why Carlyle eventually gave up poetry, these lines, with their wrenched accent and tortured diction, are a monument to the truth of Carlyle's injunction to speak a thought before trying to sing it.

Fall gently and still, good corn,  
Lie warm in thy earthy bed;  
And stand so yellow some morn,  
For beast and man must be fed.

Old Earth is a pleasure to see  
 In sunshiny cloak of red and green;  
 The furrow lies fresh; this Year will be  
 As Years that are past have been.

Fall gently, & c.

Old Mother, receive this corn,  
 The son of Six Thousand golden stires:  
 All these on thy kindly breast were born;  
 One more thy poor child requires.

Fall gently, & c.

Now steady and sure again,  
 And measure of stroke and step we keep;  
 Thus up and thus down we cast our grain:  
 Sow well, and you gladly reap.

Fall gently and still, good corn,  
Lie warm in thy earthy bed;  
And stand so yellow some morn,  
For beast and man must be fed.

The poem is at best a suggestive imitation of a sower's song, partaking more of art than of life; further, there is some mixture of motives, for the last line of the refrain:

For beast and man must be fed

interposes a kind of practical economic element which is not evident in the rest of the poem. Nevertheless, the poem is evidence of what Carlyle envisioned for poetry, for, at its best, "The Sower's Song" is almost entirely free of the accidents of places or times: it is generalized enough in its description to be essentially comprehensible in any place and at any time as a common -- and significant -- human experience.

"The Sower's Song" is far more successful as a poem than, for instance, "To-Day," largely because its message, though no slighter than that of "To-Day," is at least bodied forth in a viable human experience and does not appear to have a palpable design upon us. Yet these

two poems represent, however crudely, the possibilities of poetry as Carlyle saw it: poetry may, as in "To-Day," affirm the eternal, the realities of the universe; it may also describe, celebrate, or lament the eternal, the universals of Man's life. It is for so doing that Carlyle frequently and fully throughout his life praised the Book of Job. "The Sower's Song" is no Book of Job, but it seems to represent an attempt by Carlyle to express his understanding of a transcendental universe.

The duty of the poet and the function of poetry are more simply defined: the Poet, like the Prophet, is empowered and charged to reveal the Divine Idea of the World, the Reality which underlies all appearances. He is to reveal, that is, and weave flesh-garments for, the pantheistic universe. Further, he is to do this in an especially national way: Carlyle points to Dante and Shakespeare -- the twin subjects of his lecture -- as those through whom a national consciousness, an otherwise unspoken national aspiration, was given voice. The poet, in short, speaks both to and of his people, but always musically, and always seeing into the life of things.

As early as his 1832 essay on "Goethe's Works," Carlyle established standards for poetry and the poet from which he never significantly deviated in his remaining forty-nine years. Here, in embryo, are the doctrines of the Hero poet and the Vates poet, as clearly said as ever he was going to say them. For Carlyle, Goethe was in the first instance admirable because he had been endowed with gifts which are beyond price "without which all others are worth nothing: a seeing eye and a faithful loving heart" (Works, II, VII, 426):

A mind of all-piercing vision, of sunny strength, not made to ray-out darker darkness, but to bring warm sunlight, all-purifying, all-uniting. A clear, invincible mind, and 'consecrated to be Master-singer' in quite another guild than that Nürberg one (XXVII, 427).

Vision and love, then, are qualities which are eminently necessary to the poet no less than they are to other men. But there is more to the matter of the making of a poet, and more in Goethe himself. Two further qualities, says Carlyle, which are indispensable are "intellectual Perspicacity, with force and honesty of Will":

Which two, do they not, in their simplest quite naked form, constitute the very equipment a Man of Business needs; the very implements whereby all business, from that of the delver and ditcher to that of the legislator and imperator, is accomplished; as in their noblest concentration they are still the moving faculty of the Artist and Prophet! (XXVII, 429).

Poetry is thus as much a business--a Duty of Life--as anything else.

Goethe is a man who combines skills, who can turn his hand to anything:

a Hero, in short. At Weimar

The greatest of Poets is also the skilfulest of Managers: the little terrestrial Weimar trust committed to him prospers; and one sees with a sort of smile, in which may lie a deep seriousness, how the Jena Museums, University arrangements, Weimar Art-exhibitions and Palace-buildings, are guided smoothly on, by a hand which could have worthily swayed imperial sceptres. The world, could it intrust its imperial sceptres to such hands, were blessed: nay, to this man, without the world's consent given or asked, a still higher function had been committed.

The Poet, as a type of the Hero, is not merely the unacknowledged legislator of mankind: he is pre-eminently a man fit for the task of legislating, of guiding, of compelling action and belief.

But Goethe, like other heroes such as Cromwell, has to work for what he has achieved and for what he is able to do. Carlyle observes Goethe passing through three distinct stages on the way to his Everlasting Yea. The first stage, as in Werter, partakes of scepticism: "the voice of the world's despair; passionate, uncontrollable is this voice; not yet melodious and supreme"; this is reserved for Faust, "wild apocalyptic";

like a death-song of departing worlds; no voice of joyful 'morning stars singing together' over a Creation; but of red nigh-extinguished midnight stars, in spherical swan-melody, proclaiming, It is ended! (XXVII, 431).

This first stage is soon succeeded by a second -- typified by Wilhelm Meister -- which Carlyle designates "Pagan or Ethnic in character";

It embodies "a free recognition of Life, in its depth, variety and majesty; as yet no Divinity recognized there." The process has not been completed as yet, but much has already been done:

Doubt, reduced into Denial, now lies prostrate under foot: the fire has done its work, an old world is in ashes; but the smoke and the flame are blown away, and a sun again shines clear over the ruin, to raise therefrom a new nobler verdure and flowerage.

The process continues to its triumphant conclusion in the third stage wherein 'melodious Reverence becomes triumphant; a deep all-pervading Faith, with mild voice, grave as gay, speaks forth to us in a Meisters Wanderjahre, in a West-Oestlicher Divan; in many a little Zahme Xenie, and true-hearted little rhyme, 'which, ' it has been said, 'for pregnancy and genial significance, except in the Hebrew Scriptures, you will nowhere match'" (XXVII, 431). Carlyle cites with approval these lines (which he translates himself):

"What shall I teach thee, the foremost thing?  
Couldst teach me off my own Shadow to spring!

These, he remarks, the reader, "if he will, may substitute for whole horse-loads of Essays on the Origin of Evil; a spiritual manufacture which in these enlightened times, ought ere now to have gone out of fashion." (XXVII, 432).

Once this three-stage process is completed, the result is a poet, a man whose essential function is to rise above the confusions and the

fashions of the age and remind the faithful of the light which is Eternity:

In such spirit, and with an eye that takes-in all provinces of human Thought, Feeling, and Activity, does the Poet stand forth as the true prophet of his time; victorious over its contradiction, possessor of its wealth; embodying the nobleness of the past into a new whole, into a new vital nobleness for the present and the future. Antique nobleness in all kinds, yet worn with new clearness; the spirit of it is preserved and again revealed in shape, when the former shape and vesture had become old (as vestures do), and was dead and cast forth; and we mourned as if the spirit too were gone (XXVII, 433-434).

So many of Carlyle's essential doctrines are involved in this passage that one can only be impressed by both the degree to which Carlyle continued to foreshadow himself, to say early in his career what he said again later, and by the degree to which all of his doctrines, again and again, are seen to be interdependent, or -- in another sense -- to depend equally upon one central conception. In this passage, for instance, are mingled Heroes, Old Clothes, Past and Present, and Rebirth.

The bodying-forth of the Divine Idea, however, is not the sole duty of poets, for -- as he does later in the lectures on Heroes and Hero-Worship -- Carlyle insists on another, humanly-grounded activity for the poet, who is, says Carlyle, "a Thinker in the highest of all senses":

For Goethe, as for Shakespeare, the world lies all translucent, all fusible we might call it, encircled with WONDER; the Natural in reality the Supernatural, for to the seer's eyes both become one. What are the Hamlets and Tempests, the Fausts and Mignons, but glimpses accorded us into this translucent, wonder-encircled world; revelations of the mystery of all mysteries, Man's Life as it actually is? (XXVII, 437-438).

The poet, the highest form of thinker, rises above the confusions and pettinesses of his age to speak in, for, and through the age in communicating the Divine and the Eternal, "the mystery of all mysteries." He is a man apart, endowed with reverence and clearness of vision, but in all

this he is only a special case of the general type hero, and may indeed turn his hand to any task in this world which might engage the hero of any sort.

Early in his career Carlyle established tests and conditions for Poetry and Poets which, with very minor exceptions, he adhered to and continued to preach for the rest of his life. Thus the attitudes which were to determine his relationships with the poets under consideration here were formed long before he had met any of them.

## CHAPTER II

### BROWNING AND CARLYLE

Carlyle: "I hear you have been bringing out several new Books rather lately. I always read your Books and find them well worth it, but I have not seen these."

Browning: "I'm afraid of you in that way! I'd sooner trust my body to you than my book."

-- November 5, 1875<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between Thomas Carlyle and Robert Browning displays some of the best and some of the most typical features of relationships between Great Men of Literature in the Nineteenth Century. These two were in many ways the great teachers of their age. Furthermore, there was a long and apparently close personal friendship between them. Walking, smoking, talking, visiting, they spent many hours of their forty years of friendship together. In short, there is every superficial indication of great amity between them, and even signs of a kind of master-disciple relationship.

But the superficial picture is the deceptive one. Despite the indications of harmony the harmony was outward only, and did not touch the deepest centers of belief in either man. Their relationship, in one sense, is typical of the sort of relationship Carlyle had with many of the noted literary men of his time, and especially with the poets. For if Browning

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<sup>1</sup> H. Allingham and D. Radford, eds., William Allingham: A Diary (London, 1907), p. 240. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Browning's works are from the Centenary Edition, edited by F. G. Kenyon (10 vols., London, 1912).

was a disciple of Carlyle, he was an unruly one, and one not above taking his master to task in the most allusive and ambiguous of ways.

Browning and Carlyle first met in the late 1830's, at a time when Carlyle was fairly well-established as one of the figures of English letters and Browning was a young man on the way up, first establishing himself as a poet and gaining entree to London literary circles. Mrs. Orr<sup>2</sup> says that the two met through Leigh Hunt in early 1840; Charles R. Sanders<sup>3</sup> says substantially the same. Griffin and Minchin<sup>4</sup> hold that Browning and Carlyle dined with others at Maeready's in 1839; Maurice Browning Cramer says that Leigh Hunt introduced Browning to Carlyle "sometime before 1839."<sup>5</sup> Browning himself, recalling at the distance of some forty years their first meeting, told William Allingham: "I first saw him at Leigh Hunt's, and very properly sat silent for my part all the time."<sup>6</sup> There is also the perhaps legendary account given by several biographers of a meeting in which Carlyle, out riding one day, was met by a "beautiful youth" who poured out his admiration for Carlyle and asked for his acquaintance. The youth, of course, was Browning, and the event, apocryphal as it may be, is not impossible for a nascent poet under the influence of Shelley.

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<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Sutherland Orr, Life and Letters of Robert Browning (Boston and New York, 1891), p. 177. Hereafter cited as Orr.

<sup>3</sup>Charles R. Sanders, "Carlyle, Browning, and the Nature of a Poet," Emory University Quarterly, XVI, 4 (Winter, 1960), 197. Hereafter cited as Sanders, EUQ.

<sup>4</sup>W. H. Griffin and H. C. Minchin, The Life of Robert Browning (London, 1910), p. 136.

<sup>5</sup>Maurice Browning Cramer, "Browning's Friendships and Fame before Marriage (1833-1846)," PMLA, LV (1940), 216. Hereafter cited as Cramer.

<sup>6</sup>William Allingham: A Diary, ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford (London, 1907), pp. 310-311. Hereafter cited as Allingham.

The exact date of the first meeting thus remains somewhat unsure, but we know on Browning's own testimony that he was attending Carlyle's lectures "On Heroes and Hero-Worship" in May of 1840, when he reported in a letter to Fanny Haworth that Carlyle was lecturing "with eclat" and had been reported to have passed some complimentary remark upon Robert Browning.<sup>7</sup> It is at this point that their relationship really begins.

In the early 1840's, Browning sent Carlyle copies of his works ("Sordello" and "Pippa Passes") (Cramer, 217), and they corresponded from time to time. Browning reported to Fanny Haworth about the end of December 1841 that he had dined with "dear Carlyle" and his wife, and added: "catch me calling people 'dear' in a hurry!"<sup>8</sup> They dined together the next year at Macready's (Cramer, 211) and Browning accepted an invitation from Mrs. Carlyle for breakfast (Hood, 8). In 1842, Elizabeth Barrett could write to her brother George that Carlyle was Browning's friend, whose friendship was better than the shouting of the crowd (suggesting, again, something of the state of Browning's literary reputation early in his career).

In short, the information suggests that Browning, if hardly Carlyle's intimate friend, was at least on a footing of easy acquaintanceship with him and had entree to his presence. This picture is supported by the letters which passed between Robert Browning and Elizabeth Browning during the

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<sup>7</sup> New Letters of Robert Browning, ed. W. C. DeVane and K. L. Knickerbocker (New Haven, 1950), p. 18. Hereafter cited as NLRB.

<sup>8</sup> Thurman L. Hood, Letters of Robert Browning Collected by T. J. Wise (New Haven, 1933), p. 72. Hereafter cited as Hood.

on the whole, that there is no better nor sincerer relation than that in which you stand to me. One might fancy I did not profit as I might have done by the facilities you gave me for seeing and communicating with you in England; but I always hoped to be better qualified to profit one day. I don't apologize for writing in this way, and of these things. Here in Italy, it seems useless and foolish to put into a little note any other matter than what comes uppermost (and yet lies undermost) (Hood, p. 17).

To this effusion Carlyle replied on the 23rd of June. Of the marriage of the Brownings, he says, in the high Carlylean vein:

No marriage has taken place within my circle, these many years, in which I could so heartily rejoice. You I had known, and judged of; her, too, conclusively enough if less directly; and certainly if ever there was a union indicated . . . by the Eternal laws under which poor transitory Sons of Adam live, it seemed to me, from all I could hear or know of it, to be this! Courage, therefore; follow piously the Heavenly Omens, and fear not. He that can follow these, he, in the loneliest desert, in the densest jostle and sordid whirlpool of London fog, will find his haven: 'Se tu segui tua stella!' Perpetually serene weather is not to be looked for by anybody; least of all by the like of you two, --in whom precisely as more is given, more also in the same proportion is required: but unless I altogether mistake, here is a life-partnership which, in all kinds of weather, has in it a capacity of being blessed to the Parties. May it indeed prove so, May the weather, on the whole, be moderate;--and if joy be even absent for a season, may nobleness never! That is the best I can wish. The sun cannot shine always; but the places of the stars, these ought to be known always, and these can.<sup>11</sup>

Obviously, then, Browning, however exalted his notion of it may have been, was far from totally wrong in his judgement of his standing in Carlyle's estimation. For Carlyle's letter seems to be something more than ordinary felicitations to a newly-married couple, and--despite the rhetorical flight which indicates that Carlyle, regardless of the object of

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<sup>11</sup> Letters of Thomas Carlyle to John Stuart Mill, John Sterling, and Robert Browning, ed. Alexander Carlyle (New York, 1923), pp. 281-282. Hereafter cited as LTC.

his address, has his singing robes on -- does suggest his fondness for both of the Brownings.

Such a letter, coming from one for whom both had often expressed the deepest admiration, could hardly do otherwise than gratify both of them in the highest degree. Elizabeth reported Carlyle's words in a letter to her sister (July 9, 1847), saying, "when I had read (it) I kissed for gladness and gratitude, it gave me so much of both." She quoted from it at length, and commented: 'Isn't that full, full of kindness?'<sup>12</sup> And yet this letter apparently went unanswered by Browning for almost three years. When he did write to Carlyle again (June 10, 1850), he explained his long silence by saying that since Carlyle's letter "went straight to my heart -- I could not trust myself to answer it at the time," and then added, in effect, that he had got too involved in other things to write (Hood, pp. 26-27). Furthermore, the substance of the letter itself is a request that Carlyle grant audience to the American sculptor Story. About this time (ca. 1849) Carlyle told Gavan Duffy that Browning had "a powerful intellect, and among the men engaged in England in Literature just now [is] one of the few from whom it [is] possible to expect something."<sup>13</sup> But Carlyle adds to this praise a note of commentary on poetry generally which is significant not merely in helping to explain his attitude toward Browning's work but toward poetry generally.

He [Browning] was somewhat uncertain about his career, and he himself [Carlyle] had perhaps contributed to the

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Letters to Her Sister, 1846-1859, ed. Leonard Huxley (London, 1929), pp. 33-34. Hereafter cited as Huxley.

<sup>13</sup> Gavan Duffy, Conversations with Carlyle (London, 1892), pp. 56-57.

trouble by assuring him that poetry was no longer a field where any true or worthy success could be won or deserved. If a man had anything to say entitled to the attention of rational creatures, all mortals would come to recognise after a little that there was a more effectual way of saying it than in metrical numbers. Poetry used to be regarded as the natural, and even the essential language of feeling, but it was not at all so; there was not a sentiment in the gamut of human passion which could not be adequately expressed in prose (p. 57).

Apparently there was no word between Browning and Carlyle again until 1851, when the Brownings were back in England for a time. On the 28th of July of that year, Browning wrote to Carlyle, asking that he be allowed to call. Carlyle, he had heard, was to go into the country shortly, and, he asked plaintively, "What am I to do, -- with my five-years' hunger for the sight of you and Mrs. Carlyle? -- unless you let me call tomorrow" (Hood, p. 32). He apparently was allowed to do so. Through August, Carlyle was at Great Malvern taking the water cure: he wrote to Browning on the 21st of that month, asking about a memoir of Margaret Fuller for Emerson and asking when the Brownings were going to Paris (LTC, 284-286). This trip, of course, Carlyle was to share with the Brownings. Carlyle reported to his brother John (September 28, 1851): "On the whole, it was a nice country all the way, a brilliant day, and the Brownings were excellent friends, and couriered me along in every respect, without the least trouble left for me except that of sitting still" (Sanders, JEGP, p. 328). While Carlyle remained in Paris (he was home to write to Browning in Paris on 10 October) the two saw much of each other.

Browning's regard for Carlyle evidently remained high; he wrote to Carlyle from Paris in October of '51, telling him that he had "just done a little thing I told you of -- a mere Preface to some new letters of Shelley" (Hood, pp. 35-36). In it he says: "I shall always hope -- for a great incentive -- to write my best directly to you some day." The "mere Preface"

articulates doctrines of poetry which are strongly in accord with Carlyle's belief. The central doctrine is the distinction between the subjective and the objective poet.

For Browning the objective poet is "one whose endeavour has been to reproduce things external (whether the phenomena of the scenic universe, or the manifested action of the human heart and brain) with an immediate reference, in every case, to the common eye and apprehension of his fellow men, assumed capable of receiving and profiting by this reproduction. It has been obtained through the poet's double faculty of seeing external objects more clearly, widely, and deeply, than is possible to the average mind, at the same time that he is so acquainted and in sympathy with its narrower comprehension as to be careful to supply it with no other materials than it can combine into an intelligible whole."<sup>14</sup> Such a poet, Browning goes on to observe, is "properly the *ποιητής*, the fashioner; and the thing fashioned, his poetry, will of necessity be substantive, projected from himself and distinct" (p. 5).

The objective poet is to be contrasted with the subjective, "the genius of an opposite tendency" (p. 6), who, "gifted like the objective poet with the fuller perception of nature and man, is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth, -- an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul. Not what man sees, but what God sees -- the Ideas of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly on the Divine

<sup>14</sup> Robert Browning, On the Poet Objective and Subjective; On the Latter's Aim; On Shelley as Man and Poet (London, 1881), p. 5. This is a Browning Society reprint of the 1852 essay.

Hand--it is toward these that he struggles. Not with the combination of humanity in action, but with the primal elements of humanity he has to do; and he digs where he stands, --preferring to seek them in his own soul as the nearest reflex of that absolute Mind, according to the intuitions of which he desires to perceive and speak" (pp. 6-7). Such a poet differs from the objective poet in that, whereas the objective poet is a fashioner, the subjective is a "seer," and "what he produces will be less a work than an effluence" (p. 7). Obviously enough, the subjective poet of which Browning speaks is ultimately in harmony with Romantic theory of the poet and of the nature of poetry, for he is not merely a man who works with the essentials rather than the accidents of life; behind it all lies the notion--however concealed here--of the poet as the inspired speaker of truth, the Vates.

Further, according to Browning the distinction between the two types is not in their faculties or in the objects of their contemplation, but in

the more immediate adaptability of these objects to the distinct purpose of each, that the objective poet, in his appeal to the aggregate human mind, chooses to deal with the doings of men, (the result of which dealing, in its pure form, when even description, as suggesting a describer, is dispensed with, is what we call dramatic poetry), while the subjective poet, whose study has been himself, appealing through himself to the absolute Divine mind, prefers to dwell upon those external scenic appearances which strike out most abundantly and uninterruptedly his inner light and power, selects that silence of the earth and sea in which he can best hear the beating of his individual heart, and leaves the noisy, complex, yet imperfect exhibitions of nature in the manifold experience of man around him, which serve only to distract and suppress the working of his brain<sup>15</sup> (p. 7).

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<sup>15</sup>It is difficult in this not to hear the voice of Carlyle, calling down Heaven's wrath upon the incessant roars of the vast cockneydom which surrounded him in Chelsea.

Though Browning appears to decline to judge between the merits of the two sorts of poet--"It would be idle to inquire, of these two kinds of poetic faculty in operation, which is the higher or even rarer endowment" (p. 8)--and though he argues for the possible combination "in successive works" of the two traits in the same poet, it is evident that his sympathies are with the subjective poet as being, in the last analysis, something of the higher type:

There is a time when the general eye has, so to speak, absorbed its fill of the phenomena around it, whether spiritual or material, and desires rather to learn the exacter significance of what it possesses, than to receive any augmentation of what is possessed. Then is the opportunity for the poet of loftier vision, to lift his fellows, with their half-apprehensions, up to his own sphere, by intensifying the import of details and rounding the universal meaning. The influence of such an achievement will not soon die out (p. 8).

Carlyle praised the essay highly, calling it "a solid, well-wrought, massive, manful bit of discourse" (LTC, p. 291). He urged Browning to go on writing, prose or poetry, it made no difference, so long as he wrote at the bidding of his Genius (p. 293). Thus at this point in their lives the relationship between the two men was firm and friendly, with an apparently solid base of admiration on either side. This was essentially the mode in which it remained throughout the fifties; when the Brownings were in London, they and the Carlyles were often together: Elizabeth, for example, wrote to her sister in the summer of 1855 that they had met Carlyle at Forster's; Carlyle, she reported, was "in great force, particularly in the damnatory clauses" (Kenyon, II, 210). When the Brownings were on the Continent, they corresponded with the Carlyles frequently: Carlyle asked Browning to check some references for him while in Paris; Browning did so (LTC, pp. 294-296; Hood, pp. 43-45). It was about this time, however, in his letter of December 4, 1855, that Carlyle apparently uttered his last

unqualified praise of Browning's poetry; he praised Men and Women, especially the old corregidor of "How It Strikes a Contemporary," whom he adjudged "a diamond." Thereafter there seemed to come something of a turn, for more and more in the next twenty-five years a darkling tone crept into Carlyle's comments on Browning's work, until toward the last the comments became almost totally gloomy. Their relations remained basically friendly (though there were spates of foul weather) but when Carlyle wrote to Browning in April of 1856, he could not refrain from making some fairly severe criticisms. He found Men and Women to be full of "an excellent opulence of intellect. . . the keenest just insight into men and things. . . a fresh valiant manful character, equipped with rugged humor, with just love, just contempt, well carried and bestowed; -- in fine a most extraordinary power of expression. . . rhythm, endless poetic fancy, symbolical help to express" (LTC, p. 297-298). But, he added, this genius, which had grown since he first knew Browning, was likely, unless he was careful, to be spoiled by the fact that "you are dreadfully difficult to understand; and that is really a sin. . . . Consider that case; it is actually flagrant!" (pp. 298-299). He warned Browning that he was in real danger of becoming unreadable: "Well, the sum of my ideas is: If you took up some one great subject, and tasked all your powers upon it for a long while, vowing to Heaven that you would be plain to mean capacities, then --!" (p. 300). It was not long after this that Carlyle, noting in a letter to Emerson that Browning was to visit him that evening, added that Browning "is abstruse, but worth knowing."<sup>16</sup> Thus perhaps it was by a kind of unintentional quid

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<sup>16</sup> The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (Boston and New York, 1883-1884), II, 228. Hereafter cited as C-EC.

pro quo that Elizabeth reported to Isa Blagden from Rome in February of 1859 that "Robert curses and swears" over Carlyle's Frederick.<sup>17</sup> Thereafter there apparently was no more from one to the other for two years.

The 1860's were hard years for both men, for in that decade they both lost the wives who, for good or ill, had been all in all to them. It was, in fact, the comments of the one upon the life and death of the wife of the other which led to the first serious breach in the relationship between Browning and Carlyle. Mrs. Browning died in Florence on June 29, 1861; on the 9th of August, Carlyle wrote to his brother that Browning was back in England: "Poor fellow, I believe he is very sad about the loss of such a Wife: but I believe it may ultimately prove a great gain for him. If he comes to England, and look after his own Tasks while it is yet Time!" (Sanders, JEGP, p. 332). In a letter of August 17 to John Forster, Carlyle was even more explicit: "often my greatest sorrow over the 'Swan of Italy' has been that a soul like R. B's was kept weltering, in a hobbled condition, amid such a mass of thorns and hopeless cobwebs!" (Sanders, JEGP, p. 333). Certainly there was here no diminution of either Carlyle's affection for Browning or his belief that Browning might yet be capable of speaking clearly and with some purpose: he might yet take up that "one great subject." The intent of such remarks was obviously a good one, but within the next year someone was so indiscreet as to let drop to Browning something of the nature of Carlyle's comments on Elizabeth, and the apparent upshot was a break in their relations for a period of about three years, for after late November of 1862 we hear nothing of their communication until Carlyle's 70th birthday in 1863, when Browning appeared at

<sup>17</sup> Dearest Isa: Robert Browning's Letters to Isabella Blagden, ed. E. C. McAleer (Austin, 1951), pp. 35-36. Hereafter cited as DI.

Forster's for a celebration in honor of the new septuagenarian. There is no direct evidence for the break between them in this period, but Browning himself told William Allingham in 1888: "C. said many things that I mentally dissented from, and he said something about a certain lady. . . which was reported to me and made me, for a time, hold aloof from him altogether" (Allingham, p. 374).

