

Aesthetes, English Professors, and Socialists:
The British Reception of Matthew Arnold (1888-1948)

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I hereby declare that this thesis was composed by myself,
and the work involved has been my own.

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ABSTRACT

Between his death in 1888 and the cultural criticism of T.S. Eliot in the 1940s, commentators on Matthew Arnold were divided, in most cases, as a result of their adherence to one of two conflicting intellectual traditions. These traditions may be called 'aesthetic' and 'moral' respectively: one derived from the romantic belief in the autonomy of the artist and literary critic from social theorizing, the other asserting the right of the artist to make moral and political statements.

This conflict was inherent within the writing of Arnold himself who, throughout his life, was torn between two distinct images of himself: on the one hand, the romantic solitary, most evident in the early poems, the withdrawn aesthete who, for the sake of his own poetic gift, shuns society; on the other, a spokesman on social issues who, despite claiming to avoid 'immediate practice,' is morally and politically engaged.

As the products of specific 'moments' in history, responses to Arnold often reveal as much about their writers as about Arnold himself. The influence of shifting intellectual climates have a considerable bearing on various aesthetic and moral biases. These biases lead to the privileging of certain Arnoldian concepts over others and the subsequent canonization of the works that contain them.

George Saintsbury responds to Arnold as a critic who has come under the influence of Walter Pater at Oxford. In his 1899 biography and later essays, Saintsbury's emphasis is on the 'aesthetic' Arnold at the expense of Arnold the social and theological commentator. Alternatively, George Russell, absorbed in the New Liberalism at the turn of the century, portrays Arnold as a social reformer whose poetry and literary criticism was only secondary to his controversial writings. Russell is later to draw on Arnoldian themes and language to support his own advocacy of Christian Socialism.

The preoccupation of C.F.G. Masterman, E.M. Forster, and A.R. Orage with the condition of England question is born out of the need to recoup Liberal values in the face of a new political age; their emphasis on *Culture and Anarchy* is endemic of the Edwardian interest in the political function of art and criticism. Against the background of Lytton Strachey's dismissal of Victorian moral values, the counter-political thrust of Hugh Kingsmill's proto-modernist return to aestheticism causes him to claim, on the other hand, the failure of Arnold the social critic and the superiority of the individualistic romantic element in the early poet.

Despite their many differences, T.S. Eliot inherits the modern man of letters tradition which Arnold's aesthetic-moral synthesis helped to forge. The later critic may be regarded as the capstone to two antagonistic Arnoldian traditions largely divided between concerns which, by the subject matter of his criticism alone, he serves to unite like Arnold before him.

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INTRODUCTION

'Astonishingly,' said David DeLaura in 1969, 'we have no comprehensive study of Arnold's influence and reputation in England comparable to John Henry Raleigh's *Matthew Arnold and American Culture*.'¹ In the two decades that have transpired since these words were written the field of Arnold scholarship has positively exploded and yet we still do not have that study of his British reputation and influence. This dissertation is meant to provide a basis from which such a comprehensive study can hopefully emerge. Its chronological scope -- from Arnold's death in 1888 to the cultural criticism of T.S. Eliot in the 1940s -- is certainly more limited than Raleigh's which begins with contemporary responses to the 1865 edition of *Essays in Criticism* and ends with an appraisal of Arnold scholarship in the 1950s. To produce a work of comparable scope at this time would be unwise since we already have a very thorough study of the responses of Arnold's contemporaries in Sidney Coulling's *Matthew Arnold and His Critics*, many of which have been reprinted in the two volumes dedicated to Arnold in the Routledge Critical Heritage series.

Writing in 1936, E.L. Hunt remarked that, owing to the centrality of his position on many issues, disagreements among Arnold's readers 'are usually more profound than their quarrels with Arnold' and that 'controversies over Arnold are fundamental disagreements concerning the nature of literature and of criticism.'² Between his death in 1888 and the essays of T.S. Eliot in the 1940s, commentators on Matthew Arnold were indeed divided, in most cases, as the result of their adherence to one of two conflicting intellectual traditions. These traditions might be called 'aesthetic' and 'moral' respectively, one derived from a romantic belief in the autonomy of the artist and literary critic from social (and sometimes rational) theorizing, finds its late-nineteenth century equivalent in Paterian impressionism, while the other asserts the right of the artist or critic to make moral and political statements, thereby imbuing aesthetic values with moral significance. As an early embodiment of this conflict between aesthetics and morals, it is hardly surprising that the Arnold canon became one area over which the two sides in the issue were to wrangle.