If there was matter for revenge in it, Browning got his in 1866 when Mrs. Carlyle died, for on May 18 of that year he wrote to Isa Bragden "Poor Mrs. Carlyle's death was sad and strange, -- but by no means 'shook' me rudely; -- and she might be considered fairly as entitled to go" (DL, p. 239). In a sense, too, such a comment may have been a kind of revenge for Mrs. Carlyle's attitude toward Browning, for there was no love lost between the two, however much they may have disguised it for Carlyle's sake. By 1852, Jane had her mind made up about Browning: "My private opinion of Browning is, in spite of Mr. C's favour for him, that he is 'nothing,' or very little more, 'but a fluff of feathers! She is true and good, and the most womanly creature" (NLMJWC, II, p. 45). Mrs. Carlyle reported in her journal on July 4, 1856, that, she being at Mrs. Montagu's: "Browning came while I was there, and dropt on one knee and kissed her hand, with a fervour! And I have heard Browning speak slightly of Mrs. Montagu. To my mind Browning is a considerable of a 'fluff of feathers,' in spite of his cleverness, which is undeniable. He kissed my hand too with a fervour; and I wouldn't give sixpence for his regard for me. Heigho, what a world of vain show one walks in! How cold and hard I get to feel in it!" (NLMJWC, II, pp. 108-109). Thus it was, perhaps, that Browning could think of her as "a hard and unlovable woman" (Orr, p. 381).

Mrs. Browning, on the other hand, seems to have held Carlyle in much the same high regard that Browning did; only once do we find her possibly deviating from a fixed attitude of worship, when she described that same Frederick that Robert was cursing and swearing over as an "immoral book in the brutal sense" (DI, pp. 35-36).

Thus by the late '60's the two great and aging men of letters were widowers living both in London, the one in Warwick Crescent, the other in Cheyne Row. Letters and diaries of the period show us the two meeting quite frequently, being presented to the Queen on the same occasion, dropping in upon one another, walking and riding together. Throughout the '70's they saw more of one another than at any other time in their long relationship. Browning made it a habit (as did, of course, many others) to visit Carlyle on his birthday: twice when Browning arranged showings of Pen's pictures, Carlyle came to see them, though he had little to say about the pictures themselves: Pen's painting of the harbor at Antwerp elicited from Carlyle no more than a discussion of the etymology of the name of the town (Allingham, pp. 263-264). The characteristic traits of each deepened throughout this period: as Carlyle became more and more saturnine, Browning became more and more unintelligible in his poetry.

The two remained constant in their affection to the last; Carlyle was the first to go, early in 1881, and Browning related most movingly to Allingham the last he had seen of Carlyle shortly before his death: "The last time I went to Cheyne Row his niece said he was not speaking to any one, but I might go up and see him. He was lying on the sofa, wrapt in a shawl. I stooped over him and said a word or two, and he put his arm round my neck. That was all" (Allingham, p. 375).

Thus in appropriately touching fashion ended the long earthly friendship of two of the most noted literary men of their time. But this picture of their sunset years is a partial and perhaps misleading one, for what they were when together is somewhat at variance with their privately expressed opinions of one another, especially of one another's work. Browning did not express himself fully until after Carlyle's death, but through the late '60's and the '70's Carlyle had often been acerbic about Browning's work in opinions expressed to William Allingham and duly recorded in Allingham's diary. These comments reveal an increasing frustration upon Carlyle's part about Browning's work, ending finally in something like complete disappointment that Browning would ever make himself understandable. As early as 1867, for example, Allingham reported that Carlyle, reading The Ring and The Book, found it to be "a curiously minute picture of Italian Society: not poetry at all" (p. 194). And his own disappointment in the work led him to express scorn for those who professed to understand Browning and on that basis to idolize him: "A set of people who cannot see over Browning are determined to see in him all sorts of things" (Allingham, p. 197). This is a curiously mixed remark, suggesting as it does either that Browning was an insurmountable object or that he towered like a giant. He may have meant either or both, but there is no doubt what he meant some two years later when he told Allingham:

I read it [Balaustion] all twice through, and found out the meaning of it. Browning most ingeniously twists up the English language into riddles -- "There! there is some meaning in this -- can you make it out?" I wish he had taken to prose. Browning has far more ideas than Tennyson, but is not so truthful. Tennyson means what he says, poor fellow! Browning has a meaning in his twisted sentences, but he does not really go into anything, or believe much about it. He accepts conventional values (Allingham, p. 205).

This criticism is different from the more common charge of unintelligibility against Browning (which Carlyle often made and was to make again). Here the main point seems to be that Browning's sentences, once unravelled, do not really mean very much at all, and suffer further from the (for Carlyle) especially damning fault of being less than truthful. Of course, part of the difficulty lay in Carlyle's way of looking at the world and his disinclination to accept the possible validity of anybody else's way. Thus the fault, for Carlyle, in The Ring and the Book was not in the setting or description--"showing a most intimate acquaintance with Italian life--better, I think, than anything else of Browning" (Allingham, p. 207), but in its handling of the central situation: "the whole is on a most absurd basis. The real story is plain enough on looking into it; the girl and the handsome young priest were lovers" (Allingham, p. 207). Here is a dangerous flaw in Carlyle's criticism; he is not talking about the poem which Browning has written or the ideas he was trying to express thereby, but about the factual basis on which it stood. Carlyle, in short, was damning Browning for not having written a work of history instead of a work of poetry. Here again, the charge which he levels against Browning is one not so much of obscurity as of pointlessness, or infidelity to Truth.

But Carlyle was to return to the charge of obscurity. Allingham reported having called on Carlyle on June 24, 1872: "He has been reading Fifine at the Fair, and saying every now and again to Browning (though not present), 'What the Devil do you mean?'" (Allingham, p. 209). When Red Cotton Night-Cap Country was published, Carlyle's comment was that there are "ingenious remarks here and there; but nobody out of Bedlam ever before thought of choosing such a theme" (Allingham, p. 225). Again, the objection is not so much to the way he says it as to what he says; the

only saving grace seems to be that undeniable cleverness which Mrs. Carlyle herself had admitted years before. Yet there is perhaps irony in the fact that Carlyle has apparently failed to recognize that the poem is in large part a poeticizing of some of his own basic doctrines. That he did not comment specifically upon the philosophical foundations of Red Cotton Night-Cap Country may be attributable to several causes: Carlyle's advanced years, his lack of close attention to the poem, or Browning's undenied capacity for disguising things. Still, as we shall see, there is a good deal in the poem which Carlyle might have recognized as his own merchandise coming back to him in different bales.

By 1878 Carlyle was nearly ready to admit defeat: "Browning's Inq Album is the worst of all he has given us; and he has been growing worse and worse -- with the exception of his Greek translations. The Ring and the Book -- what a thing it is! Browning has a great quantity of miscellaneous reading about him, but no solid basis of knowledge in anything. Tennyson's later things are better than B's. But Browning is a man of great abilities" (Allingham, p. 244). Yet to Browning himself, Carlyle would say: "I always read your books and find them well worth it." (Allingham, p. 240).

Was Carlyle hypocritical in telling Browning to his face something other than he said behind his back? Not entirely; when Browning published his translation of the Agamemnon, done, as he said, at Carlyle's desire (Hood, p. 180), Carlyle reported to Allingham: "I told him frankly about the Agamemnon, after praising his fidelity, that I could make nothing of his translation -- could not understand it -- had to turn to the Jesuit's book. R. B. admitted that all said it was of no use" (Allingham, p. 260). As early as 1858, Carlyle had warned Browning that "you are dreadfully difficult to understand; and that is really a sin. . ." (LTC, pp. 298-299),

A fuller explanation of what he meant is found in further remarks which he made to Allingham about Browning's Agamemnon:

[Browning] called down some months ago to ask if he might dedicate it to me. I told him I should feel highly honoured. But -- O bless me! Can you understand it, at all? I went carefully into some parts of it and for my soul's salvation (laughs) couldn't make out the meaning. If anyone tells me this is because the thing is so remote from us -- I say things far remoter from our minds and experiences have been well translated into English. The book of Job, for instance. It's bad Hebrew, I understand, the original of it, and a very strange thing to us. But the translator said to himself, "the first thing I have to do is to make this as intelligible as possible to the English reader; if I do not this I shall be -- h'm -- I shall be -- in fact darned." But he succeeded most admirably, and there are very few books so well worth reading as our Book of Job.

Yes, Browning says I ordered him to do this translation -- he winds up his preface (highly to his own satisfaction, in a neat epigrammatic manner) by saying so, -- summing it all up in a last word; and I did often enough tell him he might do a most excellent book, by far the best he had ever done, by translating the Greek Dramatists -- but O dear! he's a very foolish fellow. He picks you out the English for the Greek word by word, and now and again sticks two or three words together with hyphens, then again he snips up the sense and jingles it into rhyme! I could have told him he could do no good whatever under such conditions (Allingham, pp. 257-258).

Here again is an instance in which Carlyle's poetics, which as we have seen had begun to take written form at least as far back as the early 1830's (cf. Chapter I), remained essentially unaltered throughout his career. Here, for instance, he continued to use as his example, his touchstone for poetry, the Book of Job, to which he had accorded such high praise in 1840 (Chapter I, supra). In these remarks there are several points which help to make clearer just what Carlyle was objecting to. It is, in the first place, not merely unintelligibility to which he is objecting, for he is careful to point out the foundations upon which such unintelligibility rests. The qualities (or faults) which he detects in translation -- sticking words together with hyphens, distorting syntax, and the like -- are observable

traits in Browning's original compositions. But perhaps of even greater significance is the analogy Carlyle makes with the book of Job. Though he cites it as an example of something "far remoter from our minds and experiences" than the Agamemnon, what he means is that it is remote from the accidents of nineteenth-century life in England, not remote from the generalized human experience. In fact, his very praise of Job as "well worth reading" suggests that there is for Carlyle something ultimately meaningful in the work, meaningful in all times and places. He is thus appealing to the universal experience of the race. The essence of his charge against Browning's Agamemnon then seems to be that it fails to convey, or conveys muffled, swaddled, and distorted, the essential human experience which the play contains. Furthermore, note that Carlyle conceives of the translator's saying to himself that he will be "damned" if he fails to render the work intelligible in English. This is surely of a piece with Carlyle's lofty conception of the duty of a poet, that of vates. To fail in intelligibility is thus to fail of one's duty, and so to fail is to sin.

In fact, Carlyle's choice of the book of Job as a standard of measurement acquires additional point when one considers his earlier discussion of the book as a universal message.

In sum, then, the poetical career of Browning must have represented something of a large disappointment to Carlyle. For over thirty years he stoutly maintained that there was good stuff in Browning, that he was a fine fellow and a man of ideas, but for thirty years Carlyle was again and again disappointed with the poems that Browning produced. Carlyle felt that his early warning about the obscurity of Browning's work was all too mournfully justified, and that Browning never did really learn to express himself clearly. But even worse, Carlyle thought, was the fact that Browning, a

man of good ideas -- "better than Tennyson's" -- persisted in being less than truthful in his art, in having sometimes a distorted point of view, and in choosing subjects unfit for his talents or for poetic treatment. The high hopes he had had for Browning in the '40's and '50's were, to his mind, never realized fully; though he continued to have a high regard for Browning the man, the poet was finally dismissed with regrets.

But Browning the poet had not yet finished with Carlyle, for from the early 1850's onward he produced poems in which the ideas, the idiosyncrasies and even the very personality of Thomas Carlyle played a significant role. To some extent, it may be argued that Browning was using these poems as a means of exploring his relationship with Carlyle. At the same time, however, it is clear as well that some of these poems are adequate demonstrations of the influence of Carlylean ideas upon Browning's poetry and their appearance in it.

### iii

Though the "Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville" is the best-known and possibly the most explicit instance of Browning's treating in his poems of Carlyle and Carlyle's ideas, it is by no means the only such instance. There are three other poems in which Browning comes to grips with Carlyle, though not always to the same end. Carlyle and Carlylism are significant elements in "How It Strikes a Contemporary" (late 1851 or early 1852), "'Transcendentalism'" (1853) (both published in Men and Women, 1855), and Red Cotton Night-Cap Country (1873) as well as the "Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville" (1887).<sup>18</sup> The first two of these, appearing as

<sup>18</sup> Charles R. Sanders ("Carlyle, Browning, and the Nature of a Poet," Emory University Quarterly, XVI, 4 (Winter, 1960), 197-209) suggests that "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" is also influenced by Carlyle. Despite his assurance that "no poem could express more adequately and powerfully the spirit of Thomas Carlyle" (p. 206), the evidence which he cites from the poem hardly seems conclusive, however suggestive it may be.

they do in the same volume, <sup>19</sup> are especially suggestive of the influence, both personal and artistic, which Carlyle may have had upon Browning. "How It Strikes a Contemporary" contains in the person of the Corregidor a portrait which suggests Carlyle in many details of dress and habit. Sanders mentions the costume of the Corregidor, especially his "scrutinizing hat" (l. 18), his interest in observing all trades, his taking note of all things, and especially his horror of cruelty; all of these, he says, make the poem "in considerable part a portrait of Carlyle and of the side of Browning himself which owed most to Carlyle" (p. 207). Further, he says, the style of life which is attributed to the Corregidor and the purpose of his work are both observed in Carlyle. And it must be remembered that this was a poem which especially delighted Carlyle, who called its central figure "a diamond."

But it might be observed that there is more yet to the portrait in the poem, for it seems to contain several undetected references to Carlyle's life and works which, if they do not demonstrate a specific influence of Carlyle upon Browning's beliefs, nevertheless suggest a fondness and an admiration. Yet with all that, there is just possibly a hint of criticism in the poem.

Browning describes the clothing of the Corregidor thus:

His very serviceable suit of black  
 Was courtly once and conscientious still,  
 And many might have worn it, though none did:  
 The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,  
 Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.

(IV, 81, ll. 5-9)

<sup>19</sup> Sanders, in the article cited above, points out that "in Browning's final arrangement of the poems in Men and Women 'Transcendentalism' comes first and 'How It Strikes a Contemporary' second. The close conjunction of the two is no accident" (p. 207).

The immediate suggestion, of course, is of the recurring and dominant clothes metaphor of Sartor Resartus. What is meant by the suggestion, however, is less clear. Though the obvious conclusion is that the lines are intended as praise for Carlyle's life of comparative poverty, scorning to do the world's service and thus not garnering for himself the world's rewards,<sup>20</sup> the fact that Carlyle himself uses old clothes as a metaphor for that which is outworn and past its usefulness raises the question whether that suggestion is complimentary or not. The last two lines of the poem:

Well, I could never write a verse, -- could you?  
Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.  
(11 114-115)

contain a variety of suggestions. In the first place, we have ample evidence that Carlyle had attempted to discourage Browning from writing verse; he continued to feel as he had felt in 1840 (in Heroes and Hero-Worship) that a serious age called upon men who had a thought to say it before trying to sing (poetise) it. Further, the last line is double-edged. Granting Browning his persona in the poem, the last line may suggest merely the attitude of a young worldling who, though temporarily distracted by the figure of the Corregidor, is nevertheless still pleasure-bent. On the other hand, the advice to "make the most of time" is reminiscent of the frequent injunction of Carlyle to work while the day lasts, for the night cometh in which no man may work. Such ambiguity, of course, is far from unusual

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 11 91-98 of the poem:

I had been used to think that personage [the Corregidor]  
Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,  
And feathers like a forest in his hat,  
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,  
Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,  
And memorized the miracle in vogue!  
He had a great observance from us boys;  
We were in error; that was not the man.

in Browning, and may here further be the reflection of an ambiguity of attitude.

There may be significance also in the description of the route taken by the Corregidor and his "old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels":

They turned up, now, the alley by the church,  
That leads nowhither. . .

(ll. 13-14)

This passage recalls, perhaps, Carlyle's early flirtation with the ministry before doubts overwhelmed him. It may be, then, that Browning is using incidents from Carlyle's personal history in molding a recognizable portrait of Carlyle.

The central figure of "How It Strikes a Contemporary" is being treated as a poet, not as a pretender or poetaster. Sanders points to the distinction between the subjective and objective poet of Browning's essay on Shelley in asserting "How It Strikes a Contemporary" is a portrait of the objective poet. But Sanders goes on to argue that the poet discussed in "Transcendentalism" is the complementary subjective poet, 'the poet of the harp and the magic wand.' Yet it has been argued that the poet of 'Transcendentalism' is being given advice by the persona which is "strongly reminiscent of Carlyle," and the persona himself is a poet with strong Carlylean sympathies.<sup>21</sup> Says Altick: "it is evident that Browning adopted, with at least some degree of ironic intent, portions of Carlyle's own dogma and echoes of his own prose" (p. 28). The only open question is whether Browning intended the poem as a reply to Carlyle or as a kind of declaration of his intent to change his own poetic style. In either event,

<sup>21</sup> Richard D. Altick, "Browning's 'Transcendentalism'," JFGP, VIII (Jan., 1959), 28.

assuming that the change, were it to come about, would be in the direction pointed out by Carlyle, the relationship with Carlyle remains one of the central facts of the poem.

But one wonders just how much this poem is intended to be a transliteration of Carlylean dogma. Altick points, it is true, to several passages in the poem as "chief reminiscences of Carlyle" (p. 27). He cites lines 3-4:

Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts  
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds

and line 26:

That day the daisy had an eye indeed--

as passages paralleled by Book I, Chapter XI of Sartor Resartus, in which the notion of metaphors as a kind of clothing is developed:

Language is called the Garment of Thought: however, it should rather be, Language is the Flesh-Garment, the Body, of Thought. I said that Imagination wove this Flesh-Garment; and does not she? Metaphors are her stuff; examine language; what, if you except some few primitive elements (of natural sound), what is it all but metaphors recognised as such, or no longer recognised; still fluid and florid, or now solid-grown and colourless? If those same primitive elements are the osseous fixtures in the Flesh-Garment, Language, --then are Metaphors its muscles and tissues and living integuments. An un-metaphorical style you shall in vain seek for: is not your very Attention a Stretching-to?

(I, 57-58).

He mentions also the lines on Boehme as parallels with the treatment of Boehme in "The State of German Literature" and line 47:

You are a poem, though your poem's naught

as referent to several references in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, especially those to Milton, Richter, and Herder.

But in so selecting his evidence to prove his point, Altick has overlooked some other points of Carlylean dogma which might tend to weight

the argument entirely otherwise. In citing the reference to Sartor Resartus as evidence of Browning's espousal of Carlyle's teachings about language, Altick overlooks the palpable fact that the bulk of the poem is a criticism of the poet for following yet another tenet of Carlyle's dogma. Compare lines 3-4, cited above, with lines 6-18:

But why such long prolusion and display,  
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,  
And taking it upon your breast at length,  
Only to speak dry words across its strings?  
Stark-naked thought is in request enough --  
Speak prose and holloa it till Europe hears!  
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,  
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp --  
Exchange our harp for that, -- who hinders you?

But here's your fault; grown men want thought, you think;  
Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse:  
Boys seek for images and melody,  
Men must have reason -- so you aim at men.

Here we have a whole cluster of suggestions relative to Carlyle's teaching about poetry, but none of them can be said to be at all imitative or adulatory. It is Carlyle's own notion that "grown men want thought"; in Lecture III of Heroes and Hero-Worship Carlyle defines poetry as "musical Thought," and adds, "the Poet is he who thinks in that manner" (pp. 83-84). Furthermore, he adds:

I would advise all men who can speak their thought,  
not to sing it; to understand that, in a serious time,  
among serious men, there is no vocation in them for  
singing it. (V. 8)

Browning, in short, is not adopting Carlyle's dogma: he is attacking it. Lines three and four of the poem refer only to the general (and Romantic) theory of language which Carlyle enunciates in Sartor; the bulk of the poem attacks those dicta about poetry which Carlyle educes in Heroes and Hero-Worship and elsewhere. In effect, Browning is agreeing with Carlyle that all language is metaphorical, and is then criticizing him for failing to

allow poetry as much metaphorical right as prose. Furthermore, the suggestion of line 47:

You are a poem, though your poem's naught  
 can be derived more directly from basic Carlylean dogma than Altick suggests. One has only to remember Sartor Resartus, Book II, Chapter X:

The Man is the spirit he worked in; not what  
 he did, but what he became.

(I, 161).

It is clearly to this, from a work which Browning admittedly admired very much,<sup>22</sup> that he makes reference in the poem. Since Browning is here challenging Carlyle on several points in his attitude toward poetry, it is only reasonable that at the last of it he should recall the attention to one of the central elements in the creed of Carlyle, an element devoid of literary reference and having to do only with men. About the importance of men Browning and Carlyle were in substantial agreement.

In these poems of the fifties, then, Browning is exploring his attitudes toward Carlyle, defining the sides of their relationship. It is observable through almost the whole course of the personal relationship of Browning and Carlyle that there is affection and admiration on both sides, personally if not professionally. In one sense, "How It Strikes a Contemporary" and "Transcendentalism" explore Browning's feelings about Carlyle. The first of these two exhibits the obvious fondness for the man and the admiration of his integrity. The second, while not diminishing the fondness and admiration a jot, takes issue with some of Carlyle's doctrines. Yet even

<sup>22</sup> Cf. New Letters of Robert Browning, ed. W. C. DeVane and K. L. Knickerbocker (New Haven, 1950), p. 263.

here the element of personal admiration remains: the concluding lines:

So come, the harp back to your heart again!  
 You are a poem, though your poem's naught.  
 The best of all you showed before, believe,  
 Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer chords  
 Bent, following the cherub at the top  
 That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.  
 (11. 46-51)

may, as Sanders suggests,<sup>23</sup> refer especially to Browning's poem "Saul," and may, without contradiction, confirm as well Altick's<sup>24</sup> suggestion that Browning is making "a veiled expression of his decision to mend his poetic ways." It seems unlikely, however, that Browning is stating in whatever disguised form his intent to return to the style of such works as "Sordello" and "Pauline." What seems immediately more plausible is that he is suggesting that Carlyle return to the spirit of such works as Sartor Resartus and leave off theorizing about poetry. He may be said, in short, to be admonishing Carlyle to be the Corregidor of "How It Strikes a Contemporary" and not the poet who composed "'Transcendentalism: A Poem in Twelve Books'."

It has recently been argued<sup>25</sup> that Browning's "Red Cotton Night-Cap Country" (1873) is another of the "group of poems which in some measure records Browning's thoughts on certain of Carlyle's opinions" (p. 360). Mrs. Watkins finds three major relationships between Thomas Carlyle and Browning's poem:

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<sup>23</sup>Sanders, EUQ, pp. 206-207.

<sup>24</sup>Altick, "Browning's 'Transcendentalism'," p. 28.

<sup>25</sup>Charlotte Crawford Watkins, "Browning's 'Red Cotton Night-Cap Country' and Carlyle," Victorian Studies, VII (June, 1964), 359-374.

1) There are parallels in language which suggest that Carlyle's narratives were models for the narrative in the poem; further, those same fables were "the source of certain ideas critically presented in it" (p. 360).

2) There are allusions to Carlyle which serve as a key to the poem as a comment on Nineteenth-Century life.

3) "In general the poem documents further the literary relationship between two representative Victorians" (p. 360).

The three central metaphors in the poem are, according to Mrs. Watkins, Carlyle's. The red cotton night-cap, she says, "was borrowed, with acknowledgment, from Carlyle's The French Revolution" (p. 362). The subtitle, Turf and Towers, refers, she says, to Carlyle's figure for modern society, "that of a monumental architectural structure falling into ruin" (p. 362). The recurrence of these metaphors throughout the narrative is a device attempting to "define the relevance of Carlyle's diagnosis of the intellectual malady of nineteenth-century man to the situation of the hero in the narrative" (p. 362).

The source of the red cotton night-cap image is clearly Carlyle's French Revolution. Browning in effect acknowledges this when the Kensington Fiddle-Show having given way speculatively to a show of white night-caps -- he goes on:

And so we profit by the catalogue,  
Somehow our smile subsiding more and more,  
Till we decline into. . . but no! shut eyes  
And hurry past the shame uncoffined here,  
The hangman's toilet! If we needs must trench,  
For science' sake which craves completeness still,  
On the sad confine, not the district's self,  
The object that shall close review may be. . .  
Well, it is French, and here are we in France:  
It is historic, and we live to learn,  
And try to learn by reading story-books,  
It is an incident of 'Ninety-two,  
And, twelve months since, the Commune had the sway.  
Therefore resolve that, after all the Whites  
Presented you, a solitary Red  
Shall pain us both, a minute and no more!

Do not you see poor Louis pushed to front  
 Of palace-window, in persuasion's name,  
 A spectacle above the howling mob  
 Who tasted, as it were, with tiger-smack,  
 The outstart, the first spurt of blood on brow,  
 The Phrygian symbol, the new crown of thorns,  
 The Cap of Freedom? See the feeble mirth  
 At odds with that half-purpose to be strong  
 And merely patient under misery!  
 And note the ejaculation, ground so hard  
 Between his teeth, that only God could hear,  
 As the lean pale proud insignificance  
 With the sharp-featured liver-worried stare  
 Out of the two gray points that did him stead,  
 And passed their eagle-owner to the front  
 Better than his mob-elbowed undersize, --  
 The Corsican lieutenant commented  
 "Had I but one good regiment of my own,  
 How soon should volleys to the due amount  
 Lay stiff upon the street-flags this canaille!  
 As for the droll there, he that plays the king,  
 And screws out smile with a Red night-cap on,  
 He's done for! Somebody must take his place."  
 White Cotton Night-cap Country; excellent!  
 Why not Red Cotton Night-cap Country too?

(11. 292-332)

The passage to which this "incident of 'Ninety-two" is related is in Part II, Book V, Chapter XII of The French Revolution:

King Louis, his door being beaten on, opens it; stands with free bosom; asking, "What do you want?" The Sansculottic flood recoils awestruck; returns however, the rear pressing on the front, with cries of, "Veto! Patriot Ministers! Remove Veto!"--which things, Louis valiantly answers, this is not the time to do, nor this the way to ask him to do. Honour what virtue is in a man. Louis does not want courage; he has even the higher kind called moral-courage; though only the passive-half of that. His few National Grenadiers shuffle back with him, into the embrasure of a window: there he stands, with unimpeachable passivity, amid the shouldering and the braying; a spectacle to men. They hand him a red Cap of Liberty; he sets it quietly on his head, forgets it there. He complains of thirst; half-drunk Rascality offers him a bottle, he drinks of it. "Sire, do not fear," says one of his Grenadiers. "Fear?" answers Louis: "feel then," putting the man's hand on his heart. So stands Majesty in Red woolen Cap; black Sansculottism weltering round him, far and wide, aimless, with inarticulate dissonance, with cries of "Veto! Patriot Ministers!"

(III, 262)

Differences in treatment are notable in the comparison of the two accounts. It is clear, for one thing, that Carlyle is much more in sympathy with Louis than is Browning: Carlyle gives no indication that there is any "feeble mirth" in Louis's behavior toward the Grenadier who sought to comfort him; furthermore, the incident does not seem to him "at odds with that half-purpose to be strong/And merely patient under misery." Browning has, nevertheless, picked up Carlyle's suggestion that the sort of moral courage Louis has is "only the passive-half." Yet the difference in attitude remains clear.

Too, the remainder of the passage, concerned with Napoleon, is a graft, for in Carlyle's account of the incident, Napoleon is nowhere to be found. Browning's probable intent in dragging Napoleon into the scene is to heighten the dramatic flavor of the confrontation between Old and New. The juxtaposition does, however, cast some doubt upon Mrs. Watkins's claim that Browning's treatment of incidents taken from The French Revolution is such "as to suggest that [he] had recently reread them" (p. 368). Mrs. Watkins observes that Carlyle consistently used the red night-cap in The French Revolution as a symbol of revolutionary events. Says she: "Browning's poet appropriates Carlyle's image as a symbol for his own narrative. In the new context, Carlyle's image, extended by a kind of synecdoche to the History itself and, hence, to Carlyle's art as an historian, retains its connotation of revolutionary change" (p. 364). Such extension is somewhat rickety, but if--as seems clear--Browning does take the image of the night-cap from Carlyle, then in all likelihood he carries over as well the connotative meaning which Carlyle himself, in the passage cited, had attached to it.

Mrs. Watkins goes on to point out that there are allusions as well to "The Diamond Necklace" and Sartor Resartus; the fact that Miranda, the protagonist of the narrative, is a jeweler elicits the comment from Browning:

A jeweller -- no unsuggestive craft!  
Trade that admits of much romance, indeed!  
For, whom but goldsmiths used old monarchs pledge  
Regalia to, or seek a ransom from,  
Or pray to furnish dowry, at a pinch,  
According to authentic story-books?<sup>26</sup>  
Why, such have revolutionized this land  
With diamond-necklace-dealing!

(ll. 588-595)

The reference to Sartor is equally oblique:

Look, lady! where I bade you glance but now!  
Next habitation, though two miles away, --  
No tenement for man or beast between, --  
That, park and domicile, is country-seat  
Of this same good Miranda! I accept  
The augury. Or there, or nowhere else,  
Will I establish that a Night-cap gleams  
Of visionary Red, not White for once!  
"Heaven," saith the sage, "is with us, here inside  
Each man:" "Hell also," simpleness subjoins,  
By White and Red describing human flesh.

(ll. 548-558)

The second and third symbols, "turf" and "towers," are, says Mrs. Watkins, taken from Carlyle's frequently-employed architectural image for the structure of society and of human history generally (p. 368). It was a figure which Carlyle employed frequently, though by no means exclusively. It appears in "Characteristics," though it is there, of necessity, subordinate to the bodily or organic image of society; it appears many times

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<sup>26</sup> Note that here, as in the passage cited above, Browning refers obliquely to his sources as "story-books." Though the phrase may seem at first glance pejorative, Browning probably intends to convey by it no more than that the sources are excellent examples of the narrative art.

in Heroes and Hero-worship and is, as Mrs. Watkins points out, recurrent in the early chapters of The French Revolution. It functions most typically in two ways: as a symbol of human activity, especially of the meritorious kind, and, as a kind of alternative to the clothes metaphor, as a symbol of that which is outworn in human life and thought. It is in this second sense, the sense of decay, or, as Mrs. Watkins calls it, "a monumental edifice falling into ruin" (p. 367), that Browning borrows Carlyle's figure. The most extensive and literal application of it to the narrative is in ll. 1031-1149, the subject of which is ruins. The concluding lines of the passage point the moral of the whole:

Keep this same  
Notion of outside mound and inside mash,  
Towers yet intact round turfy rottenness,  
Symbolic partial-ravage, -- keep in mind!  
(ll. 1144-1147)

The image, in short, is that of an age of transition, a world between two worlds, one dead, the other not yet quite born. Says Mrs. Watkins:

Within the poem itself [as distinct from the dedicatory epilogue], the stylized idiom serves to dramatize the narrator and to characterize him as a disciple of Carlyle's social doctrines, as well as an imitator of Carlyle's narrative art. The parallels between the language of his imitative fable and Carlyle's diction identify his narrowly realistic point of view toward his material with the notion of social disintegration which Carlyle's fables had disseminated in early Victorian England. Implicit in the parallels is criticism of Carlyle's notion as a context for understanding either the intellectual problems of contemporary man or the responsibility of the contemporary poet seeking to delineate them. By the ironic method of dramatizing this criticism, the poem reaffirms Browning's characteristic conviction of man's inherent capacity for development beyond the external circumstances of life, even -- this poem adds -- in what was admittedly a 'transitional' era of human history (pp. 371-372).

What, then, is the sum of the relationship between Red Cotton Night-Cap Country and Carlyle? There is indebtedness of Browning to Carlyle in terms of metaphor, traits of diction, and ideas to argue. In part, though

only in part, the poem is a test, in narrative form, of certain of Carlyle's notions concerning mankind in an age of transition. In the fate of Miranda is epitomized the fate of a man--or race of men--who, in such an age of transition, clings too closely to the decayed symbols of a previous age, who pitches a tent upon the turf and never seeks to scale the walls before them. But Browning has more than social history in mind, for he is concerned as well with the poet and his work. He had before tried out, in poetic form, some of his responses to Carlyle--"How It Strikes a Contemporary" and "'Transcendentalism'" are instances of essentially opposed attitudes on Browning's part. In Red Cotton Night-Cap Country Browning addresses himself directly to the problem of the poet's role in two passages which are digressions from the narrative per se. In the first of these, he interrupts his narrative just before the climax to consider the necessity incumbent upon the poet to consider both the deed and the reasoning behind the deed, the accident and the substance. Miranda, at the beginning of part IV, just before his suicide, is at the tower atop his chateau:

He thought. . .  
 (Suppose I should prefer "He said"?  
 Along with every act--and speech is act--  
 There go, a multitude impalpable  
 To ordinary human faculty,  
 The thoughts which give the act significance.  
 Who is a poet needs must apprehend  
 Alike both speech and thoughts which prompt to speak.  
 Part these, and thought withdraws to poetry:  
 Speech is reported in the newspaper.)

(ll. 3276-3284)

The apparent contradiction in the passage is resolved in another passage near the end of the poem:

For, break through Art and rise to poetry,  
 Bring Art to tremble nearer, touch enough  
 The verge of vastness to inform our soul  
 What orb makes transit through the dark above,  
 And there's the triumph! -- there the incomplete,  
 More than completion, matches the immense, --  
 Then, Michelagnolo against the world!

(ll. 4027-4033)

This is another rendering of Browning's notion of success in failure, of the reach exceeding the grasp. Browning, in short, is here reaffirming that his ideas are his own, that the Carlylean notions have not been taken over in toto. Browning is affirming, without noisily insisting upon, his independence. The evidence of this poem, like the evidence of others examined here, suggests that Browning regarded Carlyle as a sympathetic friend and stylistic pioneer, not as a source of wisdom, prophecy, or absolute intellectual guidance. Mrs. Watkins insists that Browning's admiration for Carlyle was based largely upon his literary artistry, upon those narratives -- Sartor Resartus, "The Diamond Necklace," The French Revolution -- in which Carlyle was most originally creative. It is in those works which in Red Cotton Night-Cap Country Browning calls "story-books"<sup>27</sup> that Carlyle, in Browning's estimation, is able to "break through Art and rise to poetry."

As chance would have it, it was Browning who lived on and thus had the opportunity for the last word. And it was only at this point that Browning expressed more or less openly anything other than that unvarying admiration for Carlyle which had been the substance of his utterances for over forty years. The fullest expression of it, according to W. C. DeVane, came in 1887 in the Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville. This poem,

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<sup>27</sup> And in the "Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville" "fables short and sweet" (p. 373).

says DeVane, is "a recognizable portrait of the doleful prophet of Chelsea",<sup>28</sup> both personally and philosophically: "Browning is attempting in the Parleying to answer the gloomy philosophical views of Carlyle on the problems of good and evil, and God's relation to the universe. But the poem is more than mere answer to Carlyle; it amounts almost to an attack upon him. Browning clung to his own philosophical beliefs with more and more tenacity and temper as he grew older, and this fact partly explains the tone of the Parleying" (p. 17). Browning, that is to say, shared something of Carlyle's character if not of his attitude.

In one sense, it may be argued that Browning is in this poem doing no more than underscoring for one last time the essential difference between his attitude and Carlyle's. That it is easy to say that the difference may be epitomized as the difference between optimism and pessimism in no way destroys the validity of the epitome. DeVane's remark that the Parleying is an attack upon Carlyle as much as it is a rebuttal to him proves true in several instances of language. In part III of the poem, after having summarized what he understands to be Mandeville's teaching, Browning adds:

But what means this  
 --Objected by a mouth which yesterday  
 Was magisterial in antithesis  
 To half the truths we hold, or trust we may,  
 Though tremblingly the while? "No sign"--groaned he--  
 "No stirring of God's finger to denote  
 He wills that right should have supremacy  
 On earth, not wrong! How helpful could we quote  
 But one poor instance when he interposed  
 Promptly and surely and beyond mistake  
 Between oppression and its victim, closed  
 Accounts with sin for once, and bade wake  
 From our long dream that justice bears no sword,

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<sup>28</sup>W. C. DeVane, Browning's Parleyings: The Autobiography of a Mind (New Haven, 1927), p. 14. Hereafter cited as DeVane.

Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves!  
 So might we safely mock at what unnerves  
 Faith now, be spared the sapping fear's increase  
 That haply evil's strife with good shall cease  
 Never on earth. Nay, after earth, comes peace  
 Born out of life-long battle? Man's lip curves  
 with scorn: there, also, what if justice swerves  
 From dealing doom, sets free by no swift stroke  
 Right fettered here by wrong, but leaves life's yoke --  
 Death should loose man from -- fresh laid, past release?"  
 (ll. 39-61)

Carlyle, who had once (as in Sartor) preached fearlessly that the Universe was God's and proclaimed himself free of base fear forever, became, in Browning's view, all too convinced of the reality of evil, of its power to root out good. There is undeniably some justice in what Browning says: it is evident that Carlyle did grow more and more gloomy as the century went on, more and more became oppressed by the "vast Cockneydom" which he saw about him everywhere. The language of the quotation is very much Carlyle in one of his "Book-of-Job" moods. The argument of the poem resolves itself into a consideration of the question whether evil is real or illusory. Evidently for Carlyle it is all too real, for Browning otherwise:

Bernard de Mandeville, confute for me  
 This parlous friend who captured or set free  
 Thunderbolts at his pleasure, yet would draw  
 Back, panic-stricken by some puny straw  
 Thy gold-rimmed amber-headed cane had whisked  
 Out of his pathway if the object risked  
 Encounter, 'scaped thy kick from buckled shoe!  
 (ll. 62-68)

The existence of evil, in other words, which is for Carlyle of such magnitude, is, if properly understood, insignificant, or, rather, significant only as part of a combination with good.

In developing his theme, Browning lets Carlyle speak with his own voice: the passage above goes on with Browning's asking Mandeville to

grant th' friend --

('Those groan I hear, with guffaw at the end  
 Disposing of mock-melancholy) -- grant  
 His bilious mood one potion, ministrant  
 Of homely wisdom, healthy wit! For, hear!  
 'With power and will, let preference appear  
 By intervention ever and aye, help good  
 When evil's mastery is understood  
 In some plain outrage, and triumphant wrong  
 Tramples weak right to nothingness nay, long  
 Ere such sad consummation brings despair  
 To right's adherents, ah, what help it were  
 If wrong lay strangled in the birth -- each head  
 Of the hatched monster promptly crushed, instead  
 Of spared to greater venom! We require  
 No great experience that the inch-long worm,  
 Free of our heel, would grow to vomit fire,  
 And one day plague the world in dragon form.  
 So should wrong merely peep abroad to meet  
 Wrong's due quietus, leave our world's way safe  
 For honest walking."

(11. 70-90)

This is -- allowing always for the fact that he has become a character in  
 a Browning poem and his syntax is thus disordered -- the more or less  
 authentic voice of Carlyle. Elsewhere in the poem, as in the passage con-  
 cerned with the ground-plan of "Goethe's Estate in Weimar" (l. 176),  
 Browning is so specific in his allusions as to leave no doubt that it is  
 Carlyle himself, and not merely a body of Carlyle's ideas, he is coming  
 to grips with. The argument which follows, interwoven with and developed  
 by a Promethean theme, is essentially Browning's contention that the evil  
 in the world exists for a purpose: to show good to best advantage. Evil  
 is more illusory than not in the sense that it can never finally triumph.

Browning is fair in the poem: he allows Carlyle his own voice in  
 which to present the best of his argument. Yet the final dismissal of  
 Carlyle's argument:

so good my friend, keep still  
 Trustful with -- me? with thee, sage Mandeville!

(11. 320-321)

constitutes as well the dismissal of one whole area of possible influence of Carlyle upon Browning.

Though Browning claimed<sup>29</sup> that Carlyle never influenced him at all beyond the range of a very narrow circle, the claim seems somehow more hopeful than apt. If by influence Browning means that he never accepted without reservation Carlyle's doctrines, he speaks with some justice. It is evident, however, that, mutatis mutandis, he either borrowed or agreed with a number of Carlyle's notions and worked them into his poems. Charlotte Crawford Watkins has argued that Browning valued Carlyle most as a literary stylist and as a personal friend, and Browning, in the letter quoted below, seemed to bear this out. What remains dubious, however, is that the influence of Carlyle in other matters was as slight as Browning wished it to seem. If Carlyle's influence was so slight, why did Browning then find it necessary so often to argue with him poetically, not merely to rebel, to disclaim, or to assert oppositely, but to make very clear just who it is that he is rebelling against, disclaiming from, or asserting in opposition to?

It might be argued that Carlyle so dominated thought in the Nineteenth Century that almost anybody would be forced to give him his due, whether agreeing with him or arguing against him. But here we are faced with the circumstance of a forty-year friendship between the two which was practically uninterrupted and was, by all the evidences at hand, a fairly close one. Furthermore, the most stunning attack was withheld until after Carlyle's death. The conclusion seems to be that Browning stood more in

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<sup>29</sup> See below.

Carlyle's shadow than he cared to admit.

It is almost as if Browning were finally undertaking to express publicly the independence from Carlyle and his influence which he had practiced tacitly for many years. And in a sense, this may indeed be the case; in Carlyle's lifetime Browning never ventured to dispute at length with the tenets of his elder. The difference may be only the difference of thirty-five years' experience, but it may also be accounted for partly in terms of the fact that Carlyle was dead. Both, indeed, are probably true: no doubt Browning was less and less under the influence of Carlyle as he grew older and as he became more and more convinced about the rightness of his own ideas. And Carlyle himself had changed; the tone of Sartor is not in all ways the tone of his later words and remarks. But whatever the reasons may be, the essential point remains the same: saving only the break in the '60's, the two men never failed in affection for one another, but clearly they had only a limited sympathy for or understanding of one another's work.

The Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville may be in some ways Browning's last word on Carlyle: it may even represent his final considered judgement. But perhaps a truer estimate of the relation between the two men and the foundation upon which it rested is to be found in a letter of March 1, 1861:

... I knew the extraordinary limitations of my dear old friend -- and of his "woman" too -- just as well forty years ago as today. His opinions about men and things one inch out of his own little circle never moved me with the force of a feather -- or I should hardly have lived five minutes of my whole life as I have done, and, for the remainder of it, -- please God, -- shall do. But we must not ourselves prove ingrates for a deal of love, or at least benevolence, in deed and wish, -- I must not, anyhow, -- so, instead of "burning Carlyle and scattering his ashes to the winds," I am on the committee for erecting a monument to "True Thomas" -- whose arm was laid on my shoulder a very few weeks ago.

He confessed once to me that, on the first occasion of my visiting him, he was anything but favourably impressed by my "smart green coat" -- I being in riding-costume; and if then and there had begun and ended our acquaintanceship, very likely I might have figured in some corner of a page as a poor scribbling-man with proclivities for the turf and scamp-hood. What then? He wrote Sartor -- and such letters to me in those old days! No, I am his devotedly. (NLRE, pp. 262-263).

### CHAPTER III

#### TENNYSON AND CARLYLE

"Tennyson means just what he says, poor fellow."

-- Carlyle to William Allingham

"Carlyle has nothing more to say."

-- Tennyson, 1850

In his biography<sup>1</sup> of his grandfather, Sir Charles Tennyson recounts an incident of Tennyson's visit to Holland in the summer of 1841. In Amsterdam Tennyson fell in with an American tourist, a Dr. Shepherd, who apparently proved either companionable or unshakable, for the two spent a good deal of time together in the next two weeks, dining, sight-seeing, and the like. Tennyson, however, who had already manifested that extreme aversion to personal publicity which amounted almost to a morbid condition in later years, refused to reveal his identity to his companion, even to the extent, we are told, of having difficulties with the police for refusing to show his passport one day when he was asked for it in the presence of Dr. Shepherd. Shepherd, who was "fascinated by his strange companion," was as well in some perplexity as to his identity. He finally guessed to himself -- wrongly -- about the identity of his companion, until a chance remark of Tennyson's negated his guess. Shepherd had come to the conclusion, guessing from Tennyson's "unconventionality and the brilliance of his conversation" that he must be Thomas Carlyle,

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Tennyson, (Alfred Tennyson), New York, 1949.

The incident, slight as it may be, is nevertheless significant to the extent of indicating that there was at least the possibility of confusing the two; it was, though not in so corporeal a way, not the last time that the two were to be thought of as possessing common traits. Ten years later, in its review of In Memoriam, the Times (Nov. 28, 1851) called Tennyson "the most resolute mannerist in England, except Mr. Carlyle." The two have been linked in other ways as well: both have been called antidemocratic and anti-idealistic;<sup>2</sup> they both make the transition from Negative to Positive Romanticism;<sup>3</sup> both, finally, are authoritarian and rather inclined to imperialism.<sup>4</sup> These likenesses between the two serve to point up a similarity between Tennyson and Carlyle which was, in the first instance, largely responsible for a friendship of over forty years, and, in the second instance, was a probable partial cause for the failure of understanding which characterized a good deal of their relationship, especially insofar as Tennyson's work as a poet was concerned. It will become evident that Tennyson probably misunderstood Carlyle -- and especially his own debt to Carlyle -- as much as Carlyle misunderstood -- and disapproved of -- some of the most Carlylean elements in Tennyson's poetry. There is in

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<sup>2</sup> Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate (Toronto, 1962), pp. 174-178.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 76-77, and Clyde de L. Ryals, Theme and Symbol in Tennyson's Poems to 1850 (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 39-40.

<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, of course, had his say on The Nigger Question; Tennyson held "the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child," and thought it better to have "fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay." Further, the two were drawn together in the mid-60's on the committee defending Governor Eyre against charges of brutality in putting down a Negro revolt in Jamaica.

this relationship, as in the Browning-Carlyle relationship, evidence of a pattern: the older, already-prestigious man gathering to him and encouraging a younger, promising man, who, achieving his poetic majority, departs from the strict tenets of his elder, who views the adventitious growth as somewhere between failure to develop and apostasy. As a prophet and guide, Carlyle outlived his usefulness to the younger men whom he nurtured; as a friend he remained constant.

The acquaintanceship of Tennyson and Carlyle began in approximately the fashion of that of Browning and Carlyle: in each instance, Leigh Hunt was prominent, in each instance, the nascent poet was attending a series of Carlyle's lectures. The probable date of the first meeting of the two is sometime in 1837. In that year, Leigh Hunt wrote to Tennyson:

. . . Carlyle expresses the pleasure he should have in meeting you here some evening. . . . Shall I hope to see you at Carlyle's lecture on Monday? <sup>5</sup>

Tennyson, like Browning, was following the pattern of being attracted to Carlyle in person first through his lectures though there was probably on Tennyson's part some attention to Carlyle's published works, especially those in the periodicals, even before this time. Sir Charles Tennyson gives a somewhat different account of the first meeting of the two, though the approximate time remains the same:

He [Tennyson] also joined the club which John Sterling had started and which was generally called by his name. There he met Carlyle, Forster, Macready and Landor, as well as many former

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<sup>5</sup> Hallam Tennyson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir. (New York 1897), I, 156. Hallam Tennyson dates this letter 1835, but he is surely in error, since the first of Carlyle's four series of lectures -- that on German literature -- did not take place until 1837.

Apostles. Carlyle, who had heard much of him from John Sterling, had long wanted to make his acquaintance. They must have met soon after the Tennysons settled at High Beech, for the first reference to Alfred in the Carlyle correspondence shows that he was already a favourite at Cheyne Row in 1839.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Charles's guess seems to confirm that 1837 was the approximate year of the first meeting of the two, for the Tennysons lived at High Beech from 1837 to 1840. This evidence does not coincide precisely with the notion that it was through the Sterling Club (first called the Anonymous Club) that Tennyson and Carlyle first met: that club was officially denominated as such on August 8, 1838,<sup>7</sup> though the evidence of Carlyle's account suggests that it met namelessly (if a group called the Anonymous Club can be said ever to have had a name) for some time before the Original Regulations were drawn up. In any event, 1837 or 1838 seems the most likely date for their first acquaintanceship.

What impelled the desire for acquaintanceship on either side? It is more or less easy to see why Tennyson would want to know Carlyle, who was already coming to be known in literary circles: by 1838 he had published The French Revolution, Sartor Resartus, and a large number of essays in the periodicals including the essays on Burns, Boswell, and Signs of the Times. The appeal for Tennyson, according to Harold Nieplson, lay in the fact that

there is an essential similitude between the actual stuff of Carlyle's doctrine and the more nebulous and tentative theories with which Tennyson endeavoured to allay the doubts and anxieties of the Victorian mind. There is

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Tennyson, p. 176.

<sup>7</sup> See Carlyle's Life of John Sterling (Works, XI, 150-159).

the same mistrust of logic, the same mistrust of mere soulless intelligence, the same belief in truth and virtue dominant and triumphant in face of the evidence of sense, in face of those two disturbing negatives -- the infinity of space and the infinity of time. We have, more fundamentally, the same ultimate appeal to intuitive theology -- to the "heat of inward evidence."<sup>8</sup>

Even when something is deducted for tone in this passage, it does suggest part of the reason that Tennyson might have been drawn to Carlyle aside from his being the friend of friends and one of the emergent figures in English literary life. Tennyson may well, as Nicholson, suggests, have seen in Carlyle and his work the fuller formulation of ideas of his own which were as yet but imperfectly articulated. To this extent, the beginning of the Tennyson-Carlyle relationship is very much in the pattern of the disciple-master relationship. Aside from its being a pattern of relationship which seems to know no bounds in space or time, it is also evidently a pattern into which Carlyle himself drew many younger people, with himself always in the dominant role.

But what about Carlyle himself? Why should he be especially interested in meeting Tennyson, who was, after all, at this stage of his career, a comparative unknown? There is nothing in Hunt's letter cited above which indicates more than ordinary courtesy on Carlyle's part in expressing the wish to meet Tennyson some evening. Yet Tennyson himself recalled in later years that Carlyle "seemed to take fancy" to him from the beginning.<sup>9</sup> There seems to be no comment of Carlyle's on Tennyson's poetry before

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<sup>8</sup> Sir Harold George Nicholson, Tennyson: Aspects of his Life, Character and Poetry (New York; 1962), pp. 143-144.

<sup>9</sup> Tennyson and His Friends, ed. Hallam Tennyson (London, 1911), pp. 131-132.

this time (essentially the poems of 1830 and 1832); indeed, it was not until 1842 -- several years after their first meeting -- and Tennyson's poems of that year that Carlyle set himself to any lengthy comment on his work. But Carlyle's taking a fancy to Tennyson and his expression of a wish to meet him need not be taken as identical conditions: whereas the one may be no more than uniform politeness, the other may reflect a real interest, based upon two circumstances.

In the first place, Tennyson's personal charm was evidently very great, and it seems to have had its effect upon Carlyle. On September 5, 1840, he wrote to his brother:

Some weeks ago, one night, the Poet Tennyson [sic] and Matthew Allen were discovered here, sitting smoking in the garden. Tennyson had been here before, but was still new to Jane, -- who was alone for the first hour or two of it. A fine large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed man is Alfred: dusty, smoky, free-and-easy; who swims, outwardly and inwardly, with great composure in an inarticulate element as of tranquil chaos and tobacco smoke; great now and then where he does emerge: a most restful, brotherly, solidhearted man. <sup>10</sup>

Though it is obvious from this description that Carlyle was much taken by Tennyson, it is evident as well that he saw more than the charm -- saw, indeed, those very qualities of indeterminacy (the "inarticulate element" composed partly of "tranquil chaos") which might suggest to a prophet that

<sup>10</sup> Charles Richard Sanders, "Carlyle and Tennyson," PMLA, LXXVI (March 1961), 82. Sanders notes that the original of the letter is in the National Library of Scotland.

a new Hero -- or a new disciple -- had appeared. <sup>11</sup>

Whatever the causes may have been, it is evident that the friendship of the two prospered. Joanna Richardson suggests that Carlyle may have taken to Tennyson because he saw him as a kind of hero: of their relationship in the late '30's and early '40's she says that Tennyson's "friendship with Carlyle was growing, for, irascible though he was, Carlyle could worship a hero when he found him; and the Son of Earth and Heaven who had entered Carlyle's Valhalla" was impressive to many people beside Carlyle. <sup>12</sup> Not the least of those so impressed was Mrs. Carlyle herself. A woman of decided opinions and a sharp and nimble tongue, she had dismissed Browning as "a considerable fluff of feathers." Tennyson, however, she found a great deal more exciting; a letter from her to Helen Welsh in March 1843 can hardly say enough about Tennyson. Besides being a man of genius, "he is a very handsome man, and a noble-hearted one, with something of the gipsy in his appearance, which, for me, is perfectly charming.

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<sup>11</sup> There is a striking similarity between this description and one which Carlyle set down almost four years later in a letter to Emerson. On August 5, 1844, he wrote of Tennyson: "One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusty-dark hair; bright-laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy! -- smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic, -- fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe! -- his way is through Chaos and the Bottomless and Pathless; not handy for making out many miles upon" (The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872 (Boston, 1885), II, 67.

<sup>12</sup> Joanna Richardson, The Pre-Eminent Victorian. A Study of Tennyson (London, 1962), p. 36.

Babbie never saw him, unfortunately, or perhaps I should say fortunately, for she must have fallen in love with him on the spot, unless she be made absolutely of ice. . . ." 13

Hallam Tennyson was inclined to the belief that it was indeed Tennyson's great charm (not to mention his genius) which accounted for Carlyle's admiration -- and cultivation -- of him. He quotes with apparent approbation a note of FitzGerald's that Carlyle was "naturally prejudiced against one whom everyone was praising, and praising for a sort of poetry which he despised. But directly he saw and heard the Man, he knew there was a man to deal with and took pains to cultivate him; assiduous in exhorting him to leave Verse and Rhyme and to apply his genius to Prose." 14 It was apparently at this time that Carlyle referred to Tennyson as a "life-guardsmen spoilt by making poetry" (p. 188).

The advice to abandon poetry for prose appears to have been standard with Carlyle, for it is essentially the same advice he gave to and about Browning, and which he enunciated as a general principle in his lectures and elsewhere. 15 But it is not -- despite the wretched state of Carlyle's own poetry -- merely a matter of the dog in the metrical manger. Carlyle appears to have held to something like a cyclical theory of history, and he makes it clear that, in his estimation, his own was a sorry age. As a

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<sup>13</sup> Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, ed. J. A. Froude (New York: 1883), I, 107.