Consequently, I will examine several major responses to Arnold during the half century after his death in order to illustrate the effect of this aesthetic-moral conflict on the way that he was to be perceived in that period.

My approach to the problem is founded on the belief that the equal strength of both sides in this issue serves to show that there is not a consistently true Matthew Arnold who, if he stood before us today, would call himself a partizan of either view. Rather there are, metaphorically speaking, at least two Matthew Arnolds: the Oxford aesthete and the moral critic, one of whom is more prominent than the other at different specific stages in his development. As Hunt perceived, 'it was Arnold's role to appear to be a moralist among aesthetes and an aesthete among moralists.'³ Such a position avoids any suggestion that Arnold was ever completely comfortable with either role and, as William Madden has rightly said, 'it was the inward crisis created by this predicament to which his poetry gave poignant expression and which his criticism was, in the main, an attempt to resolve.' Attempting to define the essential unrest at the heart of Arnold's work, Madden speaks perceptively of:

The life-long conflict which Arnold experienced between his innate sense of vocation as a poet, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, his ethical sense of duty as a Victorian citizen and his critical sense of duty as a member of the new 'intelligentsia.'

While Madden's recognition of this inherent conflict between the romantic aesthetic and socio-moral responsibility in Arnold's life and work is, I believe, fundamentally correct, his central thesis -- that the romantic image of the poet represented Arnold's 'strongest, deepest self . . . with which he early and permanently identified his true self and vocation' in the face of an impinging morality -- is mistaken. Rather than following the Arnoldian dichotomy to its logical outcome, he comes down on one side, thus causing him to take Arnold's 'aesthetic temperament' as 'the key' to understanding him.⁴ According to DeLaura, while Madden's approach to Arnold offers 'a provocative corrective to the "moral" Arnold who has been overplayed' by many critics, his emphasis on Arnold's aesthetic temperament 'tips the balance perilously towards the opposite extreme.' Such one-sided readings as Madden's, says DeLaura, result in 'an inability to distinguish shifts of emphasis in Arnold's thought, especially from 1869 onwards.'⁵ In tracing the tension

between the aesthetic and moral domains and the accompanying indecision between his desire for romantic withdrawal against the need to become an engagé critic -- both of which are continually evident throughout Arnold's development -- I have chosen to divide his life and work into three phases that suggest, contrary to Madden's thesis, a series of such 'shifts of emphasis' from aesthete to moralist while, at the same time, keeping before me the continuing conflict between these spheres.

The present study grew out of my own surprise at the vast amount written on Arnold ~~from 1838~~ up to the comments of T.S. Eliot in the 1940s, much of which has gone virtually unexamined since its original appearance. Some of these documents appear in the form of biographies which never saw second editions; more obscure are the scores of newspaper and journal articles, some of which have not seen the light of day for a century. Having said all this, I do not wish to give the impression that my consideration of this vast body of material is in any way comprehensive; given the sheer diversity of matter, I have, in the interest of cohesion, endeavoured to concentrate on the work of several critics who I feel to be representative of various approaches to Arnold in their own times. Thus I have found it profitable to arrange this study around the various critical 'moments' in literary history of which I believe these commentators to be (with certain qualifications) representative. The influence of their authors' personal biases and the shifting intellectual climates in the respective historic periods from which these documents arise, does, I believe, have a considerable bearing on the various ways in which they reflect their views of Arnold: for example, George Saintsbury responds as an aesthetic critic who has come under the intellectual influence of Walter Pater at Oxford; George Russell, absorbed in the New Liberalism at the turn of the century, is naturally drawn towards the social implications of Arnoldian criticism; the preoccupation of C.F.G. Masterman and E.M. Forster with the condition of England question is clearly born out of the Edwardian sense of the need to recoup Liberal values in the face of a new political age; while the counter-political thrust of Hugh Kingsmill's proto-modernist return to aestheticism suggests the failure of such Arnoldian values in the light of the large-scale personal and social upheaval initiated by the First World War. Of course, no study of this kind would be complete