<sup>14</sup> Hallam Tennyson, Memoir, I, 188.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Heroes and Hero-Worship, Lecture III and the letter to Emerson below.

consequence, poetry, which he professed to hold in the highest regard, was at best possible only with the greatest of difficulty in such an age; the true man of genius, the Hero, would, if he had anything to say, say it in prose rather than in verse. His qualified approval of Tennyson as poet in the following passage suggests the depth of his feeling that poetry, as he seemed to see it practiced in his era, was at least partially definable as the absence of good sense. On November 17, 1843, he wrote to Emerson:

. . . at bottom "Poetry" is a most suspicious affair for me at present! You cannot fancy the oceans of Twaddle that human Creatures emit upon me, in these times; as if, when the lines had a jingle in them, a Nothing could be Something, and the point were gained! It is becoming a horror to me, -- as all speech without meaning more and more is. I said to Richard Milnes, "Now in honesty what is the use of putting your accusative before the verb, and otherwise entangling the syntax; if there really is an image of any object, thought, or thing within you, for God's sake let me have it the shortest way, and I will so cheerfully excuse the omission of the jingle at the end: cannot I do without that!" -- Milnes answered, "Ah, my dear fellow, it is because we have no thought, or almost none; a little thought goes a great way when you put it into rhyme!" Let a man try to the very uttermost to speak what he means, before singing is had recourse to. Singing, in our curt English speech, contrived expressly and almost exclusively for "despatch of business," is terribly difficult. Alfred Tennyson, alone of our time, has proved it to be possible in some measure. <sup>16</sup>

As difficult as poetry is made out to be in this account, it must be reckoned high praise indeed of Tennyson that he is capable of it even "in some measure." Carlyle may, however, have considered the "life-guardman" not yet entirely spoilt by making poetry; disillusionment with Tennyson, like disillusionment with Browning -- disillusionment, that is, that either would

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<sup>16</sup> Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, pp. 48-49.

ever heed his advice and leave poetry for prose -- came to Carlyle only slowly. At this point in the early forties, he was still cultivating Tennyson the man in hopes of being able to dispatch Tennyson the poet. Hallam Tennyson mentions the frequent night walks his father took with Carlyle during this period, walks in which Carlyle railed against the conditions of the time, the "acrid putrescence" of the stuccoed houses, the "bigak jumble of black cottages where there used to be pleasant fields" which constituted the suburbs, and the two would agree that London was going to hell in a handbasket (Memoir, I, 267). "They had," he says, "long and free discussions on every conceivable subject," and fell out only once when Carlyle accused Tennyson of calling poetry "high art," and Tennyson flatly denied it.<sup>17</sup> That Tennyson ranked high with Carlyle at this period is evidenced by the company he kept in Carlyle's conversation; on October 26, 1841, John Sterling wrote to Tennyson that ". . . Carlyle was here yesterday evening, growled at having missed you, and said more in your praise than in any one's except Cromwell and an American backwoodsman who has killed thirty or forty people with a bowie knife and since run away to Texas" (Memoir, I, 181).

It was against this background of friendly relations and warm praise that Carlyle undertook to congratulate Tennyson upon the volume of poems which ended the "Ten Years' Silence." On December 7, 1842, Carlyle wrote to Tennyson in praise of the Poems of 1842. He had, he says, "read certain of them over again, and mean to read them over and over till they become my poems." He acknowledged that such species of praise was high

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<sup>17</sup> Whether or not the story is true, Tennyson often did write as if he believed what Carlyle charged him with. "The Hesperides," for example (1832), may well be read as a poem about the poetic mysteries and the necessity for keeping them more or less inviolate.

and rare indeed: "If you knew what my relation has been to the thing call'd English 'Poetry' for many years back, you would think such fact almost surprising!" For once, that is to say, Singing seems almost as good as Speaking. The volume of praise swells as he goes on:

Truly it is long since in any English Book, Poetry or Prose, I have felt the pulse of a real man's heart as I do in this same. A right valiant, true fighting, victorious heart; strong as a lion's, yet gentle, loving and full of music: what I call a genuine singer's heart! There are tones as of the nightingale; low murmurs as of wood-doves at summer noon; everywhere a noble sound as of the free winds and leafy woods. The sunniest glow of Life dwells in that soul, chequered duly with dark streaks from night and Hades: everywhere one feels as if all were fill'd with yellow glowing sunlight, some glorious golden Vapour; from which form after form bodies itself; naturally, golden forms. In one word, there seems to be a note of "The Eternal Melodies" in this man; for which let all other men be thankful and joyful!

He goes on to offer special praise for several pieces: "Dora," which reminds him of the Book of Ruth; "The Two Voices," which he finds reminiscent of the Book of Job; "The Summer Oak," in which he detects traces of Goethe's "Müllerinn"; the "Vision of Sin," which recalls Jean Paul Richter; and "Ulysses," which does not remind him of anything, but which creates in him "what would fill whole Lachrymatories as I read" (Memoir, I, 213-214).

Those poems which Carlyle picks out for special mention are significant indications of the bases of Carlyle's attitudes, for it is to be observed that -- with the exception of "Ulysses" -- they are praised for reminding him of something else. Job was one of Carlyle's touchstones: "A noble Book," he called it; "all men's Book! . . . So true everyway; true eyesight and vision

for all things; material things no less than spiritual. . . ."18 It is in its universality, its faithful depiction of the condition of men everywhere and in all times, that a poem attains its validity. Thus, for Carlyle, to compare a poem with Job or Ruth is to praise that poem highly. So too, with the comparisons with Goethe and Richter, two of Carlyle's earliest and most enduring heroes; to echo them is to echo the truth. Indeed, the phrase "The Eternal Melodies" is very nearly the key one in this critique of Carlyle's: the Eternal is the True, and Melody is the necessary condition of poetry, which for Carlyle may be defined as "Musical Thought" (Heroes and Hero-Worship, Lecture III (V, 93)).

In a sense, therefore, Carlyle praises Tennyson's poetry because it is traditional, but the tradition is not a literary one. Charles Richard Sanders remarks of Carlyle that "what he sought for first in all art was its humanity and the invincibility of the human spirit. The distinction between what was human and what was not was always a vital one to him, whether he was judging the arts or the institutions of society."<sup>19</sup> It ought to be added that Carlyle also sought for some sort of authentication of the "humanity and the invincibility of the human spirit" in art by referring to models. Thus it is essentially the authority of the past -- or, more accurately, of the sum of human experience -- which legitimizes the art of the present. This unstated but very evident appeal to authority in Carlyle's criticism of Tennyson's art and of art in general may be said to account largely for the change in attitude which that criticism underwent later in the relationship between the two men.

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<sup>18</sup> Heroes and Hero-Worship, Lecture II (V, 49).

<sup>19</sup> Sanders, "Carlyle and Tennyson," p. 83.

Through the remainder of the forties, the friendship of the two, which had grown rapidly from acquaintance to intimacy, remained for the most part unruffled. Tennyson in these years, still unmarried, was not often in London, preferring to remain in seclusion at home, first at Boxley, later at Cheltenham. Though Tennyson was yet "solitary and sad" (as Carlyle wrote to Emerson), he was nevertheless "a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother!" (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 66). It may be that the very infrequency of contact delayed for Carlyle what appears to be the inevitable disappointment in the man whom he would, so to speak, make his disciple; Tennyson, by much the same token, thus avoided a good deal of the advice and exhortation which were the lot of Browning at a similar stage of his relationship with Carlyle. "He often skips me in these brief visits to Town," Carlyle wrote to Emerson, but hastened to add that he skipped everybody.

What Carlyle did see of Tennyson, however, was apparently sufficient to convince him that Tennyson's Everlasting No would eventually emerge triumphant as an Everlasting Yea; he was "carrying a bit of Chaos about him. . . which he [was] manufacturing into Cosmos!" Furthermore, what Carlyle saw of Tennyson was enough to convince him that he was deserving of some help in his manufactory, for Carlyle was instrumental in the attempt to get a pension for Tennyson to relieve the financial pressure created by the failure of Dr. Allen's woodcarving scheme, in which Tennyson had invested heavily and disastrously. Carlyle's aid to Tennyson in the matter of the pension was in some sense typical of the man, for this was not the only instance in which he labored to gain livelihood for one of his friends; he was instrumental in much the

same way in getting Clough an examinership in the Education Office in 1853.<sup>20</sup> As Hallam Tennyson recounts it, Carlyle put the matter to Richard Monckton Milnes, who, though not unsympathetic, doubted that his constituents would approve his endeavoring to get government money for an unknown poet. Carlyle told him, in his best prophetic fashion, "Richard Milnes, on the Day of Judgment, when the Lord asks you why you didn't get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it will not do to lay the blame on your constituents; it is you that will be damned" (Memoir, I, 225). Carlyle apparently convinced Milnes, who apparently convinced Peel, and on October 5, 1845, Mrs. Carlyle wrote to her husband: "Did you know that Alfred Tennyson is to have a pension of £200 a year after all? Peel has stated his intention of recommending him to Her Gracious Majesty, and that is considered final: 'A chaqu' un selon sa capacité!'"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, James Insley Osborne, Arthur Hugh Clough (Boston, 1920), p. 183, and Katherine Chorley, Arthur Hugh Clough: The Uncommitted Mind (Oxford, 1962), p. 129. Carlyle's charities and generousities were quite well-known; Augustus Hare recounts the following story:

Mr. Hannay knew Carlyle very well, and often went to see him, but it was in his poorer days. One day when Mr. Hannay went to the house, he saw two gold sovereigns lying exposed in a little vase on the chimney-piece. He asked Carlyle what they were for. Carlyle looked -- for him -- embarrassed, but gave no definite answer. "Well, now, my dear fellow," said Mr. Hannay, "neither you, nor I are quite in a position to play ducks and drakes with sovereigns: what are these for?" -- "Well," said Carlyle, "the fact is, Leigh Hunt likes better to find them there than that I should give them to him" (Augustus J. C. Hare, The Story of My Life (New York, 1901), IV, 49-50).

<sup>21</sup> New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, ed. Alexander Carlyle (New York, 1903), I, 180.

Carlyle replied three days later: "What you tell me today of Tennyson's Pension is very welcome indeed. Poor Alfred, may it do him good. . . . By the bye, was it not I that first spoke of that Pension, and set it afloat in the world! In that case it may be defined as our ukase not less than Peel's." <sup>22</sup>

The next few years, however, were to prove critical ones in the friendship of Tennyson and Carlyle; the generally sunny weather, the aura of unrelieved admiration which had been characteristic of their relationship, began, if not to fade, at least to acquire the nature of chiaroscuro. The signs were not at first evident; Tennyson, now spending more time than ever in London, spent most of the first half of 1846 there and saw much of Carlyle and other friends such as Macready, Thackeray, and William Thomson. Indeed, Sir Charles Tennyson argues that one of the chief influences keeping his grandfather in London so much in this period was his affection for Carlyle (Alfred Tennyson, p. 214). Much the same pattern continued the following year: when Tennyson wrote to Edward FitzGerald in 1847, after the publication of The Princess, he remarked that he had seen Carlyle frequently (Memoir, I, 260). The conjunction of dates is perhaps interesting, for it was The Princess, FitzGerald later wrote, which caused both him and Carlyle very nearly to give up hope for Tennyson. Certainly, by the end of that year, some doubt about Tennyson had crept into Carlyle's mind, though he still regarded him as a man of great possibility. On December 30, 1847, he wrote to Emerson:

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<sup>22</sup> New Letters of Thomas Carlyle, ed. Alexander Carlyle (London, 1904), II, 6.

Tennyson has been here for three weeks; dining daily till he is near dead; -- setting out a Poem withal. He came in to us on Sunday evening last, and on the preceding Sunday: a truly interesting Son of Earth, and Son of Heaven, -- who has almost lost his way, among the will-o'-wisps, I doubt; and may flounder ever deeper, over neck and nose at last, among the quagmires that abound! I like him well; but can do next to nothing for him. Milnes, with general co-operation, got him a pension; and he has bread and tobacco; but that is a poor outfit for such a soul. He wants a task; and, alas, that of spinning rhymes, and naming it "Art" and "high Art," in a Time like ours, will never furnish him (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 188-9).

Since The Princess had been published only five days before, it is quite possible that Carlyle had not yet seen it; if he had, he would very likely have commented more largely to Emerson instead of referring to it only as "a Poem." But the disparaging reference to "spinning rhymes" as an unfit task -- indeed, as no task at all -- fits a familiar pattern in Carlyle's criticism of poetry and the poet's art, for the finding of a task -- of some real work which a man might with honor do -- is a piece of advice which he urged upon Browning as well. Though there is no evidence that Carlyle had The Princess in mind when he wrote to Emerson, the only other possible source of his remark is his personal observation of Tennyson. Since Tennyson had published nothing since the 1842 volume, and since Carlyle had professed himself enchanted with that, and since it seems unlikely that he had read The Princess when he wrote to Emerson, he must have been basing his pessimism upon what he saw of the man and not the poet.

There is no evidence that any of Carlyle's feeling communicated itself directly to Tennyson (though it is impossible not to imagine Carlyle's having his say, in however mild and friendly a fashion, on those occasions

when the two were together), but Tennyson's own attitude toward Carlyle was demonstrably undergoing a change during this period. It may be that some word of Carlyle's animadversions did reach his ears, and, since Tennyson was always almost morbidly sensitive to criticism, as he was averse to publicity, he may have taken umbrage. Mrs. Rundle Charles gave Hallam Tennyson an account of a conversation she had with Tennyson during his visit to Plymouth in 1848:

Then we talked of Carlyle: "You would like him for one day," he said, "but get tired of him, so vehement and destructive"; he gave by way of a specimen of his talk in a deep tragic voice, "For God's sake away with gigs, thousand million gigs in the world, away with them all in God's name, spoke and axle, the world will never be right until they are all swept into the lowest pit of Tophet." He often smokes with Carlyle; "Goethe once Carlyle's hero, now Cromwell his epitome of human excellence. Carlyle spoke once as if he wished poets to be our statesmen; fancy Burns Prime Minister!" (Memoir, I, 279).<sup>23</sup>

The imitation of Carlyle hardly ranks as one of Tennyson's better productions, but the anecdote does point to one quality in Carlyle which might have disturbed Tennyson. Valerie Pitt points out that Tennyson had a

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<sup>23</sup> Tennyson may have been joking, choosing Burns as the least likely Prime Minister among the poets, or he may have been recalling some fragment of Carlyle's conversation. Some two years later, however, Carlyle made very nearly that suggestion in Latter-Day Pamphlets (No. III: "Downing Street," April 1, 1850):

Robert Burns never had the smallest chance to get into Parliament, much as Robert Burns deserved, for all our sakes, to have been found there. For the man, -- it was not known to men purblind, sunk in their poor dim vulgar element, but might have been known to men of insight who had any loyalty or any royalty of their own, -- was a born king of men: full of valour, of intelligence and heroic nobleness; fit for far other work than to break his heart among poor mean mortals, gauging beer! (Works, XX, 118).

horror of revolution and rather envisioned "Freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent," whereas Carlyle looked for "cataclysm as part of the nature of the universe" (Tennyson Laureate, p. 175). However much Carlyle may or may not have welcomed actual revolution, there is undeniably a vehemence in many of his utterances which might lead one such as Tennyson to suppose such vehemence was necessarily followed by the will to destruction. And it was doubtless a side of Carlyle which Tennyson could very easily find unattractive. Such impressions as these were perhaps responsible for Tennyson's remark during a visit to Ireland in 1850, upon seeing a collection of Carlyle's works, that Carlyle had nothing more to say (Memoir, I, 291n.).

Despite the feeling of Carlyle that Tennyson lacked a task, and despite Tennyson's feeling that Carlyle had nothing more to say, the relationship of the two remained essentially placid, with one possible exception, through the early 1850's. In 1850, of course, was Tennyson's annus mirabilis: In Memoriam, marriage, the Laureateship. Oddly, it is only the second of these on which Carlyle expressed himself in the records which remain, but to Tennyson's marriage he gave his imprimatur, delivered at Tent Lodge, Coniston, when the Tennysons were on their wedding journey: "Here for the first time," says Hallam Tennyson, "my mother saw Carlyle, who was staying with the Marshalls. The meeting was characteristic; he slowly scanned her from head to foot, then gave her a hearty shake of the hand" (Memoir, I, 334). Sir Charles Tennyson adds to this account: "Nor was his respect for her lessened when soon afterwards she silenced one of his wild grumbles by saying gently but firmly: 'That is not sane, Mr. Carlyle'" (Tennyson, p. 245). Most likely, then, Carlyle did approve as the biographers suggest, but his letter to Emerson (November

14, 1850) casts some shadow of ambiguity on the matter, though the shadow may be stylistic alone. He remarks, in recounting his journey of that year: "saw Tennyson too, in Cumberland, with his new Wife; and other beautiful recommendable and questionable things. . ." (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 224). But when the Tennyson's first child was still-born on April 20, 1851, the Carlyles were among the first to go to Twickenham after the Tennysons began receiving again.

By this time an inevitable change was creeping into the friendship; Tennyson, no longer solitary and unacclaimed, was not the lone, brooding man he had been, seeking out Carlyle (among others) as a source of strength and reassurance. It was not that he was less friendly; the evidence suggests that relations between the two men were almost certainly never less than correct (there was no evident breach in their friendship as there was in that of Carlyle with Browning) and generally a good deal warmer than that. But there was undeniably a change instituted by the rather radical and rather sudden change in Tennyson's fortunes and conditions. Carlyle apparently recognized this; he wrote to Emerson (August 25, 1851) that "Alfred has been taken up on the top of the waves, and a good deal jumbled about since you were here."<sup>24</sup>

But if the times were drawing the two apart, the Times was drawing them together. In its review of In Memoriam (November 28, 1851), the Times remarked that "Mr. Tennyson. . . has grown into the most resolute mannerist in England, except Mr. Carlyle."<sup>25</sup> For if the heat

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<sup>24</sup>Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 237. "Since you were here" refers to Emerson's last visit to England in late 1847-early 1848.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in Edgar Finley Shannon, Tennyson and the Reviewers (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 156.

of early friendship had somewhat cooled, the very process of cooling was tending to set Tennyson in a form in which he would more and more often seem to bear likeness to Carlyle, not merely physical this time, as in Amsterdam in 1841, but in style and in idea. By an odd paradox, it was in this period that Carlyle tended more and more to disapprove of what Tennyson produced.

One of Carlyle's most famous (though, by his own later account, "not very luminous") descriptions of Tennyson pictured him "sitting on a dung-heap among innumerable dead dogs."<sup>26</sup> This is customarily explained as meaning that, to Carlyle's mind, Tennyson "was apt to brood over old-world subjects for his poems."<sup>27</sup> It may well be; Carlyle was rarely at a loss for a good scatological image. The possibility exists, nevertheless, that he had something other in mind, possibly the morbidity which traditionally characterizes Tennyson, possibly parts of In Memoriam in particular. Even though Carlyle may not have meant it in quite this way, there is also the possibility that some emotion similar to that which called forth the dung-hill image may have afflicted Carlyle in observing another facet of Tennyson's personality: Tennyson the salon entertainer.

By all accounts, Tennyson was proud of his readings from his own works given to the select groups which gathered in the fashionable houses.

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<sup>26</sup> Hallam Tennyson, Memoir, I, 340. There are several slightly variant versions of the anecdote which place it in any of several widely-separated years. Cf. Arthur Waugh, Alfred Lord Tennyson (London, 1892), p. 89, and A. C. Benson, Alfred Tennyson (New York, 1907), p. 23. Hallam Tennyson's account seems likely to be the most probable of the three.

<sup>27</sup> Memoir, I, 340. Benson (p. 23) gives substantially the same account.

Though he customarily had to be urged to entrance gatherings with his deep-chested music, he seemed to love to be urged.<sup>28</sup> This sort of performance may have been distasteful to the Apostle of Silence. It was this collision of opposites which led to one of the famous minor upheavals in literary subhistory. Lady Ashburton had assembled at the Grange in early 1856 a party including the Tennysons, the Carlyles, Spedding, the Brookfields, the Venables, and others. The piece de resistance of the gathering was to be Tennyson's reading of his new poem, Maud. The day came, the expectant company gathered in the study. Carlyle, however, was not among them; he was in the hall, preparing to take his daily walk, and waiting for someone to join him. None of the company cared to miss Tennyson's reading, but, with two geniuses in the house to placate, someone had to go. Finally Mr. Goldwin Smith slipped out in the hall to join Carlyle, and Mr. Brookfield followed shortly after. Crisis was averted, but apparently Tennyson's feelings were not spared entirely, for this or something else had apparently put him in one of his more sensitive moods. Mrs. Carlyle, who might (or might not) be expected to be partial to her husband, but who had nevertheless a strong affection for Tennyson, reported to William Allingham on February 23, 1856:

We lived in the same house with Alfred Tennyson lately -- at Lord Ashburton's in Hampshire -- and he read Maud and other poems aloud to us, and

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<sup>28</sup> He may even have urged others to urge him. Augustus Hare gives the account of a Lady S.: "She talked of Tennyson, who had been to stay with her. He desired his sons to let her know that he should like to be asked to read some of his poems in the evening. Nevertheless, when she asked him, he made a piece of work about it, and said to the other guests, 'I do it, but I only do it because Lady S. absolutely insists upon it.' He read badly and with too much emotion: over 'Maud' he sobbed passionately" (Augustus Hare, The Story of My Life (III, 662)).

was much made of by all the large party assembled there.

He seemed strangely excited about Maud -- as sensitive to criticisms as if they were imputations on his honor: and all his friends are excited about Maud for him! and an unknown Cambridge gentleman wrote to Mr. Carlyle to ask him to be so good as to inform him what was his opinion of Maud!!! You may imagine how Mr. C. would toss that letter into the fire, sending a savage growl after it! Dear Mr. Allingham, be a Post by all means, for you have a real gift that way; but for God's sake beware of becoming too caring about whether your gift is appreciated by "the million" -- of Jackasses. The nightingale don't trouble itself about appreciation, and sings none the worse for that. <sup>29</sup>

Some of this may indeed be Mrs. Carlyle's passionate partisanship for her husband. It need not, however, necessarily reflect his own attitude entirely. Though Charles Richard Sanders, in recounting the incident, says that Carlyle "refused to listen," <sup>30</sup> it is not clear that Carlyle was objecting either to Tennyson or to Maud or, indeed, doing any more than taking his daily walk and perhaps protesting mildly against hearing anybody read. But whatever his motives may have been, it is obvious that the incident is open to misconstruction, and that Mrs. Carlyle may have been reflecting at least part of her husband's attitude. <sup>31</sup>

Such incidents aside, however, the relationship of the two men was basically sunny during the fifties. As often as Tennyson was in London,

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<sup>29</sup> Letters to William Allingham, ed. H. Allingham and E. Baumer Williams (New York, 1911), pp. 143-144.

<sup>30</sup> "Carlyle and Tennyson," p. 91.

<sup>31</sup> Sanders points out, though, that on the day of Tennyson's reading (January 2, 1856) Carlyle wrote to John Forster, calling Tennyson "the agreeablest phenomenon at present" and describing him in genial and companionable terms (p. 92). The letter from which he quotes is otherwise unpublished.

he seemed to try to visit Carlyle, reversing the habit of earlier years of which Carlyle had complained to Emerson. Too, the Tennysons seem to have made a habit of inviting the Carlyles to visit them. On January 21, 1857, Mrs. Carlyle wrote to Mrs. Tennyson her

. . . heartiest thanks for your invitation to Freshwater. Wouldn't I like to go and visit you if that man would leave his eternal Frederick and come along! Nay wouldn't I like to go on my own small basis, if only I had the nerve for it, which I have not yet! He goes nowhere, sees nobody, only for two hours a day he rides, like the wild German Hunter, on a horse he has bought, and which seems to like the sort of thing! . . . If this horse of Mr. C's dies, he will certainly write its biography (Memoir, I, 417-418).

Other invitations, according to Sanders (pp. 92-93), equally unsuccessful, followed. The invitations themselves seem to point to cordial relations, and even the refusals do not seem predicated upon cooling off or breaking off a friendship. The pattern, then, remains very much the same.

Indeed, it continued to be so through the next few years, up to the time of Mrs. Carlyle's death in 1866. In the summer of 1863, Tennyson was laid up in London for some time, invalid with a bad leg and apart from his family. Carlyle was among the friends -- Froude, Spedding, Holman Hunt, and Browning were others -- who gathered to him during the time of his convalescence.<sup>32</sup> Though Tennyson was annoyed with Carlyle's Frederick (William Allingham notes in his diary: "T. said he had read part of Carlyle's Frederick till he came to 'they did not strive to build the lofty rhyme, ' and then flung the book into a corner"<sup>33</sup>), the

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<sup>32</sup> Sir Charles Tennyson, p. 345.

<sup>33</sup> William Allingham: A Diary, ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford (London, 1907), p. 119.

annoyance was not great enough to keep him from calling on Carlyle early in December of 1865. He wrote in his "Letter-Diary": "Yesterday I called with Woolner on Froede, and then we all walked to Carlyle's. Mrs. C. seemed feeble, but was very glad to see me, then Carlyle walked a mile or two with us, and was agreeable and amusing as usual" (Memoir, II, 29). Carlyle gives a slightly different account of this visit; he wrote to his brother John on December 5:

On Sunday Alfred Tennyson was here; had a dilapidated kind of look, but in talk was cheerful of tone. Woolner is his host; Woolner and he, with Froede and Stephen, (meeting at the door, I suppose) were all here together; and I hastened to get them out into the Park, muddy and clammy as it was (New Letters of Thomas Carlyle, II, 232).

Carlyle, deeply concerned by the falling health of his wife, did apparently an entirely adequate job of disguising from his visitors that he wanted to get them out of the house in order not to tax Mrs. Carlyle's strength; too, it is perhaps significant that Tennyson should note that Carlyle was "agreeable and amusing as usual." There is no hint here of any failure of affection.

In fact, as a practical matter, there is hardly any variation in the cordiality of their relationship between this point and its close at Carlyle's death in 1881. The two couples lunched with a party at Westminster Deanery in February of 1866; Mrs. Tennyson described in her journal a "delightful talk" with the Carlyles (Memoir, II, 33). Sir Charles Tennyson says that the Tennysons, in their six-week stay in London in February and March of that year, saw much of the Carlyles, and saw Mrs. Carlyle last on March 22, just a month before her death (p. 363). Through the seventies, the Tennysons often met the widowed Carlyle, who now, with bereavement and advancing age, frequently was even more caustic in his

private comments on others than he had been at the height of his powers. In fact, Carlyle in old age seemed to alternate between two moods, and often the same people were caught up in both of them. He disparaged the Idylls of the King as having an "inward perfection of vacancy. . . though the lollipops were so superlative" (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 339). He wrote to his brother John on April 2, 1870, that Tennyson had "called here last Sunday on very good-natured terms, and borne me ditto company on my walk. Good-natured, almost kind; but rather dull to me" (New Letters of Thomas Carlyle, II, 265). In 1873, he found him "distinctly rather wearisome" at dinner, "nothing coming from him that did not smack of utter indolence, what one might almost call torpid sleepiness and stupor; all still enlivened, however, by the tone of boylike naïvete and total want of malice except against his Quarterly and other unfavourable Reviewers" (p. 301). Yet in 1879, he told Mrs. Sabine Greville, "Alfred always from the beginning took a grip ~~at~~ the right side of every question" (Memoir, II, 241).