without addressing the commentary of T.S. Eliot. A book could, and probably should, be written on the subject. All that is intended here is to show how Eliot, while often seen to be reacting against various 'Arnoldian' tendencies in his own period, can be seen, despite numerous specific differences, to fall quite distinctly into the modern man of letters tradition which Arnold's aesthetic-moral synthesis had helped to forge. The later critic might, therefore, be said to act as the capstone to two antagonistic Arnoldian traditions largely divided between concerns which, by the subject matter of his criticism alone, he tacitly served to unite like Arnold before him. If nothing else, the case of Eliot throws into relief the problematic nature of the term 'Arnoldian' itself, so often used as a descriptive for a specific type of writer. Consequently, I intend to show that the Arnoldian succession that Eliot himself traced via Pater is an oversimplification since the evidence shows that rather than a singular Arnoldian lineage there exist, in fact, several identifiable 'Arnoldisms' of which the Paterian aesthetic is only one.

Despite the scope of this study, I by no means wish to give the impression that I take the divided Arnoldian tradition to end with Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. Regardless of the demise of Arnold's reputation among many critics in recent years, the value of this study is not for the literary historian alone, since the aesthetic-moral conflict evident throughout this first sixty years of Arnoldian criticism has continued to dominate critical practice since the 1940s, even to the present day. While F.R. Leavis, for example, receives a brief mention in the final chapter, the influence of his own reading of Arnold was to come to fruition throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as Leavis's methods and beliefs found a formidable place in the British academic establishment. To a certain extent, the recent reaction against Leavis has been responsible for much antagonism towards Arnold. For all their apparent sophistication, the anti-Arnoldian criticism of Marxist and Post-structuralist readers alike and the narrow ideas for which they make Arnold stand, provide yet other, more angry, examples of the divided critical tradition at the centre of which Arnold has stood since the 1860s. In his emphasis on the aesthetic Arnold, Terry Eagleton charges him with a kind of covert detachment from moral engagement while also propping up a bourgeois political establishment. For others, who see literary criticism as a

self-referential discourse, and texts as mere plays of signs with little relevance to 'life,' it is the moral content of Arnoldian criticism that is found objectionable. That so many even a century after his death feel this compulsion to make Arnold 'a whipping-boy' (William Buckler's phrase) suggests not his passing importance but rather his continuing relevance to a discipline which continues to seek answers to questions regarding the function of criticism and the role of the artist.

Much work has been done in recent years to expose ways in which literary works are 'realized' through the response of the reader. The reception theorist Hans Robert Jauss has shown how historic and ideological presuppositions can make up what he calls a 'horizon of expectations,' thus resulting in a predisposed response in the reader. David Bleich has shown how modes of reading often reveal a projection of the self, its anxieties, and desires, into the work under consideration. Perhaps what contemporary reception theory, in its almost exclusive emphasis on response, has neglected, however, is the very conspicuous presence of the text in the reading process. This study is concerned not with the writings of Arnold exclusively, nor primarily with the reading strategies of his critics over the years, but with what I consider to be the interactive relationship between a number of confident and very committed readers who have themselves engaged with a complex and often difficult canon of writing. What hopefully will emerge from this exercise is a sense of the dynamic continuity of an ongoing conversation about the role of the critic and artist in society that is very much rooted in the language and reputation of Arnold himself.

Notes

¹David DeLaura, 'What, Then, Does Matthew Arnold Mean?', *Modern Philology*, 66 (May, 1969), 355. Carl Dawson has more recently remarked that 'the extent and the implications' of Arnold's British influence 'still deserve scrutiny.' [Carl Dawson and John Pfordresher, editors, *Matthew Arnold: Prose Writers*, Routledge Critical Heritage Series (London, 1979), 57].