Carlyle, as he grew older, seemed to grow more and more impatient with the present and more and more inclined to look back thirty, forty, fifty, or more years to happier or more memorable times; he was, in effect, living his own Past and Present in miniature. Yet often something in the present would strongly remind him of the past or carry with it something of the "Eternal Melodies" which he regarded as of great importance in poetry. "He cares for goodness more than genius," Mrs. Greville wrote in June, 1879, "and the truth of 'The Grandmother' quite upset him -- he kept saying, 'Poor old body, poor old body. And Alfred wrote that: well, I didn't know it'" (Memoir, II, 241). Carlyle's strictures against Tennyson, both personal and professional, seem never to have

been quite so strong as his strictures against Browning. And so, even in old age, he seems never to have been quite so querulous against him.

Indeed, it is odd how easily Carlyle seemed to accept Tennyson's failure to accept the injunction to write poetry to Carlyle's order; to become, after a fashion, a disciple of Carlyle. But Tennyson, more than most of the younger poets whom Carlyle appeared to try to draw into his sphere, came close to fulfilling Carlyle's desires about poetry. Naturally, no poet who used his poetry largely as a means of argumentation was likely to garner much praise from Carlyle; nevertheless, Tennyson managed to avoid the worst blame which Carlyle heaped upon the likes of Browning, while yet treating extensively in his poetry of Carlyle's ideas, and even his personality. It might be argued, in fact, that Tennyson, more than anyone else, was nearly an ideal Carlylean.

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Informed that Alfred Tennyson had produced a volume of poems, his grandfather is reported to have remarked, "I had sooner have heard that he had made a wheelbarrow."<sup>34</sup> Though the remark does not likely reflect Carlyle's attitude perfectly, there is nevertheless a similarity between this observation and Carlyle's remark to Emerson in 1847 (noted above) that Tennyson "wants a task; and, alas, that of spinning rhymes, and naming it 'Art' and 'high Art,' in a Time like ours, will never furnish him" (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 189). The wheelbarrow may be a prosaic device, but, for Carlyle, the nineteenth century was an age of prose, and one of his most frequently given pieces of advice was that poets ought

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas R. Lounsbury, The Life and Times of Tennyson from 1809 to 1850 (New Haven, 1915), p. 25.

to stop singing and start talking. Though it would be overhasty to say, as Tennyson is reported to have done, that Carlyle was never moved by poetry, it is nevertheless true that he seems to have been noticeably cool toward a good deal of it, especially that written in his own era. Thus it is not surprising that he was somewhat cool toward Tennyson's poetry, particularly to that written after 1842. The implications of this coolness will be examined in some detail below. Yet Tennyson, though he may have differed largely with Carlyle's attitude toward poetry, found himself in agreement with other Carlylean notions, especially those touching upon the structure of society and the nature of social responsibility and social relationships.

The influence of Carlyle upon Tennyson's poetry, though not large, is definite and, in some instances, significant. I propose to examine a group of poems in which the influence of Carlyle, Carlylean doctrines, or Carlyle-transmitted ideas is evident and significant. As a kind of control, I shall also examine a smaller group of poems which, though not influenced (at least as far as is discernible) by Carlyle, are significant because Carlyle admired them. These, then, may be significant in that an examination of them may indicate what Carlyle valued and searched for in poetry and in part explain why he did not care for those other poems of Tennyson's here examined, especially why he did not care for those poems in which his own ideas were most forcefully expressed.

"The Two Voices" (1833-1834) is the first of the poems of Tennyson's maturity in which Carlylean notions are readily detectable; further, it is the poem which, when published in 1842, reminded Carlyle of passages in the Book of Job. It therefore has the distinction of being the first poem of Tennyson's simultaneously to embody Carlylean doctrines and to have

recommended itself to Carlyle's attention. Begun in 1833 as "Thoughts of a Suicide" (Memoir, I, 109), "The Two Voices" is a debate between two elements within the personality; the object of their debate is whether or not life is worth living after all. The poem, in consequence, is interesting in two ways as a study of Tennyson's relationship to Carlyle; interesting, on the one hand, because of the function of the debate, and interesting on the other because of its form.

The function of the debate -- whether to live or die -- places the poem within the context of documents relating to conversion phenomena in the Victorian era. "Throughout Victorian literature," says Jerome Hamilton Buckley, "ran the message of redemption. Poet, novelist, and sermon-writer joined to urge the supreme necessity of spiritual purgation, of the little death-in-life, the dying unto the corrupted self."<sup>35</sup> Granting that conversion is one of the most frequently cited and therefore apparently commonest phenomena in Victorian literature, there is still reason to remark that the kind of conversion evidenced in Tennyson's poem is in some ways very much the kind which Carlyle records in Sartor Resartus and which he sought to make the "requisite pattern for all conversion" (Buckley, p. 97). Clyde de L. Ryals marks the similarity in calling "The Two Voices" a fight "between the Everlasting No and the Everlasting Yea."<sup>36</sup> The "still small voice" in the poem, which is the counselor of despair and death, is much like the voice which speaks to Teufelsdröckh to tell him

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<sup>35</sup> Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture (London, 1952), pp. 91-92.

<sup>36</sup> Clyde de L. Ryals, Theme and Symbol in Tennyson's Poems to 1850 (Philadelphia) 1964, p. 116.

that he is fatherless and outcast and that the world belongs to the Devil (Sartor Resartus, Book II, Chapter VII). The major difference is that Tennyson has elaborated a debate, whereas Carlyle describes Teufelsdröckh as conducting an interior monologue, not a duologue. The effect of Tennyson's employment of the debate form is to lend the matter at least the appearance of objectivity. Nevertheless, the similarity of the two experiences, though Carlyle's is the more vivid, is striking, especially as in each instance the ultimate affirmation comes not from the rigorously-examined arguments brought to bear upon the problem but rather from an intuition that all is well, that life is in essence good.

It is unlikely in the extreme that Sartor Resartus, despite the apparent similarities of the two, could have influenced "The Two Voices." The poem was begun some two months before the first part of Sartor appeared in Fraser's in November 1833, and though Tennyson did not complete the poem until the following year, the improbability is really too great. Nor would it be necessary to suggest that Carlyle had influence on the poem were it not for the similarities observable in the kind of conversion phenomenon being treated. Other influences are evident in the poem: Ryals (Theme and Symbol, pp. 120-121) notes the parallel of the church scene and the blessing with incidents in The Ancient Mariner; too, there are striking parallels with scenes in Part I of Goethe's Faust. But it is the particular nature of the conversion, of the winning back to life and the assurance of benevolence in the universe, which offers the most teasing parallel, for it seems very much like Carlyle. If it cannot be with much probability Sartor Resartus which is the source of the parallel, a better possibility is "Characteristics." Published in 1831, this essay has many of the themes and elements which appear also in Sartor. But beyond this,

which might even yet be only a chance resemblance, there is a passage toward the end of the essay which draws immediate attention. Carlyle has been discussing what he sees as the condition of his era, the temporal and spiritual sickness, the multiplicity of solutions. He then goes on: "From this stunning hubbub, a true Babel-like confusion of tongues, we have here selected two Voices; less as objects of praise or condemnation, than as signs how far the confusion has reached, what prospect there is of its abating." The two works--Schlegel's Philosophical Lectures and Thomas Hope's Essay on the Origin and Prospects of Man--are characterized as representing "the two Extremes of our whole modern system of Thought; and may be said to include between them all the Metaphysical Philosophies . . . which, of late times, from France, Germany, England, have agitated and almost overwhelmed us." Furthermore, the two works stand in sharp contrast: "If Schlegel's Work is the apotheosis of Spiritualism; Hope's again is the apotheosis of Materialism" (Works, XXVIII, 34). The contrast between the two works might be described (as Carlyle does describe it) as the contrast between Life and Death, between Hope and Despair. It is these very sets of contrasts which inform "The Two Voices."

It was very likely not his own essay of which Carlyle was thinking when he praised "The Two Voices"; it may not, indeed, have been Carlyle's "Characteristics" which Tennyson had in mind when he wrote his poem. But even if there is no connection of influence between the two, there is nevertheless one in terms of attitude and of the basic impetus to affirm. "The Two Voices" is nearly unique in being both a poem in which Tennyson treats Carlylean notions and a poem of which Carlyle approved.

A more familiar example of Carlylean influence in Tennyson's poems is "The Golden Year," first published in 1845. This poem, like "The Two

Voices", "takes something of the form of the debate, albeit an abbreviated one. Leonard, the poet, recites his song, a vision of progress in which the Golden Year (to be equated with the Golden Age) will come when it will come, but apparently not very soon.

'But we grow old. Ah! when shall all men's good  
Be each man's rule, and universal Peace  
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,  
And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,  
Thro' all the circle of the golden year?'

(11. 47-51)

The vision of the future which his song contains is fairly orthodox, looking forward to redistribution of wealth, the equality of all men, and a universal availability of all things. This age may not be yet, sings Leonard, but there is little to do about it except wait:

'Ah, tho' the times when some new thought can bud  
Are but as poets' seasons when they flower  
Yet seas that daily gain upon the shore  
Have ebb and flow conditioning their march,  
And slow and sure comes up the golden year.'

(11. 27-31)

The ecstatic vision of automatic recompense is not, however, left unchallenged, for old James: "old, but full/Of force and choler, and firm upon his feet, /And like an oaken stock in winter woods, /O'er-flourished with the hoary clematis," responds by calling it folly so to trust in a vision of an automatically-happy future. He says that they are both fools and dreamers who would expect so large a return for so little effort:

'You most, that in an age, when every hour  
Must sweat her sixty minutes to the death,  
Live on, God love us, as if the seedsman, rapt  
Upon the teeming harvest, should not plunge  
His hand into the bag; but well I know  
That unto him who works, and feels he works,  
This same grand year is ever at the doors.'

(11. 67-73)

There is general critical agreement that the words of James are intended to be a Carlylean utterance; Valerie Pitt, characterizing the speech as a successful "denial of idealism"--the idealism of Leonard's song -- says of James that "this cantankerous speaker one suspects to be Carlyle, for this is both his manner and his sentiment, and the passage has an authenticity which the rest of the poem has not" (Tennyson Laureate, pp. 128-129). Jerome Hamilton Buckley calls old James "a testy Carlylean" who dismisses Leonard as "an idle dreamer" (Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet, p. 99). But Buckley suggests that James is not presented by Tennyson out of any sympathy with the philosophy he represents: "Tennyson hardly endorsed such a philosophy even in this idyl, but simply by presenting it he was able to detach himself a little from Leonard, the character with whom he must have felt most sympathy" (p. 94).

There is then agreement that Carlyle's philosophy, in the person of James, has been injected into the poem, but disagreement whether or not Tennyson himself has any sympathy for the position. A possible route out of the impasse is suggested by Ryals, who points out that Tennyson frequently employs, in the poetry of his younger days, "the mask of age", adopting, that is, the guise of a person older than the poet -- well advanced into the vale of years, in fact -- in order to lend the authority of age to the ideas and utterances of youth (Theme and Symbol, pp. 18-19). The device is employed, Ryals notes, in such poems as "A Dream of Fair Women" (p. 91) and "The Two Voices" (p. 117). Accordingly, then, it may be that Tennyson has deliberately made James older than the other persons of the poem -- he goes somewhat out of his way to make the point that James is a good deal older than the others, though still extremely vigorous (they had, after all, been climbing Mount Snowden) -- in order to lend

to his utterance the authority of what would now be called the Jungian archetype of The Wise Old Man. The probability, then, is very great that -- granting the Carlyle figure -- Tennyson is at least partly in sympathy with his position.

"Locksley Hall" bears some resemblance to both "The Two Voices" and "The Golden Year," but adds something else as well. The speaker, disappointed in love, suffers something like a crisis of personality. In his musings, he passes through several stages: he envisions a glorious future when "the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law" (l. 130); he toys with the temptation of giving up the strains of civilized existence for a kind of primitive-oriental fugue; finally, he resolves himself to accept the necessity for action, for participation in the world as it is about him in order to make it into the world that he has envisioned. Throughout all this, the speaker passes over such social problems as hypocrisy, greed, and the hovering threat of revolution.

The lyrical descriptions of the future are quite reminiscent of Leonard's song in "The Golden Year," though the speaker's conclusion that action is essential if the vision is to be fulfilled is more in consonance with the position of James in that poem. The crisis of personality brought about by the speaker's disappointment in love through the agency of his cousin Amy recalls in its effects the divided mind of "The Two Voices." In addition, the theme of madness, which Tennyson was later to use more extensively in Maud, appears here as a sub-theme.

"Locksley Hall" also bears a good deal of resemblance to Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, especially Book II, which deals with the personal travail of Teufelsdröckh. Teufelsdröckh, like the speaker in "Locksley Hall," has been disappointed in his love for the fair Blumine; he enters a period

of crisis, of self-doubt and self-examination which rapidly spreads to embrace his world-view. Finally, both teeter on the edge of madness; and both are finally recalled to an understanding of the necessity for action, action which will (though Tennyson barely hints at this) transcend happiness and enable the worker to achieve blessedness instead. "Locksley Hall," in short, is another version of conversion.

Indeed, the parallels between the two extend to smaller matters within the narrative frame: the speaker of "Locksley Hall," like Teufelsdröckh, is parentless, though somewhat less fortunate in that Teufelsdröckh is reared by the admirable Fustereis, whereas he falls into the hands of a "selfish uncle" (l. 156). Each of them, in different ways, spends a period in the Wilderness or the Primitive ("Locksley Hall," ll. 157-180; Sartor Resartus, Book II, Chapter IX; Works, I, 146-157) in order to come to a fuller realization of the necessity for acting in this world.

But is the parallel deliberate or accidental: does it arise from an imitation of Carlyle or from a passage through the same phenomena? There is no doubt, as Clyde de L. Ryals puts it, that in "Locksley Hall" the speaker "undergoes the same pattern of development as that which led Teufelsdröckh to argue the Everlasting No into the Everlasting Yea. For the speaker, and presumably for Tennyson, positive romanticism has supplanted negative romanticism" (Theme and Symbol, p. 125). Jerome Hamilton Buckley goes further: "As if illustrating the pattern of Sartor Resartus," he says "which may indeed have suggested some details of story and imagery, the hero turns from an Everlasting No, born of self-absorption and romantic malaise, of which blighted affection is but one aspect, to the Everlasting Yea of activity in a self-confident and energetic 'Mother-^ge'" (Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet, pp. 76-77).

But Tennyson is not merely poeticizing Carlyle's fable. For one thing, though each work has its hero redeemed to life by recognizing that action is the antidote for despair, Tennyson injects into "Locksley Hall" a vision of material and cultural progress which is essentially alien to the spirit of Teufelsdröckh. Work has different connotations for the two: whereas for the hero of "Locksley Hall," work is both an antidote for pain and a means of bringing the great age of reform -- the "Golden Year" -- to existence, for Teufelsdröckh it is largely, though not exclusively, the means to personal salvation. Thus, for him, action is not so much a thing which achieves a certain benefit here and now, but rather one which ennobles the performer: "The Man is the spirit he worked in," says Teufelsdröckh; "not what he did, but what he became" (Book II, Chapter X). But the differences are within the pattern of resemblance, not outside of it, and their very existence tends to point out all the more clearly that such a pattern does exist. <sup>37</sup>

The pattern is evident as well in both In Memoriam and Maud, though in the former it is perhaps ultimately less important than the pattern of consolation, which, partly arising from the pattern of conversion, eventually comes to dominate it. The point, however, at which the pattern of consolation begins to emerge from the pattern of conversion is marked by Ryals, who notes that a large part of the "moral action" within the poem is conceived of in terms of recognizing the distinction between the Real and the Ideal. "The sufferer," he says, "the 'negative' Romantic, must become resigned to the fact that absolute happiness, joy, and perfection

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<sup>37</sup> For another discussion of the relationship of Carlyle to "Locksley Hall," cf. William D. Templeman, "Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall' and Thomas Carlyle," Booker Memorial Studies, ed. Hill Shine (Chapel Hill, 1950), pp. 34-59.

are not to be found in this life" (Theme and Symbol, p. 229). Teufelsdröckh finally caught sight of the truth that happiness is not the final goal, that "there is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness," that "Love not Pleasure; love God" is "the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein who so walks and works, it is well with him" (I, 155). Whereas Teufelsdröckh arrives at a love of man by finding first a love of God, Tennyson's pattern in In Memoriam seems to be almost the exact reverse, for it is the understanding of Hallam and his role as a neotype of a higher creation,

. . . a noble type

Appearing ere the times were ripe

(In Memoriam, CXXXI)

which leads Tennyson ultimately to a love of God as reflected in his understanding and acceptance of the scheme and order of the whole creation. Nevertheless, though the process may be somewhat different, Tennyson, like Teufelsdröckh, finally finds a center in

That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves. <sup>38</sup>

(CXXXI, II, 153-156)

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<sup>38</sup> That this was essentially Carlyle's attitude as well is demonstrated by a passage from Lecture III of Heroes and Hero-Worship. Carlyle is remarking upon how important was the role played by the Warwickshire Squire who prosecuted Shakespeare for poaching, arguing that, had it not been for him, Shakespeare might never have gone to London to enter on the career of playwright:

Curious, I say, and not sufficiently considered: how everything does cooperate with all; not a leaf rotting on the highway but is indissoluble portion of solar and stellar systems; no thought, word or act of man but has sprung withal out of all men, and works sooner or later, recognisably or irrecongnisably, on all men! It is all a Tree: circulation of sap and influences, mutual communication of every minutest leaf with the lowest talon of a root, with every other greatest and minutest portion of the whole (Works, V, 102).

In reaching this point, Tennyson has gone through stages which are very similar to Teufelsdröckh's. In the first place, it is again, as in "Locksley Hall," a personal grief, a loss, which triggers the suffering and destroys for a time the assurance of well-being. Too, the essential condition which each has to overcome is the feeling that the world is merely mechanical and hostile: "one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb," as Teufelsdröckh puts it (Works, I, 133). The loss of faith in the goodness of the universe is apparent in stanzas LIV and LV of In Memoriam, in which Tennyson argues desperately with himself in order to continue somehow to trust "that somehow good/Will be the final goal of ill," that all things happen to some purpose, "That not a worm is cloven in vain." Yet so to believe, to accept in the face of crippling loss a tenet of belief which, like that which kept Teufelsdröckh from suicide, is hardly more than "a certain aftershine" of orthodox belief, is all but impossible when he looks at the facts of the world, the destruction which he sees in Nature and her processes. Seeing this, he says,

I falter where I firmly trod,  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar-stairs  
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope.

(LV, 11. 13-20)

This, with its succeeding stages, is, as Ryals points out, "spiritual death" (p. 251), and to recover from it, it is necessary to be able to feel once again. Even as Teufelsdröckh, locked in his melancholy, begins his conversion, and thus his salvation, at the point at which he resists the spirit of misery within him and denies the Everlasting No, thus

unleashing his "grim, fire-eyed defiance," a feeling which denies the deadness of the universe which he had just been complaining of, so to Fennyson is the capacity to feel, to overcome the shock-induced torpor, the first step on the road to recovery:

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,  
I heard a voice, /believe no more'  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the Godless deep,

A warmth within the breast would melt  
The freezing reason's colder part,  
And like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answer'd, 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear;  
But that blind clamour made me wise;  
Then was I as a child that cries,  
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again  
What is, and no man understands;  
And out of darkness came the hands  
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

(CXXIV, 11. 9-24)

One last resemblance between the pattern of In Memoriam and that of Sartor Resartus lies outside the pattern of conversion strictly considered. As Ryals points out, Hallam in the course of the poem becomes, as a manifestation of the ideal, "the 'Christ,' the 'divine' man of the 'crowning race,' who replaces or is to replace the New Testament Christ" (p. 266). To Ryals, this substitution is part of the "new Mythos" in Sartor Resartus, the new form of belief which would replace the worn-out "Hebrew Old Clothes."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> And this is perhaps the very sort of substitution of which Carlyle might have approved. He says elsewhere in Sartor (Book III, Chapter III): "A Hierarch, therefore, and Pontiff of the World will we call him, the Poet and inspired Maker; who, Prometheus-like, can shape new Symbols, and bring new Fire from Heaven to fix it there. Such too will not always be wanting; neither perhaps now are. Meanwhile, as the average of matters goes, we account him Legislator and wise who can so much as tell when a Symbol has grown old, and gently remove it" (Works, I, 179).

It may be argued that Carlyle's ideas as they are employed here appear more or less coincidentally. Even so, and even granting that not all conversion phenomena, even in the nineteenth century, are necessarily Carlylean in character, there seem to be between In Memoriam and Sartor Resartus striking parallels which appear to be more than mere accident or atmospheric aftershine. Doubly is this so for Tennyson's most famous poem when the appearance of similar patterns in other works is taken into consideration.

One such poem in which the pattern appears is Maud. It bears comparison with "Locksley Hall" in that, once again, the speaker is driven to desperation by the loss of love, though there are here the additional complicating factors of his father's suicide (which really sets the speaker's madness in motion), the deaths of Maud's brother and of Maud herself. Clearly unstable to begin with, the speaker is driven to madness by the successive misfortunes of his life, though for a time he is restored to something like wholeness in his reciprocated love for Maud. Though driven mad by her death, he is rescued when Maud appears to him in a beatific vision and urges him on to a war, which is in defense of right and which will seek to break tyrannies. It is in the war that the speaker finally realizes himself and is reconciled with mankind and with divine purpose:

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind,  
 We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,  
 And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind.  
 It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;  
 I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,  
 I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.  
 (III, V, 11. 54-59)

But the pattern of conversion-to-action is not the only Carlylean note in Maud. Part I, for instance, is given over largely to curses for the

corrupt social system in which lust of gain takes precedence over all other feelings, when "chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread" (I. I. X, l. 39), when the speaker's father was driven to suicide because "a vast speculation had fail'd" (I. I. III), in which Maud's father has made his fortune by sweat labor in the coal mines (I. X. I.), in which "a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee" (I. I. XII.). To this extent, at any rate, the poem is an indictment of the condition of England, and it is the condition of England which is the subject of Carlyle's Past and Present; in fact the "Mammonite mother" who kills her child so that she may collect the burial fee seems to have her original in the Stockport mother and father in Chapter I of Past and Present who perform the same deed for £3 ss. from the burial society (Works, I, 4). The themes of Part I of Maud are largely lost sight of in the remaining two parts, but what Tennyson has begun to develop in Part I is social criticism in a very Carlylean mode.

If there is allegory in the Idylls of the King at all, it is an allegory of destruction, the decay of the social fabric made corrupt by the senses, Ideal Manhood brought down by the lusts of the flesh. It was a work for which Carlyle, though he honored the honorable past as much as any man, never cared. "We read, at first," he wrote to Emerson on January 27, 1867, "Tennyson's Idyls, with profound recognition of the finely elaborated execution, and also of the inward perfection of vacancy, -- and, to say truth, with considerable impatience at being treated so very like infants, though the lollipops were so superlative" (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 339-40). Yet even here there is Carlylean doctrine, not this time the necessity for conversion, not

the evils of the mercantile present, but the Hero. In her book Tennyson Laureate, Valerie Pitt argues that Arthur, upon whose rise and fall the whole work, and consequently whatever moral the work may have, rest, is "a Christianised, but recognisably Carlylean hero" (p. 185). She points to four traits which make him so: 1) his kingship is not his by right of birth but rather by right of what he himself is, by the power in him. His very lack of antecedents frees him to be more identifiably a king -- and thus a Hero in his own right.<sup>40</sup> 2) He behaves as a Hero in being a law unto himself, the maker of a new order:

But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have sworn  
 To wage my wars, and worship me their King;  
 The old order changeth, yielding place to new;  
 And we that fight for our fair father Christ,  
 Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old  
 To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,  
 No tribute will we pay: so those great lords  
 Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space  
 Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King  
 Drew in the petty principdoms under him,  
 Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame  
 The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

("The Coming of Arthur," ll. 508-518)

The emphasis is upon what Arthur can take and do for himself, not upon what is granted him by legitimate or traditional sources. The authentication of this quality as an essential piece of Carlylean doctrine is to be found in Heroes and Hero-Worship, Lecture VI:

<sup>40</sup> It might be noted that the motif of Mysterious Parentage, though rather a standard one, is employed also in Sartor Resartus; young Diogenes is brought by night to the Fufferals by a mysterious (but apparently princely) stranger, who leaves a roll of gold coins with the child (Works I, 66-67).

May we not say, moreover, while so many of our late Heroes have worked rather as revolutionary men, that nevertheless every Great Man, every genuine man, is by the nature of him a son of Order, not of Disorder? It is a tragical position for a true man to work in revolutions. He seems an anarchist; and indeed a painful element of anarchy does encumber him at every step, -- him to whose whole soul anarchy is hostile, hateful. His mission is Order; every man's is. He is here to make what was disorderly, chaotic, into a thing ruled, regular. He is the missionary of Order. Is not all work of man in this world a making of Order? (Works, V, 203).

Furthermore, the emergence of Arthur as King is surrounded by wondrous signs and tokens which testify to his authenticity as a Hero: the knights, sworn by Arthur to himself, arise from the swearing shaken, some pale, some flushed, some dazed; they take on, for one mysterious moment, the likeness of their King; the three queens appear silently by Arthur's throne; the Lady of the Lake, "clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful," is there to present him with Excalibur. These signs and tokens, in short, are to be taken to mean that this is no ordinary mortal, not even an ordinary king, who has burst upon the face of the world.

3) The leadership which Arthur assumes is not for his own glorification or enrichment; it is taken on as a duty. At the beginning and at the end of his career, Arthur sees his kingship as a duty laid upon him. "But were I join'd with her," Arthur muses as he rides to battle after his first sight of Guinevere,

Then might we live together as one life,  
And reigning with one will in everything  
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,  
And power on this dead world to make it live.

("The Coming of Arthur." 11. 89-93)

So too, at the end of his career, does Arthur reflect upon what he has done as a sacred task:

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,  
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,  
But in His ways with men I find Him not,  
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.  
O me! for why is all around us here  
As if some lesser god had made the world,  
But had not force to shape it as he would,  
Till the High God behold it from beyond,  
And enter it, and make it beautiful?  
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,  
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,  
And have not power to see it as it is:  
Perchance, because we see not to the close;--  
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,  
And have but stricken with the sword in vain:  
And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend  
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm  
Reels back into the beast and is no more.

("The Passing of Arthur," ll. 9-28)

It is as a world-reforming enterprise that he speaks to Guinevere of his kingship:

But I was first of all the kings who drew  
The Knighthood-errant of this realm and all  
The realms together under me, their Head,  
In that fair Order of my Table Round,  
A glorious company, the flower of men,  
To serve as model for the mighty world,  
And be the fair beginning of a time.

("Guinevere," ll. 457-463)

Again, that Arthur is conceived of as essentially self-effacing and duty-bound marks him a true Carlylean hero. In Lecture VI of Heroes and Hero-Worship, Carlyle specifically notes that the true Great Man, the true Hero, has no self-aggrandising tendencies:

We exaggerate the ambition of Great Men; we mistake what the nature of it is. Great Men are not ambitious in that sense; he is a small poor man that is ambitious so (Works, V, 222).