²E.L. Hunt, 'Matthew Arnold and His Critics,' *Sewanee Review*, 44 (1936), 449-467.

³E.L. Hunt, 'Matthew Arnold: The Critic as Rhetorician,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 20 (1934), 505.

⁴William A. Madden, *Matthew Arnold: A Study of the Aesthetic Temperament in Victorian England* (Bloomington, 1967), viii, ix.

⁵DeLaura, 'What, Then, Does Matthew Arnold Mean?,' 349.

CHAPTER ONE

Arnold Divided: The Origins of Conflict

Throughout his life, Matthew Arnold was torn between two distinct images of himself: one, the romantic solitary, most evident in the early poems, the withdrawn aesthete who, for the sake of his own poetic gift, shuns the company of men and society; the other, a spokesman on social issues who, in spite of claiming to avoid 'immediate practice,' is nevertheless morally and politically engaged. To a certain extent, Arnold's life may be seen as a development, from aesthete to moral critic; there is, in his own mind, an early sense of movement from carefree student-poet to responsible school inspector. Later, this is reinforced by anxiety that results from the belief that he has sacrificed his poetic gift for the more public office of cultural spokesman. Between these two cruxes, there stands the Oxford professorship and a significant body of literary criticism that not only exhibits this tension between aesthetics and morals, but also shows evidence of being shaped by it.

Because I believe there is evidence to show that this conflict of interest in Arnold himself and his own changing relationship to the problem lies at the heart of many of the controversies that dominated literary and social discussions soon after his death, it will be helpful to examine this phenomenon in Arnold's own life and work in more detail. In order to do so, this chapter will be divided into three sections that suggest a series of shifts in emphasis while maintaining a concern with the aesthetic-moral dilemma: (i). *Aesthetic period* (1843-1852) in which he exhibits a desire for a personal aesthetic over and exclusive of morals, (ii). *Interregnum* (1853-1867) in which he attempts to forge a critical method which both accommodates the demands of an individual aesthetic while functioning as a responsible moral force in society, and (iii). *Cultural Period* (1867-1888) in which he finally resolves to become engaged in moral and social issues while continuing to temper his approach with aesthetic underpinnings.

i. Aesthetic period (1845-1852)

Given the strict nature of Arnold's upbringing, it is probably fair to assume that his arrival at Oxford in 1845 was a liberating experience. *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough* reveal a young student preoccupied not, like his father, with matters of state and church but with poetry and a life lived in the emotions. Free from the close moral confines of Rugby School, Arnold began at university to explore the romantic aesthetic that permeated Oxford at that time. It was as a student, for instance, that he set out on a pilgrimage to see his heroine George Sand, he became a devotee of the French actress Rachel, and developed a taste for Continental life, all of which were interpreted by those around him as radical statements of a decadent individuality.¹ Appropriately, it was also during this period that Arnold wrote much of the poetry of which *The Strayed Reveller* (1849) and *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (1852) were composed. With these first two volumes Arnold quickly earned himself, among the few who had read them, the reputation of an aesthete. In 1852, shortly after the publication of that second volume, J.C. Shairp expressed, in a letter to their mutual friend Clough, his fear that 'Matt's last book has made no impression on the public mind. I'm not much in the way of hearing, but I've seen no one, except a few Oxford Rugbeans who have ever read it.'² It is little wonder that Arnold's poetry was unpopular; it is perhaps even surprising that he appeared in print at all, given the fugitive element that was evident in some of the early poems. What George Boyle identified as 'indolent selfish quietism,' William Aytoun considered little more than 'dreary melancholy.'³ Charles Kingsley similarly asked, 'to what purpose all this self-culture . . . ? When we have read all he has to say, what has he taught us?'⁴ On this point, Carl Dawson remarks:

Kingsley thinks of the poet as a special kind of public servant who must adjust his material and manner to the abilities of the 'general reader.' The question of Arnold's relation and responsibility to his readers appears in almost every nineteenth-century commentary on his work. In its more general form, of course, it remains fundamental. 'For whom can the poet write?'⁵

Arnold's critics were therefore not attacking only his style, but the whole way in which he envisioned the poet's role in society, or, more accurately, out of society.