The point is illustrated in this case especially by the example of Cromwell, whose early public career, according to Carlyle, has none of the

marks of vulgar ambition:

It is striking, too, how he comes-out once into public view; he, since no other is willing to come; in resistance to a public grievance. I meant, in that matter of the Bedford Fens. No one else will go to law with Authority; therefore he will. That matter once settled, he returns back into obscurity, to his Bible and his Plough. 'Gain influence'? His influence is the most legitimate; derived from personal knowledge of him, as a just, religious, reasonable and determined man. In this way he has lived till past forty; old age is now in view of him, and the earnest portal of Death and Eternity; it was at this point that he suddenly became 'ambitious'! I do not interpret his Parliamentary mission in that way! (Works, V, 213).

4) Arthur is an absolute monarch, whose followers are not merely bound to him in the conventional liege-lord relationship but are, like him, dedicated to a task, the task being Arthur's leadership in the reformation of the world. He is, in this sense, one with Cromwell and with Frederick.

Even so, says Pitt, "Tennyson is not really so interested in Carlyle's doctrine of leadership as he is in Carlyle's doctrine of work; the fulfilling of the tasks laid on man by the Everlasting Yea" (p. 186). It is what Arthur is doing and not how he is doing it which matters most; nevertheless, that Tennyson finds the mold of the Carlylean Hero convenient or compelling or both is suggestive of the power the thought must have had over him.

There is, of course, a good deal here which may be attributed to Tennyson's background and the evangelical influence which, generally operative in the era, was particularly operative in Tennyson's history. That an evangelical fervor was inherent in Tennyson's antecedents is strongly suggested by Basil Willey:

Elizabeth Tennyson [his mother] was much more earnestly religious than the Reverend Doctor, and

her intense evangelical piety [*italics mine*] was probably by far the strongest of the early influences. Alfred worshipped her as the ideal mother, as these lines from The Princess show:

'Not learned, save in gracious household ways,  
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,  
No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt  
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,  
Interpreter between Gods and men. . .

Happy he

With such a mother! faith in womankind  
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
Comes easy to him. '

This mother survived until 1865, when her son had reached the height of his fame, and the quality of her watchful love may be seen in the letter she wrote to him (1859) on the publication of the first four Idylls of the King, expressing her joy on finding that they breathed the spirit of Christianity. When she died, six years later, Tennyson told the parson who conducted the funeral that 'she was the beautifullest thing God Almighty ever did make.' A man does not grow up under such influence, and live unrebelliously with it till the age of fifty, without being decisively affected. Tennyson early lost his simple faith, but the believing temper, the propensity to trust the larger hope, believing where we cannot prove, was implanted in him from infancy and never left him.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Basil Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies (New York, 1966), pp. 55-56. It may be of some significance to note here that Tennyson was not the only one of Carlyle's disciples who had an essentially Evangelical background. In the chapter on Clough, for example, I have noted the influence of his mother, and the style which her religious training of her children had. So to say is to detract nothing from the influence of Carlyle, which is the burden of this study. Elsewhere Willey observes that "Carlyle belonged to the company of the escaped Puritans" (Nineteenth Century Studies (New York, 1966), p. 108). Willey thus suggests what is generally regarded as axiomatically true of Carlyle--that he retained a kind of religious orientation in a non-secular mold. Thus, by appealing to those persons for whom orthodox Christianity was no longer possible for a variety of reasons, Carlyle took hold of what might be called the projecting weakness of such persons and gave them a demythologized faith by which they could live. It must be admitted that Carlyle's teachings could not have had the effect they did upon men like Tennyson and Clough if their backgrounds had been different: still, what Carlyle did (as evidenced by the palpable influence of his doctrine upon theirs) can neither be denied nor minimized.

The poems thus far examined, though they owe much to the influence of Carlyle, were not -- with the exception of "The Two Voices" -- poems which Carlyle professedly admired. Those which he did admire are for the most part of an entirely different nature. Of the rather small group of Tennyson's poems of which Carlyle recorded admiration, I shall examine four (a fifth -- "The Two Voices" -- is treated above) in order to determine what moved Carlyle in Tennyson's poetry and why, therefore, he did not especially care for the poems already discussed. The poems are "The May Queen" (1842); "Dora" (1842), "Tears, Idle Tears" (from The Princess, 1847), and "The Grandmother" (1859).

Carlyle's total recorded appreciation of "The May Queen" was apparently his remark, "Oh! but that's tender and true" (Memoir, II, 234). The poem, in essence, is a three-stage account of a young girl, a village belle, who, in the first movement, is so swollen with pride at having been chosen to be Queen of the May that she reveals some rather uncharitable traits, such as praising her own beauty above that of the other village girls and spurning Robin, the hapless swain who is half dead for love of her. The last two sections, later continuations of her monologue, have her in the grip of some deadly illness which will do her in eventually. At first she expects to die upon the New Year, but is preserved at least until spring. The effect of her lingering illness and its intimation of mortality is to teach her forgiveness and humility.

Of "Dora" it is recorded that Wordsworth admired the poem greatly, telling Tennyson that he himself had been trying all his life to write a poem like it, and never succeeding (Memoir, I, 285). And the poem does, indeed, have some of the simple pastoral quality which is usually called Wordsworthian; it is especially reminiscent of Michael. The poem

reminded Carlyle of the Book of Ruth. Dora is a kind of patient Griselda in embryo, being raised by her uncle Allan, a farmer, in company with Allan's son William. The old man thinks to make a match of the two, but William will none of it, and runs off to marry Mary Morrison, the daughter of a laborer. He thus incurs his father's wrath; Allan forbids him the house and orders Dora to have nothing to do with William. After several years of hardship, somewhat lightened by the aid which Dora sends the couple and their child by stealth, William dies. Dora then goes to Mary and entreats her to let the child be set in the way of his grandfather, that the old man may come to know and love the child, and the child's poverty be lightened. Dora takes the boy to the fields, wins for him his grandfather's attention, but earns banishment for herself because she has disobeyed Allan's orders. Mary and Dora return that night to Allan's house, find him already taken with the child, and, amid much weeping, the four settle down to live together. Dora remains unmarried for the rest of her life.

That Carlyle would be reminded of the Book of Ruth is not surprising: the love and devotion of two women who have no particular reason to be devoted to one another, the going into the fields to bring one person to the attention of another, and the general pastoral setting of the whole point up the similarity.

"Tears, Idle Tears" is another matter altogether. One of the lyrics from The Princess, it is essentially a lyric lament about the days that are gone, or -- more exactly -- about the feeling aroused by the days and the things that are gone. Tennyson recalled that Carlyle (whom he accused of being "never moved by poetry") once quoted the poem to him while they were out walking (Memoir, II, 73). It was not

Carlyle's habit to quote poetry in this fashion, especially to its author, unless he approved of it, and apparently he did, for reasons which will emerge shortly.

Finally, there is "The Grandmother." An old woman, speaking to her granddaughter and having just learned that her eldest son has died, reminisces at length about her children, most of whom she has outlived. The heart of the poem is in stanzas XXV and XXVI:

And age is a time of peace, so it be free from pain,  
 And happy has been my life; but I would not live it again.  
 I seem to be tired a little, that's all, and long for rest;  
 Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

So Willy has gone, my beauty, my eldest-born, my flower;  
 But how can I weep for Willy, he has but gone for an hour, --  
 Gone for a minute, my son, from this room into the next;  
 I, too, shall go in a minute. What time have I to be next?

The intimation of immortality, the loneliness, and the suggestion of a long life of toil all, I suspect, put Carlyle in mind of his own mother, in whose life and character he would apparently have seen strong parallels. In any event, the poem elicited from Carlyle one of his strongest reactions. As noted above, Mrs. Sabine Greville recalled in June 1879 that the "truth of 'The Grandmother' quite upset him -- he kept saying, 'Poor old body, poor old body. And Alfred wrote that: well, I didn't know it'" (*Memoir*, II, 241).

This last may appear to be no more than the extreme emotional reaction of a man somewhat declin'd into the vale of years, but that's not much in this instance, for Carlyle had been saying for fifty years just what the emotional reaction implies. The key phrase in this description, in fact, is "the truth," for it is exactly this quality -- interpreted, to be sure, in his own way -- which Carlyle most sought for in poetry. Furthermore, that truth must always be a truth speaking of

and to the human condition, recounting the verities of human existence, focussing not upon the minutiae of an age or the upheavals of the moment, but rather upon those struggles, aspirations, and conditions which are common to all men in all times and places. Poetry so written will be natural poetry in the best sense: it will have the force of a fact of Nature.

Carlyle's most frequently cited dicta on poetry are probably those found in the lectures on Heroes and Hero-Worship, but he continued throughout his career to articulate and elaborate his basic poetic doctrines. In "Jesuitism," for instance (Latter-Day Pamphlets, No. VIII (1850)), he remarks:

All great Poems, all great Books, if you search the first foundation of their greatness, have been veridical, the truest they could get to be. Never will there be a great Poem more that is not veridical, that does not ground itself on the interpreting of Fact; to the rigorous exclusion of all falsity, fiction, idle dross of every kind: never can a Poem truly interest human souls, except by, in the first place, taking with it the belief of said souls. Their belief; that is the whole basis, essence, and practical outcome, of human soul; leave that behind you, as 'Poets' everywhere have for a long time done, what is there left the Poets and you! (Works, XX, 328).

What is to be looked for, then, in poetry, is the fidelity to human experience as a universal or type of the Infinite Fact. With this in mind, it is easy to see why he admired "The Two Voices," "Dora," "The May Queen," "Tears, Idle Tears," and "The Grandmother": they are all extremely unlocalized in time and place; they all deal with experiences which may be said to be universally human; they interest human souls by engaging the belief of human souls. And to become involved in the minutiae of the age -- to treat, for instance, as Tennyson does in The Princess, of the question of women's rights -- is to forfeit the name of poetry. Yet Carlyle would approve a didacticism, such as "the necessity

of going forward" which Tennyson posits in "Ulysses," because it is not merely of an age but for all time.

And here perhaps is the explanation of Carlyle's dislike -- tacit or announced -- for those poems of Tennyson's which most embodied and exploited Carlylean ideas. To speak out on the issues of the day, Carlyle would insist, was no bad thing; it was, after a fashion, his own life's work. But his age was an age of prose, and he urged all men who had a thing to say to speak it before trying to sing it. Poetry was not the place for argument; poetry was the place for affirmation, for truth and belief. When Tennyson evoked the Infinite Fact in human dress in his poetry, he was a poet; when he argued or advanced doctrines, he was not. To sing in English, Carlyle wrote to Emerson, "is terribly difficult." Tennyson, he added, "alone of our time, has proved it to be possible in some measure" (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 49). It is the modifier which is important here, for the measure in which Tennyson was able so to sing was the measure by which Carlyle could regard him as a true poet.

## CHAPTER IV

### CLOUGH AND CARLYLE

Clough has gone to Italy. I have seen him twice, -- could not manage his hexameters, though I like the man himself, and hope much of him.  
-- Carlyle to Emerson, April 17, 1849

Carlyle has led us all out into the desert, and has left us there.

-- Clough to Emerson, 1848

Though Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861) joined the Carlyle orbit much as Browning and Tennyson before him did, he joined it with a difference, for Clough in some ways must be regarded as a kind of test instance of Carlyle's disciples, of the attempts of the master to make converts of the young poets who came under the influence of his writings and eventually of the man himself.

In one sense, Clough did not live long enough. He died in his forty-second year, still, from Carlyle's point of view, a young and relatively untried man. Had he lived, he might, had he continued to write poetry, have experienced the same falling-off in regard which was the fate as poets of both Browning and Tennyson. But the very fact that Clough died before he could experience the full weight of Carlyle's disapproval makes of him something of a test instance, for if we can detect in his relationships with the Master, as far as they went, the same pattern which prevailed in Carlyle's relationships with Browning and Tennyson, then it would be reasonable to predict that Clough might have entered the same sort of eclipse which the other two underwent.

"Eclipse," though, is not quite the right word; "surrender" might be nearer the truth, for Carlyle seemed to recognize eventually that there was little likelihood of his making converts of Browning or Tennyson. As poets, therefore, he gave them over; but as men and as friends he continued to respect them. Clough did not live long enough to come to the poetic crisis, though such remarks of Carlyle's as that quoted in the epigraph suggest that he must have felt that he was not making much headway in persuading Clough to turn from poetry.

The irony in their relationship is that Clough, far more perhaps than either Browning or Tennyson, was equipped to understand Carlyle and to become a thorough-going Carlylean. At the same time, he was less the poet than either of them, not only in terms of production and absorbing interest in the craft or in terms of public recognition, but also in terms of his essential bent. Clough is, far more than either Browning or Tennyson, an intellectual with a university-trained and scholastically-oriented mind. His essential skill is argumentation: "He had a habit," said Walter Bagehot, "of putting your own doctrine concisely before you, so you might see what it came to, and that you did not like it."<sup>1</sup> This trait, this capacity for rational examination, affects Clough's poetry. "He is, then," said Henry Sidgwick, "pre-eminently a philosophic poet, communicator of moods that depend on profound and complex trains of reflection, abstract and highly refined speculations, subtle intellectual perceptions, and that cannot be felt unless these are properly apprehended. He is to a great extent a poet for thinkers; but he moves them

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Bagehot, "Clough's Poems," Literary Studies (London, 1902), II, 281.

not as a thinker, but as a poet."<sup>2</sup> The very intellectual stuff of Clough's poetry influences even his forms: "Technically," says Frederick Bowers, "he reflects the intellect rather than the heart in his interest in, and perfectionist approach to, prosody."<sup>3</sup> Clough and Carlyle shared, as Michael Timko points out,<sup>4</sup> eight central beliefs which were especially relevant to the great issues of the day:

1. The eternal enigma of God's nature (p. 25)
2. The truth of the "soul" of Christianity (p. 30)
3. Duty as service (pp. 53-54)
4. Progress as distinct from material advance (p. 65)
5. Rejection of the "cash-nexus" as the basis of human relations (pp. 71 ff.)
6. Inequality of men (p. 76)
7. Responsibility of the aristocracy (p. 80)
8. Liberty as duty and service (p. 88)

Touching as they do upon both religious and social matters, these eight points provide the foundation for a great deal of community of feeling between Carlyle and Clough. But Clough's tendency to write about those beliefs in his poetry -- his tendency, that is, to use poetry for argumentation rather than for affirmation, as Carlyle's poetics would demand -- even though those beliefs were in large measure akin to or identical with Carlyle's made it almost inevitable that, as a poet, Clough would prove a disappointment to Carlyle because he attempted to sing his thought rather than to say it.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Sidgwick, "The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough," Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses (London, 1904), p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Bowers, "Arthur Hugh Clough: The Modern Mind," Studies in English Literature, VI (Autumn 1966), 714.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Timko, Innocent Victorian: The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough (Athens, O., 1966).

I yesternight received your note here, and shall find the worthy Dr. Beard's old Book lying safe for me when I return to Chelsea, in about a week hence. I beg you to understand that I am very sensible of your friendly relation toward me, and shall keep that Gift of yours as a pleasing testimony of the same. <sup>5</sup>

So Carlyle wrote to Clough on December 17, 1846, and the note has the tone of reply to a letter (which is not extant) designed to inaugurate an acquaintance. The gift, the assurance of "friendly relations," and the manner in which Carlyle responds to them all suggests that the two men may not even have met as yet, though Clough is clearly anxious to do so. Thus it must be somewhere in the middle '40's that Carlyle and Clough first met. But Carlyle was hardly unknown to Clough until this time; as a student at Oxford in the late '30's and early '40's, Clough was reading Carlyle apparently with admiration, quoting him, and imitating him. Letters to friends from this period suggest that Clough was not merely reading Carlyle, but was eagerly following him in what he wrote. On August 11, 1839, he wrote to J. N. Simpkinson that "I have just got through [reading] Tacitus' histories. I think Tacitus rather like Carlyle, whose Fr. Revoln I have [been] reading for the first time through, and with increasing admiration" (Corr., I, 93). On October 17, he wrote to Burbidge: "I have been reading some of Carlyle's Miscellaneous Essays (from the Edinburgh and Foreign Quarterly etc.) just collected and published in 4 vols. I think they are very fine, one on Burns and one on Boswell's Johnsoniad as he calls it, especially" (Corr., I, 96). In January of the following year he wrote to J. P. Gell that "hitherto I have

<sup>5</sup> The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. Frederick L. Mulhauser (Oxford, 1957), I, 166. Hereafter cited as Corr.

done nothing here except reading Carlyle on Chartism. . . . It is very good, though not quite so eloquent as I expected it to be. Of course there is a new Coinage of Words issued in it, the worthiest of note whereof is I think the adjective Benthamee. The High Court of Parliament comes off with the title of 'National Palaver'" (Corr., I, 99-100). The impression drawn from these passages, in short, is directly contrary to Osborne's, who, speaking of Clough's life at Oxford, says "we do not find Clough commending Carlyle's books in his letters".<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, it is no doubt true, as Osborne further remarks, that Clough had in some measure become a disciple of Carlyle's works, and, through them, of his doctrines. There is some evidence of this in the poems which Clough wrote during the early 1840's: "Thought may well be ever ranging" (1840),<sup>7</sup> for instance, celebrates the necessity of duty; so -- with a heavy leavening of satire -- does "Duty -- that's to say complying" (1840), which contrasts false and true duty. "Qui Laborat, Orat" (1845) connects the notion of duty with the sentiment expressed in the title, "Blank misgivings of a Creature moving about in Worlds not realised" (1841) rounds and rises to an exhortation to duty after an exposition of personal worthlessness and hopelessness which rivals -- as it recalls -- Teufelsdröckh. In fact there is justice in Osborne's observation that the poems Clough wrote at Oxford have "only two subjects: half of them are

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<sup>6</sup> James Insley Osborne, Arthur Hugh Clough (Boston, 1920), p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> The dates assigned to poems, unless otherwise specified, are approximate dates of composition, and are taken from H. F. Lowry, A. L. P. Norrington, and F. L. Mulhauser, The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough (Oxford, 1931).

about Duty, and the other half about God" (Osborne, p. 87). It is interesting to observe an upsurge of such treatment in Clough's poetry coincident with his sudden -- and apparently deep -- involvement in Carlyle's writings.

Through the first great crisis of Clough's public life -- his resignation in 1846 of his Oriel fellowship -- nothing of Carlyle is evident in propria persona, and it is impossible to determine precisely how much influence he and his works may have had upon Clough's decision.

Mrs. Clough herself is no more sure what inspired him to resign:

It is not very obvious what eventually decided him to quit Oxford at the precise moment when he did so. In the year 1847 he was powerfully stirred by the distress in Ireland at the time of the potato famine, as may be seen from the pamphlet on 'Retrenchment', and the general ferment of his nature, as well as the ripening of opinions in his own mind, probably tended to make him more open to change. Emerson also visited England in this year. Clough became intimate with him, and his influence must have tended to urge him on in the direction in which he was already moving. With another friend, also, whose general dissatisfaction with European life was strong, he was at this time very familiar. We are, therefore, disposed to think that it was some half accidental confirmation of his own doubts as to the honesty and usefulness of his own course, which brought him at last almost suddenly face to face with the question whether he ought to resign his tutorship.<sup>8</sup>

Vague as this may be in assigning causes, it draws nevertheless some support from the poems and letters Clough wrote in the immediately preceding years. Here, though the evidence is rather slim, there is some hint, not merely of ferment in his mind, but of the sort of ferment it was. "Why should I say I see the things I see not" (1845-7) and "When

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<sup>8</sup> "Memoir of Arthur Hugh Clough," in Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough (London, 1888), pp. 37-38.

Israel Came Out of *Egypt*" (1846; retitled "The New Sinai" in the 1862 edition of Clough's poems) both emphasize the necessity for patient seeking of the private vision, the personal assurance of the truth of things, especially (as in the second poem) the truth of God's nature. Both are skeptical of accepting too readily the modes currently fashionable; both suggest that there is a reality within things which the forms either express imperfectly or else utterly pervert. In the same year (1846), Clough wrote a series of letters to The Balance, a newly-founded journal of liberal opinion. In these letters -- concerned generally with trade, politics, and the social fabric -- Clough takes a line which is most strongly reminiscent of Carlyle's in Past and Present.<sup>9</sup> In short, the things which seem to be most in his mind are the necessity for a private vision because the public one is patently false or misleading and the necessity, in social affairs, for an approach which emphasizes duty and responsibility rather than the cash-nexus.

In the period from 1848, when he left Oxford, until late 1852, when he went to America, Clough was much in London. The evidence from this period suggests that he saw Carlyle at times, and that he at any rate kept abreast of what Carlyle was doing. His letters to Emerson, the major source of information concerning his dealings with Carlyle in this period, reveal him calling on Carlyle at times, meeting Mrs. Carlyle at Thackeray's lectures in June of 1850, and keeping abreast of Carlyle's progress with Frederick. Some of the letters contain characteristic touches of Carlyle's personality which suggest that Clough was

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Buckner B. Trawick, Selected Prose Works of Arthur Hugh Clough (University, Alabama, 1964), pp. 208-225. Hereafter cited as SPW.

in his presence from time to time: "Carlyle is going over," he wrote to Emerson (June 17, 1852), "for as long as he can bear to Germany, with a view to working upon Frederick the Great. He lives entirely with the Ashburtons" (Corr., I, 315). "For as long as he can bear" is good, and one can hear Carlyle complaining bitterly in anticipation of the rigors of travel. Indeed, their relationship in this period may be described as equable if not intimate.

This period in Clough's life was productive of several works -- the most notable of which, The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich, is discussed below -- which are more or less Carlylean in tone, in sentiment, and even at times in language. In the Bothie especially, as will be seen later, the influence of Carlylean social doctrines is extremely marked.

When Clough went to America late in 1852, there was, of course, an increase of correspondence on all parts, but it is notable how frequently Clough and Carlyle were in communication. Indeed, in January of 1853, Clough wrote to Blanche Smith that he had had "an extremely cordial and kind letter from Carlyle, who really seems to care more about me than my own old friends, who are still as silent as ten graves. I am getting quite angry with them -- here have I been three months (all but) away, and have written to several of them twice over, and only one brief note from Matt Arnold is the return" (Corr., II, 365). Clough himself had written lengthily and cordially to Carlyle on December 8, 1852, giving his impressions as one newly-arrived in America, describing his surroundings, giving information about mutual acquaintances such as Emerson and Daniel Webster, and enclosing a two-dollar bill for Carlyle's examination. It was Carlyle's reply to this letter which elicited Clough's remark to Blanche Smith. In it, Carlyle praised Clough highly for the

freshness and vividness of his descriptions of America, the land and the manners of New England. He then went on to predict that the chances for Clough's getting some sort of employment in England were greatly improved by the prospect of the coming to power of a new ministry in the following year. He then turns to a sketch of the state of things in England -- bad as usual -- and closes with a promise to help Clough if ever it is in his power to give help (Corr., II, 357-359).

All the while, powers were moving in England to find Clough a job suited to his training and capacities; on December 26, 1852, Lady Ashburton wrote to Carlyle: "One of my great joys at the present time in the formation of this Govt is that we are not in it, and another that I think it will go very hard if I get nothing for Clough" (Corr., II, 355). By February 25 of the following year, Carlyle was able to write to Clough enclosing a cautious note to Lady Ashburton from Lord Granville promising to do what he could for Clough. To this, Carlyle added his own admonition, that, however things might be in America, the prospects were very good at home, and his friends, though they wished Clough well in any event, wished him so especially at home (Corr., II, 384-385).

While negotiations in England were conducting, Clough continued to write to Carlyle. Two letters -- March 16, 1853, and April 21, 1853 (Corr., II, 394-397; 420-423) -- are characterized by the same qualities: they are long, they are chatty, they describe the persons, places, and events Clough was coming in contact with in New England, and they avoid for the most part what might be described as the personal or the confessional; they are friendly without being in the least intimate. They suggest what may well have been true of the entire relationship of Clough to Carlyle -- that Clough did not give himself away easily, did not commit him-

self emotionally, whatever Carlyle may have suggested or however eagerly he may have offered his own friendship. The letters suggest both friendly footing and easy interest, but they do not suggest anything beyond it.

None of it deterred Carlyle in the slightest. Acting in his role of intermediary in the job-hunt, he wrote to Clough on May 12, 1853, enclosing a note to Lady Ashburton from Lord Granville indicating that, at the instances of the Ashburtons, there was a job for Clough if he wished it. Carlyle then took up the pledge himself:

The work you have to do, which I understand consists in examining Candidate Schoolmasters, will surely be one of the quietest of useful work, and perfectly plain to you from the first. The small salary (if you think it small) will teach you noble thrift, and various high Spartan virtues, which are worth more to a man than all the yellow rubbish which so many two-legged swine are grubbing for, with painfully assiduous snout, in California and the other Hemisphere:--virtues getting dreadfully uncommon at present; and betokening (if we recollect well what they mean) the very Devil to pay, for all manner of persons and nations, by and by! -- In short, I suppose you will come? In that case, we may have a Translated Homer, and other fine things. But for the rest, understand me, as not advising at all, since no man can "advise"; only if you do come, it is certain there will several of us be very glad to see you again (Corr., II, 430-431).

Clough returned to England and decided to take the position which the intercession of the Ashburtons had made possible for him: "I have taken this place," he wrote to Emerson (July 22, 1853), "-- a Clerkship or Examinership in the Education department of the Council Office, Salary £300 a year, work 6 hours a day" (Corr., II, 457). Carlyle professed himself highly pleased, and continued to cultivate Clough's friendship. He wrote to him (July 22, 1853):

You need not be told I am delighted at the conclusion you have come to; for my own sake and for yours, I

could not wish any other result; -- and in fact I believe it will turn out to have been the wise decision. May you never repent it:-- in which case, England and the rest of us will be very far from doing so!

I have been scheming out some evening for a talk with you, or perhaps been lazily in hope you would come of your own accord. At 3 p. m any day I am here: but all my evenings now, I find, till Monday are taken up; on and after Monday the natural course of solitude returns. I expect my wife home soon; and do not as yet contemplate any travelling this year.

Come the first day or night you can (Corr., II, 457).

This certainly seems the tone of one who is eager for a friendship, who cultivates the one to whom he writes. Yet Clough himself did not apparently have quite the same feeling; to Emerson he wrote (July 22, 1853): "I found Carlyle, it seemed to me, more than usually bilious. He says he has never recovered [from] knocking about in Germany. . . ." He concludes by admonishing Emerson: "Don't treat me quite as silently as Carlyle -- unless the spirit is very reluctant --" (Corr., II, 458). Cross purposes indeed: on the same day that Carlyle proclaims to Clough his eagerness for a talk with him, Clough complains to Emerson of Carlyle's silence. Clough was perhaps the more nearly right of the two, at least to judge from what appears to be the state of their relations in the next year. On September 9, 1853, he wrote to Longfellow, mentioning Carlyle among others, but talking of him as if what he said he knew not at first hand but by report. "Carlyle has been in rural solitude," he wrote to Emerson on October 9, "by himself and well cared for, in one of Ld Ashburton's places, while they were away in Scotland, and he certainly seems much the better for it. I have not seen him in such good animal spirits for some time" (Corr., II, 464). Again, writing to Emerson on August 22, 1854, Clough remarks:

I haven't seen Carlyle for an age--He is I believe ruralizing at Addiscombe, a few miles out of London, which always does him a great deal of good--I dare say we shall not meet till London begins to consider itself alive again in October--" (Corr., II, 489).

With Carlyle thus much out of London, and Clough involved in acclimating himself to a new job, there was apparently little opportunity for them to meet. But Carlyle, too, had complained: "Clough is settled in his Office," he wrote Emerson (September 9, 1853); "gets familiarized to it rapidly (he says), and seems to be doing well. I see little of him hitherto. . . ." (Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, II, 261).

Though for the last few years of Clough's life he apparently saw little of Carlyle, he evidently continued to read him. When the first two volumes of Frederick were at last done, Clough found them good. "I have finished Carlyle," he wrote Norton (October 29, 1858). "So far as research and extent of study and reading goes, this may be said to be his best work. I cannot say that as yet I have much liking for the hero, though indeed the hero may be said to be the hero's father--old Friedrich Wilhelm;--whom certainly one comes to like" (Corr., II, 559).

But this burst of enthusiasm, recalling, though in somewhat muted tones, the accounts of his reading of Carlyle while at Oxford, is very nearly Clough's last word on the subject of Carlyle. It is evident that, almost from the time he returned to England and began work in the Education Office, Clough had less and less to do with those controversies which had so stirred him before, and, as a consequence, had less and less to do with those parties to the controversy, such as Carlyle, who competed for his attention. It is as if the pressure around him had suddenly been lessened. The lessening of pressure, the slackening of interest in the social, political, and religious controversies which once engaged him,

is evident in the lessened attention which he gave to his own writing, for after his return from America, he appears to have written very little.<sup>10</sup> One explanation for his changed conduct is offered in the Memoir prefixed to the Prose Remains: he was too busy with domestic duties.

Up to this date we may almost say that he had been too free from active and absorbing employment for his own happiness. Circumstances had forced him to try different schemes and to engage in various untakings with very moderate success, and the want of definite and continuous occupation left his mind free to deal restlessly with the great insoluble problems of the world, which had for him so true a vitality that he could not dismiss them from his thoughts. After his marriage there was none of this enforced and painful communing with self alone. He had plenty to do; and the close relations into which he was brought with various members of his wife's family kept him actively employed, and tasked his sympathies to the full. All the new duties and interests of domestic life grew up and occupied his daily thoughts. The humour which in solitude had been inclined to take the hue of irony and sarcasm, now found its natural and healthy outlet. The practical wisdom and insight into life, for which he was distinguished, were constantly exercised in the service of his friends; and the new experience which he was daily gathering at home made many perplexed questions, both social and religious, clear and simple to his mind. In this way, though he did not cease to think about the problems which hitherto had occupied his leisure, he thought about them in a different way, and was able, so to speak, to test them by the facts of actual life, and by the intuitions and experience of those whose character he valued, instead of submitting them only to the crucible of his own reflection. . . . We see that his life, though uneventful, was full of work, and we can also understand why this period of his life produced no poetical result. The conditions under which he could create were at this time wholly wanting. He had not time or strength or leisure of mind to spend on his natural gift of writing; and to his

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. SPW, "Chronological List of Clough's Prose Works" (pp. 345-351), in which only nine of the seventy-three prose works attributed to Clough are dated after his return from America, and Poems, pp. 457-586, in which almost no poems can be found definitely assignable to those years.

friends it must ever be a source of sorrow that his natural vocation, what he himself felt as such, was unfulfilled (pp. 46-47, 48).

Healthful domesticity, in short, had embraced him salubriously.

When Clough died in Italy in 1861, Carlyle was one of those friends who mourned his passing, though perhaps he mourned with the special relevance of one who saw a man who might have been his follower pass on. Though one of Clough's biographers <sup>11</sup>suggests that Clough no longer regarded himself as Carlyle's disciple as early as 1855, Carlyle did not spare to praise the man whom he had, in his special sense, so untimely lost. He told Jowett that Clough was the most high-principled man he had ever known (Chorley, p. 327); to Froude (who repeated the remark to Clough's widow) he said many times that "he thought more highly of Clough than of anyone of our generation" (Chorley, p. 3). Ultimately-- and in more Carlylean fashion--he was "a diamond sifted out of the general rubbish-heap" (Timko, p. 12). Clough may have felt that Carlyle had led him out into the wilderness and left him there, but Carlyle seemed unaware either of the deed or of the sentiment. Furthermore, the figure leaves unanswered the vital questions about Clough and his relationship to Carlyle: from what did Carlyle lead him into the wilderness, what exactly was the nature of the wilderness, and how (if ever) did Clough escape from the wilderness alive?

iii

The four great influences in Clough's life were, in order of appearance, his mother, Dr. Arnold, Newman, and Carlyle. Though the first

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<sup>11</sup>Katharine Chorley, Arthur Hugh Clough: The Uncommitted Mind. A Study of His Life and Poetry (Oxford, 1962), p. 300.

three are not necessarily in all senses antithetical to Carlyle and his teachings, it is evident that they must, between them, represent in large measure the forces from which Clough may be said to have escaped when Carlyle led him out into the wilderness. Each has its distinct, though ultimately reinforcing, character. To examine each of the four great influences in Clough's life is, of course, in part, to examine the four main stages of Clough's intellectual development. But there is more to the matter than this alone. It is evident, for one thing, that -- with the possible exception of Newman -- each of the main influences upon Clough may be classified as Evangelical, and perhaps even Liberal.<sup>12</sup> The main sequence, however, shows an interesting pattern: Clough begins at his mother's knee, from which he passes to Arnold. The effect of the first is thus in a sense modified, reinforced, and -- most important -- intellectualized -- by the influence of the second (*cf.* Bagehot, above). Newman, in Clough's most susceptible period, provides a kind of countertheme to what Clough had always been taught: the High-Church, and ultimately Romish, intent of Newman's bent, provided a kind of forbidden fruit, but a fruit from which Clough eventually recoiled. Thus, as we may assume, sickened by the Romish aspects of Newman's teaching, Clough was ready to return to the faith of his Fathers. But what Newman had done to him rendered him incapable of accepting the faith of his fathers as it was to him before. Therefore, Carlyle, with his demythologized and desectarianized version of the faith of his fathers, provided for Clough the readiest avenue of approach to the old faith. This

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<sup>12</sup> *Cf.* Walter E. Houghton, The Poetry of Clough, (New Haven, 1963), pp. 13 ff., 36 ff., for the influence of Thomas Arnold upon Clough and for the contradiction of forces in Clough's background.

is the general pattern of influence evident in what follows.

In the Memoir prefixed to the Prose Remains, there is an account of Clough's childhood written by his sister. The description of their mother, here given at some length, suggests a large measure of what must have been Clough's inheritance:

She [Clough's mother] cared little for general society, but had a few fast friends to whom she was strongly attached. In her tastes and habits she was rigidly simple; this harmonised with the stern integrity which was the foundation of her character. She was very fond of reading, especially works on religious subjects, poetry and history; and she greatly enjoyed beautiful scenery, and visiting places which had any historical associations. She loved what was grand, noble, and enterprising, and was truly religious. She early taught us about God and duty, and having such a loving earthly father, it was not difficult to look up to a Heavenly one. She loved to dwell on all that was stern and noble. Leonidas at Thermopylae, and Epaminondas accepting the lowliest offices and doing them as a duty to his country; the sufferings of the martyrs, and the struggles of the Protestants, were among her favourite subjects. There was an enthusiasm about her that took hold of us, and made us see vividly the things that she taught us. But with this love of the terrible and grand she was altogether a woman clinging to and leaning on our father. When he left us Arthur became her pet and her companion. I cannot but think that her love, her influence, and her teaching had much to do with forming his character (pp. 9-10).

The qualities of her character (rigid simplicity, stern integrity, religiosity) and the virtues which she taught to her children (God, duty, grandeur, nobility, enterprise) are rendered in such general terms that it is difficult to determine precisely in what mode they may have existed; but though it is difficult to determine, it is easy to guess: "the sufferings of the martyrs, and the struggles of the Protestants," which were "among her favourite subjects," suggest the sort of moral ethos in which Clough grew up.

Walter Bagehot remarks that Dr. Arnold was admirably suited to be the master of the "common English boy, -- the small, apple-eating animal whom we know." With such, says Bagehot, Arnold worked, "pounded," in a kind of "floating confused conception, that there are great subjects, that there are strange problems, that knowledge has an indefinite value, that life is a serious and solemn thing." For the generality of Arnold's pupils, says Bagehot, the result was probably very good. But for those "susceptible, serious, intellectual" boys like Clough, "the incessant inculcation of the awfulness of life and the magnitude of great problems" may be injurious. Clough was one too much inclined by nature alone to regard the world with great seriousness; the one thing he did not need was an education which tended to give additional force to an already morbid condition. Says Bagehot: "He was one of Arnold's favourite pupils, because he gave heed so much to Arnold's teaching; and exactly because he gave heed to it, was it bad for him." What, in fact, Clough needed was an education which told him to "take things easily, not to try to be wise overmuch; to be 'something beside critical'; to go on living quietly and obviously, and see what truth would come to him." Bagehot detects two unfortunate consequences of Clough's having the education he did under Arnold:

1. "Mr. Clough had to his latest years what may be noticed in others of Arnold's disciples, -- a fatigued way of looking at great subjects. It seemed as if he had been put into them before his time, had seen through them, heard all which could be said about them, had been bored by them, and had come to want something else."
2. "The faith, the doctrinal teaching which Arnold impressed on the youths about him, was one personal to Arnold himself, which arose out of the peculiarities of his own character, which can only be explained by them. As soon as an inquisitive mind was thrown into a new intellectual atmosphere, and was obliged to naturalise itself in it, to consider

the creed it had learned with reference to the facts which it encountered and met, much of that creed must fade away" (Bagehot, "Clough's Poems," pp. 265-267).<sup>15</sup>

Bagehot's impression, then, is of a boy, already perhaps made oversensitive and over serious, being made more so under Arnold's tutelage.

The influence of John Henry Newman, the next stage in Clough's development, was, oddly enough, made possible by Arnold himself, however much he may have fancied himself an anti-Newmanite. Bagehot argues that one of the cardinal points in Newman's character was that "he was a consummate master of the difficulties of the creeds of other men" (p. 267). The English apathy on exciting topics, says Bagehot, is the only thing which might protect one against the influence of Newman.

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<sup>15</sup> In The Liberalism of Thomas Arnold (University, Alabama, 1964), Eugene L. Williamson, Jr., offers a partial demurrer to this position. Noting that Clough is "usually taken by critics as the classic example of the unsettling effects of Arnold's heavy emphasis on moral responsibility and his questioning approach to religious matters" (pp. 213-214), Williamson goes on to observe that "Oxford philosophers and logicians like William George Ward also contributed to the psychological damage usually attributed to Clough's Rugby background" (p. 214). Further, he observes that Clough had a tendency toward emotional dependence on strong personalities, ranging from his mother to Florence Nightingale (p. 214). His conclusion is that "Dr. Arnold's responsibility for the subsequent doubts and vacillations of Clough about moral and religious issues is, at best, indeterminate" (p. 214). Of this, two observations might be made: 1) even an Arnold apologist cannot absolve him totally of responsibility for Clough's problems; 2) Williamson's observations about Clough's emotional dependence tend to suggest that Carlyle, who certainly would have to be classed as a strong personality, may well have had on Clough the sort of effect which is being suggested here.

But, he observes, it was this very apathy which Arnold specialized in removing: "He objected strenuously to Mr. Newman's creed, but he prepared anxiously the very soil from which that creed was sure to grow. A multitude of such minds as Mr. Clough's, from being Arnoldites, became Newmanites" (p. 268). That Clough was attracted to Newman's creed is evident in the letters he wrote while at Oxford. Though the tone is playful, the very playfulness seems to disguise a lurking anxiety, a hidden seriousness. On April 8, 1838, for instance, he wrote to J. P. Gell:

I wish that you were at Oxford; it is, I am sure, so much better a place than Cambridge, and you would have the great advantage of a good chance of becoming a disciple of *ὁ μέγας Νεανός*, whom I like much better than I did, and admire in many points exceedingly (Prose Remains, p. 77).

A month later, he wrote to him again:

Newman is now giving lectures on the Mystical Power of the Sacraments, and seems to have stated the objection to it Scripturally in a very fair and candid manner. If I had said a quarter of this to \_\_\_\_\_ he would have set me down at once for a thorough-going convert ad Newmanism. But you will not be so rash; and you remember that you asked me to write about it (Prose Remains, p. 78).

But, Bagehot argues, there was a second quality about Newman as important as the first: "he was much better skilled in finding out the difficulties of other men's creeds than in discovering and stating a distinct basis for his own" (p. 268). That Clough ceased to be a Newmanite is attributable, says Bagehot, to a recognition of this very flaw in Newman. On August 27, 1840, Clough wrote to J. N. Simpkinson:

That I have been a good deal unsettled in mind at times at Oxford, and that I have done a number of foolish things, is true enough, and I dare say the change from Rugby life to its luxury and apparent irresponsibility has had a good deal of ill effect upon me (Prose Remains, p. 88).

Carlyle appears to have taken up where Newman left off. In precisely what mode Carlyle affected Clough it is difficult to say, for Clough himself appears to have been very shy about setting down precisely what he felt. James Insley Osborne guesses about it in this way:

The record of his life at Oxford is a record of progressive isolation of the spirit. From being a passionate disciple he became a passionate individualist. This individualism, however, was in itself a discipleship. Clough had heard the great voice of Carlyle. There inhered in the message of that voice an effective veto on any outward profession of discipleship on the part of one who really heard it and accepted it. . . . Hence we do not find Clough commending Carlyle's books in his letters, nor talking about *Old Clothes* and *Great Silent Men*. Yet the most satisfactory understanding of Clough's singular inaction and watchfulness in these years is to be gained by seeing that he was proposing to be himself a *Great Silent Man*, and that while he appeared to be doing nothing, he was in fact sedulously ridding his spirit of its *Old Clothes*, and preparing himself, alas, in vain, for the peeling through all the recesses of his being of his own "Everlasting Yea" (p. 65).

Whatever the case may have been, Clough's reticence on the topic leaves conclusions untried.

Clough was never fully comfortable with the notion that one might have a religious sense without embodying it in a theology. What he seemed to accept implicitly from Carlyle lay rather in the political and social ranges. Yet Carlyle's thought, practically speaking, is one. His political and social thought is inseparable from his religious thought because the powers which generate and the truths which lie behind them all are the same. If Clough could accept Carlylean doctrine on, for instance, Duty in the social sphere-- the responsibilities of the aristocracy, for instance -- without at the same time accepting the notion of Duty in other spheres and, most important, the metaphysics which lay behind the notion of Duty, he must have been aware that he was discriminating very finely

indeed. Thus his complaint that he has been led into the wilderness and left there may arise in large measure from his recognition that the espousal of certain doctrines without the espousal of the credo which gave rise to those doctrines made his own position all the shakier in consequence. And what he means and what he feels about those doctrines must, in the absence of direct statement on Clough's part, be deduced from his poems and essays.

## iv

Neither the bulk nor the range of Clough's poetry is large. The total number of his poems, if we include the unfinished pieces, is less than 150. And, as noted above, there are only about seventy-three prose pieces extant, including both Oxford undergraduate compositions and fragmentary pieces. Nor is the range any greater; what Osborne says of Clough's Oxford poems, that "half of them are about Duty, and the other half about God" (Osborne, Clough, p. 87) is generally true of the totality of his poetic output. The subjects of the essays are somewhat more varied, but if we eliminate the assigned compositions from university days, there is left a group in which the dominant themes are religion, economics, politics, and English literature. Furthermore, most of the poems appear to date from the period between 1840 and 1852 or 1853, to choose rough but relatively accurate boundaries. And these are the very years in which the influence of Carlyle, by all accounts, was the greatest. Not that Carlyle, or any single force, factor, or individual could be an all-pervasive influence on a mind as apparently ruggedly skeptical and independent as Clough's. Still, there is a significant note of Carlylean influence -- or apparent Carlylean influence -- in the poems of that period.

The poems discussed in this chapter constitute about ten percent of Clough's finished poems. Further, they are a fairly representative sample; though Clough's poems range over many topics, most of them are touched on only once or twice, whereas the poems discussed here are concerned with those topics which most immediately involve the majority of his work.

The first of these poems, "Duty -- that's to say complying," printed in Ambarvalia (1849) but dated by Clough 1840 (Poems, p. 468), is a satiric contrast of two notions of duty. The first notion -- that of the world at large -- consists in complying

With whate'er's expected here;  
 On your unknown cousin's dying,  
     Straight be ready with the tear;  
 Upon etiquette relying,  
 Unto usage nought denying,  
 Lend your waist to be embraced,  
 Blush not even, never fear.

(11. 2-8)

It is the sort of duty which conforms to form, senseless to what it really means (11. 13-14). This sort of duty conforms to the World's demands: it attends both church and dances because good form requires that one do so (11. 15-16). It is duty which requires taking the rightness, the goodness, the justness of things on trust alone (11. 20-21); it is to "be drawn in a Bath chair along to the grave" (1. 28). But it is worse than this, for duty so conceived means not merely thoughtless trust in and acquiescence to social forms, mores; it means also a kind of spiritual death:

'Tis the stern and prompt suppressing,  
 As an obvious deadly sin,  
 All the questing and the guessing  
 Of the soul's own soul within:  
 'Tis the coward acquiescence  
     In a destiny's behest,  
 To a shade by terror made,  
 Sacrificing, ay, the essence  
     Of all that's truest, noblest, best:

'Tis the blind non-recognition  
 Either of goodness, truth, or beauty,  
 Except by precept and submission;  
 Moral blank, and moral void,  
 Life at very birth destroyed,  
 Atrophy, exinanition!  
 Duty!----  
 Yea, by duty's prime condition  
 Pure nonentity of duty!

(11. 27-44)

The key phrase here, of course is "duty's prime condition"; in what does it consist? By the terms which Clough has set out in the poem, it obviously involves doing whatever one does for better reason than that it is customary or regarded as proper to do so. Duty's prime condition also obviously involves some sort of self-knowledge. There is, mutatis mutandis, a resemblance between this and the condition in which Teufelsdröckh describes himself just before his encounter with the Everlasting No:

'One circumstance I note,' says he: 'after all the nameless woe that Inquiry, which for me, what it is not always, was genuine Love of Truth, had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved Truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance to her. "Truth!" I cried, "though the Heavens crush me for following her; no Falsehood! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy." In conduct it was the same. Had a divine Messenger from the clouds, or miraculous Handwriting on the wall, convincingly proclaimed to me This thou shalt do, with what passionate readiness, as I often thought, would I have done it, had it been leaping into the infernal Fire. Thus, in spite of all Motive-grinders, and Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies, with the sick ophthalmia and hallucination they had brought on, was the Infinite nature of Duty still dimly present to me: living without God in the world, of God's light I was not utterly bereft; if my as yet sealed eyes, with their unspeakable longing, could nowhere see Him, nevertheless in my heart He was present, and His heaven-written Law still stood legible and sacred there' (Sartor Resartus, Book II, Chapter VIII (Works, I, 131)).

Another fact of Duty's prime condition, then, is doing one's duty not because it leads to or is consonant with some earthly good or some temporal value, but quite often in total opposition to it. This sort of devotion to Duty is one of the qualities which Carlyle especially praises in Samuel Johnson. In his essay on "Boswell's Life of Johnson" (1832), Carlyle notes that Johnson found himself in a most uncomfortable position as a man trying to make a living:

In fact, if we look seriously into the condition of Authorship at that period, we shall find that Johnson had undertaken one of the ruggedest of all possible enterprises; that here as elsewhere Fortune had given him unspeakable Contradictions to reconcile. For a man of Johnson's stamp, the Problem was twofold: First, not only as the humble but indispensable condition of all else, to keep himself, if so might be, alive; but secondly, to keep himself alive by speaking forth the Truth that was in him, and speaking it truly, that is, in the clearest and fittest utterance the Heavens had enabled him to give it, let the Earth say to this what she liked (Works, XXVIII, 99).

Elsewhere in the essay Carlyle praises repeatedly Johnson's love of truth, and quotes with admiration the familiar injunction to "Clear your mind of Cant." In fact, the whole essay might be described as an essay in praise of doing the highest duty of which one can conceive, and doing it spite of the world's disfavor or disregard. Thus it is perhaps significant that the essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson was one of those -- the essay on Burns was another -- which Clough singled out for special praise. The message of the essay is clear, and it is very much like the message of Clough's poem. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Another poem written about this time has a similar theme, though it is treated in a somewhat different fashion. In "Thought may well be ever ranging," Clough distinguishes between two kinds of duty: "task-work," by which he seems to mean the ordinary duties of common existence, and which may be done "by the law and by the letter"; and the duties attached to the heart and the soul. He warns against bestowing "the soul away/in an

The effect of Sartor Resartus upon Clough is evident in 'Blank Misgivings of a Creature moving about in Worlds not realised', a collection of loosely-related short poems which Clough composed, for the most part, in 1841 and 1842. The loose relation of the poems is in the recurrence of much the same general themes, hinging upon a self-examination by an introspective and tormented youth. He begins by pointing to the ostensible occasion of the poem: it is his birthday, and he has now completed one-third of the mortal span without having made any progress toward maturity:

Sails rent,  
 And rudder broken, --reason impotent, --  
 Affections all unfixed; so forth I fare  
 On the mid seas unheedingly, so dare  
 To do and to be done by, well content.  
 (I, 4-8)

The next several sections detail his malady: he is weary with struggling to live day to day, and in so doing, in living for no larger purpose. He feels himself in consequence convicted as a liar and a coward. Yet through all of it, he maintains somehow a faith that God still is, "surely as in heaven the sun at noon" (II, 8). He sees himself as disoriented, purposeless, vague:

How often sit I, pering o'er  
 My strange distorted youth,  
 Seeking in vain, in all my store,  
 One feeling based on truth;  
 Amid the maze of petty life  
 A clue whereby to move,  
 A spot whereon in toil and strife  
 To dare to rest and love.

(V, 1-8)

"idle duty-play" and being unwittingly swept away by mistaken "duty-fancies." But if, he says, one finds real love which is more than mere duty-fancy, but constitutes a real duty, "Above all things--mind it, mind it!"

I pace about the pathways of the world,  
 Plucking light hopes and joys from every stem,  
 With qualms of vague misgiving in my heart  
 That payment at the last will be required,  
 Payment I cannot make, or guilt incurred,  
 And shame to be endured.

(VI, 3-8)

He longs for the release of death (VIII); he suffers a host of nightmare fancies (VII). In part IX, the longest single section of the poem (and perhaps the most explicit) he adopts the metaphor of the journey to describe his agonized condition in trying to find faith (ll. 63 ff.).

All of the long complaint before the reconciliation in part X is similar in many respects to the struggles of Teufelsdröckh before his moment of understanding. In each instance there is the basic figure of the lost man struggling with the effects of a world he never made. In each instance there is a residue, however vague, of belief in the existence of God. There is the same sense (albeit in two slightly differing modes -- Teufelsdröckh is somewhat the more rebellious and resentful) of personal worthlessness. There is the same journey through a world which seems hostile or indifferent: to Teufelsdröckh it is mechanical and therefore dead; to Clough, in section IX, Nature, to which he has fled in some hope of consolation or encouragement, offers him nothing:

A few grey woods can only show  
 How vain their [the banks and plains] aid, and in the sense  
 Of one unaltering impotence,  
 Relieving not, meseems enhance  
 The sovereign dulness of the expanse.

A wide, and yet disheartening view,  
 A melancholy world.

(IX, 9-13; 20-21)

Yet even here there begins to emerge a lesson, however partial for the time and less than perfectly fitting, which is the essential lesson learned by Teufelsdröckh:

In thine own dull and dreary state  
To work and patiently to wait.

(IX, 35-36)

If the emphasis seems wrong in this passage compared with that in Sartor, it is so because Clough is merely mouthing what he does not yet feel; he has not yet been rescued from despair by the vision of the Ideal-in-the-Actual which is Teufelsdröckh's salvation (Sartor Resartus, Book II, Chapter IX (Works, I, 157-158)). In fact, it sounds very much as if Clough had read something which he forlornly hoped would turn out to be true for him.

The consolation for Clough comes in the last stanza of part X:

The Summum Pulchrum rests in heaven above;  
Do thou, as best thou may'st, thy duty do:  
Amid the things allowed thee live and love;  
Some day thou shalt it view.

This is very much in the spirit of doing the duty which lies nearest to thee, but it recalls further what Teufelsdröckh had to say about the Ideal itself:

The Situation that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal: work it out therefrom; and working, believe, live, be free (I, 156).

Clough's recognition of the Ideal-in-the Actual is perhaps somewhat slighter than Teufelsdröckh's, and certainly a good bit wearier; it has as well an overlay of Platonism which suggests that Clough had not quite extinguished the hope of a vision of the Ideal lying outside the Actual. Despite the dissimilarities, nevertheless, the spirit of the two accounts

is much the same.

A somewhat more hopeful treatment of essentially the same subject is found in Qui Laborat, Orat (1845). Clough's emphasis, as the title suggests, is upon the value of work as the best prayer, but he means especially, of course, that work is perhaps the only kind of prayer which is possible for him or for anyone in an age when the traditional forms of worship and the traditional and anthropomorphic ways of viewing God have become impossible:

With eye down-dropt, if then this earthly mind  
Speechless remain, or speechless e'en depart;  
Nor seek to see--for what of earthly kind  
Can see Thee as Thou art? --

(11. 9-12)

One does not dare to arrogate to oneself such confident knowledge of God, but, if one acknowledges within himself the reality of God, God will not put that man from Him, however much the man's conduct, in the eyes of the world's traditions, may seem ungodly:

O not unowned, Thou shalt unnamed forgive,  
In worldly walks the prayerless heart prepare;  
And if in work its life it seem to live,  
Shalt make that work be prayer.

(11. 17-20)

Clough does not entirely abandon the hope that, if he works in well-doing, he may yet be rewarded with some directer knowledge of God:

Nor times shall lack, when while the work it plies,  
Unsummoned powers the blinding film shall part,  
And scarce by happy tears made dim, the eyes  
In recognition start.

(11. 21-24)

But he is willing, ultimately, to forego even that:

But, as thou wilt, give or e'en forbear  
The beatific supersensual sight,  
So, with Thy blessing blest, that humbler prayer  
Approach Thee morn and night.

(11. 25-28)

The sentiment in the poem is essentially Teufelsdröckh's, that Conviction is useless until it converts itself into Conduct, that the great maxim is "Do the Duty which lies nearest thee"; though it may still hope, as in "'Blank misgivings'," to be granted a revelation of the Ideal-in-the-Actual, it is content to do without it in the hope that right action is its own reward because it is right, *i. e.*, because it constitutes that prayer which draws the soul closer to God. The specific injunction to make a life of work a life of prayer draws, however, more upon Past and Present than upon Sartor Resartus for its immediate emphasis. Osborne, somewhat hostile to Clough, argues that Past and Present (1843) must have been in Clough's mind when he wrote the poem, though the poem is more than a mere versification of Carlyle's prose:

[Clough's] statement, indeed, is so much the clearer, and cooler, and more logical of the two that it might at least as well be said that he makes prose of Carlyle's poetry. But with each man it is true that both idea and form are poetic, though the difference in idea is only less great than the difference in form. Clough's argument for worship through work is quite another thing from Carlyle's argument. To work is to pray with Carlyle, because it is the bravest, hardest, spiritually wholesomest thing a man may do; but with Clough, because it is that thing a man may do which is least likely to be bold, to be profane, or to be -- horror of horrors, always -- factitious" (Osborne, Clough, pp. 69-70).

The similarity between the two may be seen in many passages in Past and Present, but it is especially evident in the concluding paragraphs of the work (Book IV -- "Horoscope"; Chapter VIII -- "The Didactic").

Carlyle exhorts the workers in the name of nobleness, to overcome the forces of Chaos:

Chaos is dark, deep as Hell; let light be, and there is instead a green flowery World. O, it is great, and there is no other greatness. To make some nook of God's Creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God; to make some

human hearts a little wiser, manfuller, happier, --  
more blessed, less accursed! It is work for a  
God (Works, X, 298).

Out of such industry, moreover, arises not only a better world, but a better man, for the common laboring man, Carlyle emphasizes, is the means by which mankind rises to the highest and touches heaven:

Ploughers, Spinners, Builders; Prophets, Poets, Kings;  
Brindleys and Goethes, Odins and Arkwrights; all mar-  
tyrs, and noble men, and gods are of one grand Host;  
immeasurable; marching ever forward since the Begin-  
nings of the World. The enormous, all-conquering,  
flame-crowned Host, noble every soldier in it; sacred,  
and alone noble (X, 298).

It is of this Host, moreover, that will arise the new and real aristocracy to replace the artificial old. The underlying doctrine here is of course essentially that of Sartor Resartus, with its emphasis upon work and producing as the only fit activities for a man; the tone here, however, is a good deal more militant, radical, and -- despite the cosmic overtones -- socially-oriented, as, of course, is all of Past and Present.

"When Israel came out of Egypt" (1846) shows Clough taking a basically Carlylean point and going somewhat beyond it. The theme of the poem is the enigma of God's personality: in just what form may God be known and found to exist? Clough's title is borrowed from the incident of the worship of the Golden Calf, to Clough a symbol of the reaction of mankind to the need for a visible presence. Whether on Olympus or Sinai, he suggests, the gods of man have been in large measure an attempt to reassure the doubting heart by a resort to the tangible:

So, even so, when men were young,  
And earth and heaven was new,  
And His immediate presence He  
From human hearts withdrew,  
The soul perplexed and daily vexed  
With sensuous False and True,

Amazed, bereaved, no less believed,  
And fain would see Him too:  
He is! the prophet-tongues proclaimed;  
In joy and hasty fear.

A Hierarch, therefore, and Pontiff of the World will we call him, the Poet and inspired Maker; who, Prometheus-like, can shape new symbols, and bring new Fire from Heaven to fix it there (Sartor Resartus, Book III, Chapter III (Works, I, 179) ).

It is essentially to this task that the "chosen prophet-soul" of Clough's poem would address himself, for what he does he does on behalf of those who, in the plain below, are worshipping the Golden Calf. But Clough denies that the search for new symbols is a worthwhile task; whereas for Carlyle these symbols constitute a necessary tissue in the organic makeup of the world, for Clough they are interferences, not healthy tissue at all. He desires an end to myth-making altogether, and recommends the adoption of a kind of stoic patience, which may in the end provide the better reward because it has not been overlaid with the deluding gloss of the symbol:

Within the sceptic darkness deep  
 He dwells that none may see,  
 Till idol forms and idol thoughts  
 Have passed and ceased to be:  
 No God, no Truth! ah though, in sooth  
 So stands the doctrine's half;  
 On Egypt's track return not back,  
 Nor own the Golden Calf,

Take better part, with manlier heart,  
 Thine adult spirit can;  
 No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er --  
 Believe it ne'er --O Man!  
 But turn not then to seek again  
 What first the ill began;  
 No God, it saith; ah, wait in faith  
 God's self-completing plan;  
 Receive it not, but leave it not,  
 And wait it out, O Man!

(11. 87-104)

Whereas Carlyle would merely do away with the old symbol and look for the fashioning of a new and better one which would express more clearly and more relevantly in temporal terms, Clough argues for the far harder

and less comfortable task of dispensing with the symbol altogether, of having done with myth-making, and waiting with stoic patience what may be.

In a somewhat similar poem written about the same time, "Why should I say I see the things I see not," Clough employs the metaphor of the dance (recalling the worship of the Golden Calf) for popular religious conceptions. Then, asking the rhetorical question, "Are there not, then, two musics unto men?", he argues for the validity of a personal and inward vision which may transfix the individual soul. Here too, though not as explicitly, Clough argues for discarding the outworn symbol and not replacing it with another symbol. It is worthwhile noting also that Carlyle is much clearer and more specific about the old and outworn symbols which are to be discarded than about the new ones which are to be put on. In fact, the central chapter ("Symbols") in Sartor Resartus is devoted to a discussion of the types, necessity, and death of symbols; the chapter on "Organic Filaments" goes no further than to suggest that literature may be the basis of a new "Church-Homiletic" or liturgy, and that the new prophet may be Goethe. None of this, of course, is very substantial symbol-making.

One mark of Clough's failure in discipleship to Carlyle is the trait evidenced in these poems: the tendency to argue, not to accept the thing spoken as spoken ex cathedra. It can hardly be called a growing disaffection for Carlyle since it seems to be present in Clough almost from the very beginning and is certainly not directed only at Carlyle or his ideas; such skepticism and mental reservation appear to be characteristic of Clough in all things all his life. But another case in point which applies specifically to Carlyle is "Epi-Strauss-ium" (1847). C. Castan,

in an article entitled "Clough's 'Epi-Strauss-ium' and Carlyle,"<sup>15</sup> argues that, although the poem does not suggest the direct influence of Carlyle, "the image on which the poem is built may be largely found in a passage in Past and Present, Book II, chapter xiv" (p. 54). The relevant passage is this:

Thus does the Conscience of man project itself athwart whatsoever of knowledge or surmise, of imagination, understanding, faculty, acquirement, or natural disposition, he has in him; and, like light through coloured glass, paint strange pictures 'on the rim of the horizon' and elsewhere! Truly, this same 'sense of the Infinite nature of Duty' is the central part of all with us; a ray as of Eternity and Immortality, immured in dusky many-coloured Time, and its deaths and births. Your 'coloured glass' varies so much from century to century;--and, in certain money-making, game-preserving centuries, it gets so terribly opaque! Not a Heaven with cherubim surrounds you then, but a kind of vacant leaden-coloured Hell. One day it will again cease to be opaque, this 'coloured glass.' Nay, may it not become at once translucent and uncoloured? Painting no Pictures more for us, but only the everlasting Azure itself? That will be a right glorious consummation!-- (Works, X, 109-110).

Castan argues that Clough's poem seems a definite borrowing rather than a chance resemblance of a common image (p. 55). Clough's poem describes the disappearance of the portraits of the four Gospel-writers, conceived in stained glass, as the sun now shines "through windows plainly glassed": meaning, that is, that Strauss's dismissal of miracles in his Life of Jesus destroys the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The consummation, from Clough's point of view, is not entirely bad:

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,  
(11. 18-15)

<sup>15</sup> Victorian Poetry, IV (Winter, 1966), 54-56.

This is a near-echo of Carlyle's "Painting no Pictures more for us, but only the everlasting Azure itself." Raised here again is the whole larger matter of symbols, their appropriateness, their growth and decay. Further, as Castan points out, a comparison of the passages suggests that, whereas neither Clough nor Carlyle condemns colored glass, both seem to prefer plain glass (p. 55).

The element of argument enters in Castan's suggestion that "it is just possible that Clough's poem is an ironical development of the Carlyle passage" (p. 55). By this he appears to mean that Clough is in effect asking Carlyle, who was violently opposed to Strauss, if the disappearance of the Four Evangelists is the "right glorious consummation" he had in mind when he spoke in praise of "translucent and uncoloured" glass. The ironical element which Castan detects seems slight at best in the face of the essential agreement with Carlyle which Clough demonstrates in the poem. Nevertheless it may be further evidence that here, as in "When Israel Came Out of Egypt" (v. 8.). Clough was tempted to go beyond Carlyle in matters concerned with religious symbolism.

The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich (1848) was Clough's first major poem. Though the work may be examined from several points of view--as a poem in hexameters, as a satire, as Clough's statement about his resignation from Oxford--it may also be considered in terms of its relationship to Carlyle. Even the most anti-Carlyle of Clough's biographers, Katharine Chorley, admits that there is a large element of his philosophy in the poem. Some of the remarks of its protagonist, Philip, she observes, especially his praise of the natural working-girl (Book II, 11. 40 ff.), make it "easy to discern here that Philip has been drenching himself in Carlyle, a drenching from which his creator was beginning

to emerge, shaking himself dry like a shaggy dog" (Chorley, Clough, 153). Indeed, readers from the first found Carlylean elements in the poem: Emerson, upon his second reading of the poem, noted in his journal that "tis a kind of new and better Carlyle".<sup>16</sup>

But wherein lie the Carlylean elements? Osborne, the most anti-Clough of Clough's biographers, thinks that in the poem Clough is fighting his way through to a new truth, which he cannot proclaim as Carlyle had done because he was not, like Carlyle, an absolute idealist who could denounce shams thoroughly:

Carlyle could do it, because even when he reached the inevitable conclusion that one thing in life is just as much a sham as another, he had his transcendental world left. He had the dreaming faculty, for which past and future are alive equally with the present in a vast romantic system created by the imagination. But Clough was no dreamer of dreams. Life interested him not as a thing to marvel at, but as a thing to control, or else to endure. . . . He had to keep hunting for good everywhere, and when he could not find it the only thing for him to do was to change his specifications of good. The hold of Carlyle, and of the German and the Platonic traditions is strong on him; so that when he does his first thinking in this new way, which is his own way, he covers it up with a show of half-seriousness, and apologizes for it further with the sub-title, "A Long-Vacation Pastoral" (Osborne, Clough, p. 107).

Essentially, the poem recounts how Philip Hewson, "a radical hot," meets, and eventually wins for his wife, the simple country-girl Elspie. The poem is frequently treated simply as a satire (cf. Timko, Innocent Victorian, cited above) in part because of its use of the hexameter line, in part because some see it as a kind of meekery of Oxford life and manners, but it seems clear that there is a large element of straightforward

<sup>16</sup> Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Boston, 1912), VIII, 16.

seriousness, as well as satiric seriousness, in the poem. And the serious seriousness in the poem is in large measure Carlylean seriousness.

Timko sees three major Carlylean elements in the Bothie:

1) It is strongly anti-aristocratic in the spirit of Past and Present:

Carlyle and Clough are . . . outspoken about designating the responsibility [for "the wide gap between classes"]. Both are "anti-aristocratic," pointing to the "sublime indifference" of the rich as the reason for the separation of the high and low classes. Carlyle's ideas are pungently stated in his chapters on the "Gospel of Dilettantism" and "Unworking Aristocracy" in Past and Present; Clough's are found in his Retrenchment article, his letters from France during his stay there in 1848, and in the Bothie, written shortly after his resignation (Timko, Clough, p. 76).

2) Clough, like Carlyle, makes the performance of Duty the highest aim; in the Bothie, it is the equivalent of living happily ever after. Philip and Elspie, united at last, go off together to New Zealand:

So won Philip his bride: --

They are married, and gone to New Zealand.

Five hundred pounds in pocket, with books, and two or three pictures,

Tool-box, plough, and the rest, they rounded the sphere to New Zealand.

There he hewed, and dug; subdued the earth and his spirit;

There he built him a home; there Elspie bare him his children,

David and Bella; perhaps ere this too an Elspie or Adam;

There hath he farmstead and land, and fields of corn and flax fields;

And the Antipodes too have a Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich.

(IX, 193-200)

Of this conclusion, Timko remarks that "they find in the Antipodes the duty they were meant to do; they both achieve the true dignity that comes to those who are content to do their duty" (p. 78).

3) The poem depends in part upon a strong contrast between the natural and the artificial, one of the central elements in Carlyle's moral teaching. In Book IX, for instance, there is this epistolary outburst by Philip:

Ah, fair Lady Maria, God meant you to live, and be lovely;  
 Be so then, and I bless you. But ye, ye spurious ware, who  
 Might be plain women, and can be by no possibility better!  
 --Ye unhappy statuettes, and miserable trinkets,  
 Poor alabaster chimney-piece ornaments under glass cases,  
 Come, in God's name, come down! the very French clock  
 by you  
 Puts you to shame with ticking; the fire-irons deride you,  
 You, young girl, who have had such advantages, learnt so  
 quickly,  
 Can you not teach? O yes, and she likes Sunday school  
 extremely,  
 Only it's soon in the morning. Away! if to teach be your  
 calling,  
 It is no play, but a business: off! go teach and be paid  
 for it.  
 Lady Sophia's so good to the sick, so firm and so gentle.  
 Is there a nobler sphere than of hospital nurse and matron?  
 Hast thou for cooking a turn, little Lady Clarissa?  
 in with them,  
 In with your fingers! their beauty it spoils, but your  
 own it enhances;  
 For it is beautiful only to do the thing we are meant for.  
 (11. 24-39)

One of the fullest analyses of the poem is that of Hewlett,<sup>17</sup> who regards the poem by and large as a versification of Carlylean doctrine. Much of the reason for it, in Hewlett's mind, is to be traced to the fact that the Bothie is a poem of the year 1848, a year of revolution, and, says Hewlett, "the year, in fact, in which the cynic's influence on Clough was the strongest" (p. 70). He goes on:

There seems to me a good deal of 1848 in the young man  
 [Philip Hewson] as he is developed -- Tear 'em Roebuck,

<sup>17</sup> Maurice Hewlett, "Teufelsdröckh in Hexameters," The Nineteenth Century and After, XCI, 539 (January, 1922), 68-75.

the Corn Law rhymers, not forgetting, by any means, Thomas Carlyle. For Hewson, it is to be observed, had nothing of the aristocrat about his origins. What he says of his youth and people sounds a good deal more like Manchester. The "Folls," on the other hand, are high (p. 71).

Hewlett observes the same anti-aristocratic sentiments in the poem which others have noted, the same paeans to the dignity of labor, the same admonitions about the performance of duty. Indeed, to Hewlett's mind, the Bothie is merely the social philosophy of Teufelsdröckh with the sex instinct added: "the reasoning is the same, though it is transfigured" (p. 73). By this Hewlett apparently means that the social philosophy of Teufelsdröckh and of the Abbot Samson is essentially a singular, perhaps even a neuter, one. It is especially evident in the case of Teufelsdröckh, since he is on the rebound from an unhappy love relationship, but it is true in both cases: the social doctrine which Carlyle preached is in no instance especially illuminated by married love or any form, for that matter, of sexual love. Indeed, as Hewlett truly observes, it is the sex instinct which seems to be missing. One might offer many explanations for such an oversight, ranging from Carlyle's alleged impotence to some argument building upon the unnecessary quality of sexual experience for one who has had more or less direct experience of deity, but what remains is obviously that Clough felt the need for elaborating upon and adding to what his master had taught him.

What emerges from the analysis of Clough's poetry is evidence that Clough, like Browning and Tennyson, found in Carlyle's religious, social, and political doctrines a large number of issues to examine, if not always to agree with. It is evident in such poems as The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich and "Qui Laborat, Orat" that Carlyle's social doctrines, especially those concerned with work (as in Past and Present),

had a great deal of impact upon Clough and frequently stirred him into expressing agreement. Yet also frequently Clough found it necessary to dissent in some measure from Carlyle's views; "When Israel Came Out of Egypt" ("The New Sinai"), for instance, and perhaps even "Epi-Strauss-ium" suggest that Clough was less concerned than Carlyle with continuing the mythopoetic process. Too, Clough finds it necessary in the Bothie to amend Carlyle's social doctrines so far as to make the sex instinct an integral part of it. Clough, in other words, is subject to influence by Carlyle but is no more than Browning or Tennyson a mere passive receptor.

Yet Clough's relationship to Carlyle did not really have time to develop fully. Though Clough did not practice what Carlyle preached about keeping argumentation out of poetry and thus was in a sense automatically disqualified as a poetic follower of Carlyle, the full measure of the distance between them -- actually and potentially -- can be taken only with a consideration of Clough's poetics.

## v

Yet there is no question, it is plain and patent enough that people much prefer *Vanity Fair* and *Bleak House*. Why so? Is it simply because we have grown prudent and prosaic, and should not welcome, as our fathers did, the *Marmions* and the *Rokebys*, the *Childe Harolds*, and the *Corsairs*? Or is it, that 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? Could it not attempt to convert into beauty and thankfulness, or at least into some form and shape, some feeling, at any rate, of content -- the actual, palpable things with which our everyday life is concerned; introduce into business and weary task-work a character and a soul of purpose and reality;

intimate to us relations which, in our unchosen, peremptorily-appointed posts, in our grievously narrow and limited spheres of action, we still, in and through all, retain to some central, celestial fact? Could it not console us with a sense of significance, if not of dignity, in that often dirty, or at least dingy, work which it is the lot of so many of us to have to do, and which some one or other, after all, must do? Might it not divinely condescend to all infirmities; be in all points tempted as we are; exclude nothing, least of all guilt and distress, from its wide fraternisation; not content itself merely with talking of what may be better elsewhere, but to seek also to deal with what is here? We could each one of us, alas, be so much that somehow we find we are not; we have all of us fallen away from so much that we still long to call ours. Cannot the Divine Song in some way indicate to us our unity, though from a great way off, with those happier things; inform us, and prove to us, that though we are what we are, we may yet, in some way, even in our abasement, even by and through our daily work, be related to the purer existence (SPW, pp. 144-145).

Thus did Clough express himself in 1855 in reviewing some poems of Matthew Arnold, Alexander Smith, and others. It stands as one of his very few explicit and major comments on poetry and the poetic art. As such, it is valuable both for its rarity and for the insight it affords into the theory of poetry which Clough may have believed in, whether or not he practiced it. It is evident that he is pleading partly for what might be called a poetry of humanity different from the highly organized, highly learned, highly allusive poetry of the sort which his review in part dealt with. The sort of poetry he here hypothesizes would be realistic, on the one hand, but it would also seek to associate its realism with more-than-human things, with the divine, and with the invisible associations which bind all mankind into one cohesive whole. There is little in this which conflicts sharply with Carlyle's view of poetry: much of what Clough says here Carlyle says in his own way in his discussion of the poetic merits of the Book of Job in Heroes and Hero-Worship.

Poetry, for Carlyle, was musical thought; it had both Truth and Nobility. Clough's statement here suggests both of these qualities, the only possible cavils being that perhaps he tends to substitute Fact for Truth and Metaphysics for Nobility. In most points, nevertheless, his statement is unexceptionable by Carlylean standards.

But Clough had not left it at this. Two other comments of his on the nature of poetry serve to modify significantly the tenets set forth above. At the conclusion of his lecture on Wordsworth (? 1851-1852), Clough speculates upon the possible future of poetry:

. . . Heat, Light, Magnetism, and Electricity, are I incline to think likely in the Poetry of the Future, to replace with signal advantage the Daisy and the Pansy and the Smaller Celandine; and to vie with the interest even of Human Passions and Affections -- to make us forget

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea  
and -- the last words of Marmion.

Still we shall err if we forget that Poetry also is a sort of Science -- a register at any rate of phenomena -- and phenomena of the most, subtle, evanescent, intangible nature; whose chemistry far transcends in strangeness and in dignity all the experiments of all existing retorts and crucibles (SPW, p. 122).

Heat, light, magnetism, and electricity would have been to Carlyle ephemeral phenomena, accidents and not substance; that they had a peripheral place in poetry he might grudgingly allow, but that they might replace human passions and affections he would not, for it was of such things that poetry was made up. The Truth and Nobility of human passions and affections might be open to some question, but there was no doubt that heat, light, magnetism, and electricity had none. The real world was not absolutely necessary or necessarily absolute in Carlyle's system: the transcendental world which lay behind was the Ultimate Real. Here again Clough seems to go, from Carlyle's point of view,

a step too far.

In his fragment "Poetry and Skepticism" (1851-2), Clough says:

We must counteract any apprehensions which the young derive from poetical descriptions of Hades, etc. by urging upon them that poetry does not altogether look to the truth, and that the real truth on the subject even for those who have simply devoted themselves to the discovery and knowledge of reality, is by their own confession a very difficult matter indeed to arrive at or apprehend. . . . They will be less ready to think the poets know anything of the matter when they find the philosophers at sea about them (SPW, p. 123).

To Carlyle, the Poet was the Vates, the Prophet or Seer. If poetry is not going to deal with the truth, it had better not be written. His frequent advice to speak before you sing if you have anything to say stems partly from his dismay at the low estate to which poetry, in his eyes, had fallen. Not to be speaking the truth in poetry was to be speaking something which ought to be said in prose, for poetry was not the place for speculation: the purpose of Poetry was Affirmation.

In this, I think, lies the justification of the reasonable prediction that Carlyle would have grown-- if he had not already grown --disenchanted with Clough as a poet. Clough's own practice of poetry had, it is true, many of the traits which he advanced as desirable in the passages quoted above. Clough used poetry in many ways: as argumentation, as ridicule, as self-examination, even as self-flagellation. None of these ways, to Carlyle, was really poetry. That he could not, by his own admission, "manage" Clough's hexameters is not at all surprising, despite the fact that so much of his own creed was poeticized there. For the very point is that it ought not have been poeticized there or elsewhere; poetry was not for argumentation.

After Clough's death, Carlyle wrote of him to Froude: "A mind more vivid, more ingenious, more veracious, mildly radiant, I have seldom met with, and in a character so honest, modest, kindly. I expected great things of him" (Osborne, Clough, p. 156). If he expected them in poetry, he might well have been disappointed.

## CONCLUSION

Reactions to Carlyle's influence assumed various forms in the poets considered here: though they were as one in rejecting the invitation to write poetry according to Carlyle's poetics or to give up poetry for prose, and though they were again as one in taking from Carlyle the ideas which -- poetically speaking -- he did not want to give, the poets did not incline to take the same sort of ideas. Indeed, it becomes evident that each tended to take a certain kind of idea. Browning tended to take from Carlyle, whether for agreement or argument, his religious ideas; Tennyson, on the other hand, tended to borrow political ideas, especially ideas concerned with authority and leadership, as in the Idylls of the King. Strangely enough, Clough, for whom religious doubt was so grievous a torment, and for whom, at one stage at any rate, Carlyle was the leader who had left him in the wilderness, tended to examine in his poetry not Carlyle's religious doctrines but his social ones. Of course, none of the three took only one kind of idea from Carlyle and let it go at that, but there is observable a tendency toward a pattern of borrowings, and the pattern is not always what might have been expected.

The nature and the patterns of the borrowings tend to demonstrate in one sense the complexity of Carlyle's position and the extent to which he seems to bestride his age: there were very few subjects, apparently, upon which Carlyle failed to express an opinion, and that usually a very firm one. Yet, since all of his attitudes arise from one central conception, or since -- to put it another way -- to perceive Unitary Truth under any aspect is to perceive it under all aspects, Carlyle's thought is really

one. It may have been in some measure the simple pervasiveness of Carlyle's ideas which created such mixed reactions toward him in the minds of his followers: Browning, Tennyson, and Clough are all on record as having been at some point or another outraged by or disappointed in Carlyle. Though it is usually Carlyle's traditionally prickly personality which is cited to account for it, there is also the possibility that to some extent it was the feeling of his inescapability, the sensation that, whatever was thought, Carlyle had thought it -- or denied it -- before. In this regard, the case of Matthew Arnold and his relation to Carlyle offers suggestive clues to the nature and extent of Carlyle's influence.

Two complementary studies of the relationship of Matthew Arnold and Carlyle -- one by Kathleen Tillotson<sup>1</sup> concerned especially with the effect of Carlyle upon Arnold the poet, the second by David J. DeLaura<sup>2</sup> concerned with Arnold's critical writings -- make essentially the same point with regard to different parts of Arnold's writings: in phrasing, in idea, in many basic attitudes, Arnold is remarkably under the influence of Carlyle. Indeed, the influence seemed to be greater than Arnold knew, though it is evident, from the extent to which he protested against Carlyle and sought to dissociate himself from him, that Arnold must have been aware to some degree of the influence.

Carlyle, in short, seemed to arouse a rather complicated response in those whom he sought to influence. One oddity in that response is the frequency with which Carlyle's debtors seem to be -- or profess to be --

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Mary Tillotson, Matthew Arnold and Carlyle, London, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> David J. DeLaura, "Arnold and Carlyle," PMLA, LXXIX (March, 1964), 104 - 129.

unaware of what they have borrowed. Arnold, although indebted to Carlyle for several of his basic terms and concepts, yet persisted in disparaging Carlyle and denying the debt. Browning professed that he was unmoved by Carlyle's opinions outside his little circle, yet Browning himself was forced to come to grips with Carlyle several times in his own poetry, borrowing ideas and arguing with those that he did not borrow. Tennyson and Clough, too, seemed unwilling to acknowledge a debt owed to Carlyle.

By the same token, however, none really received from Carlyle the kind of public testimony about their poetry which some -- especially Browning -- sorely needed at times. Carlyle, as we have seen above, was often quite willing to express privately, in a letter or a conversation, his praise of a poem; he even stood ready, when the occasion demanded, to be ready with help in finding means of support. But he apparently would not openly avow their poetry. The reasons may only be guessed at: possibly he felt that, having declared his age to be an age of prose, he called his own judgement into question by praising poetry publicly.

But the speculation is not central to the conclusion about the sort of relationship which Carlyle had with several of the poets of his time, for what is evident is a fairly simple basic pattern: nascent poets were drawn to Carlyle by the force of his early writings; Carlyle encouraged their friendship, aided them in a variety of ways, and sought to lead them to accept his idiosyncratic ideas about poetry, poets, and the writing of poetry in an age of prose. Though they rejected his ideas on poetry, they drew from him his ideas on social, political, religious, and other related topics. To the extent that they adopted his ideas, Carlyle must have been pleased, but he was not pleased that those ideas of his should be made part

of--sometimes the basis for--their poetry, for to Carlyle poetry was for affirmation and not argumentation; injecting social, political, or religious arguments into poetry was to mistake the true purpose of poetry.

What Carlyle was looking for, of course, was the poet who had finished his reasoning process and was ready--and able--to sing the Reason at which he had arrived, for the Reason was the Higher Truth at which poetry aimed. Thus it is ironic that Carlyle, through the force of his personality, though seeking to have men such as Browning, Tennyson, and Clough refrain from poetry unless and until they had a Higher Truth which they might sing, managed instead to influence them to write poetry which treated of him and his ideas and thus--by Carlyle's lights--had no real claim to be called poetry at all.

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## VITA

Name: David Stanley Gadziola.

Permanent address: 623 Deepdene Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

Degree and date to be conferred: Ph.D. 1968.

Date of birth: April 30, 1937.

Place of birth: Baltimore, Maryland.

Secondary education: Dundalk High School, 1955.

Collegiate institutions attended	Dates	Degree	Date of Degree
University of Maryland	1955-1961	B. A.	1961
University of Maryland	1961-1968	Ph. D.	1968

Major: English and American Literature after 1860.

Minor: English Language and Literature before 1860.