Arnold the poet had little regard for the general audience. 'You -- Froude -- Shairp,' he tells his sister, 'I believe the list of those whose reading of me I anticipate with any pleasure stops there or thereabouts.'⁶ F.R. Leavis, in pointing to Arnold's becoming an aesthetic recluse, said that the poet 'admits implicitly that the actual world is alien, recalcitrant, and unpoetical, and that no protest is worth making except the protest of withdrawal.'⁷ Indeed, the early letters are filled with evidence of Arnold's mistrust of the world around him. 'How deeply *unpoetical* the age and all one's surroundings are,' he tells Clough as he mourns 'these damned times [when] everything is against one.' Even the styles of Shakespeare and Milton 'would have been far less curious and exquisite' had they lived 'in the atmosphere of modern feeling.' For his part, he will do his best to avoid such contact. He has, he says:

A bitter feeling with respect to . . . the age Yes I said to myself something tells me I can, if need be, at last dispense with them . . . better that, than be sucked into the Time Stream in which they . . . plunge and bellow.

He will refuge himself, he tells Clough, with Obermann 'in his forest against your Zeit Geist.'⁸

To avoid the contamination of a sick age, the poet, Arnold feels, must stand both aloof and apart, directing his energy to the cultivation of the hidden life. The poet's business, he claims, is with 'the inward man.'⁹ A similar belief led Carlyle to promote the Poet to his realm of heroes: 'How much in Shakespeare lies hid; his sorrows, his silent struggles known to himself, much that was not known at all, not speakable at all; like *roots*, like sap and forces working underground.'¹⁰ None can really fathom Shakespeare's communion with himself, these 'forces working underground;' all that can be perceived is what is on the surface and that, we might suppose, is only slight in comparison. In 'Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Obermann"' Arnold similarly praises Senancour for his 'profound inwardness.' He, of all writers, 'is the most perfectly isolated' since 'the world is with him far less' than others. As a result:

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways;
To tell too deep ones is not well --
It knows not what he says.¹¹

Thus, even if he had chosen to reveal his inward life in all of its profundity, the public, whose chief motivation is a lust for novelty, would find it impossible to understand. Even to his sister, his closest of critics, Arnold did not expect all of his meanings to show themselves. In fact, part of the poet's task is to keep hidden the most important truths of all, lest he be dragged down and pulled away from those things that others are incapable of grasping. Lucretius's great weakness, he tells us, is that he 'has so much reflected' but 'retained so little in [his] careless depths.' There is a core at the heart of every poet that must remain inviolate if he is to continue his communion with Nature and self. Beside Wordsworth, others pale because even:

The clearest, the best, who have read
Most in themselves -- have beheld
Less than they left unrevealed.¹²

There is a great irony here. All famous literary seclusionists have engaged in public life through the publication of their work, and Arnold is no exception. In the nineteenth century especially, appearance in print was regarded as no less than an invitation for public response. To truly immerse oneself in 'the buried life' one would have to reject any such opportunity. 'I should like . . . to hear nothing more about my poems,' he tells his sister in 1853. 'It does me no good hearing discussion of them -- yet of course I cannot help being occupied by it.'¹³ That he was being drawn out of isolation was perhaps the most agonizing reality of all:

Ah! two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood
One drives him to the world without,
And one to solitude.¹⁴

While he often assumed the stance of isolated aesthete, then, the poetry in fact reveals that he felt a continual need to give deference to external standards so that there appears a tension at the heart of Arnold's formative development -- between the life of romantic introversion and the place of the writer engaged in the world of men, morals, and rational conventionalism. Hence, Edward Johnson, addressing what he calls 'a double awareness' in Arnold identifies:

A conflict . . . between the public conscience of the man of letters who comes forward as the accredited literary spokesman of his world, and the private conscience of the artist who conceives that his highest allegiance must be to his own aesthetic responsibilities.¹⁵

In this chapter I will show that this problem between the desire for aesthetic withdrawal and the inculcation of moral responsibility was so fundamental to Arnold's early development that a search for its solution was to provide the basis for much of his work throughout the rest of his life.

In his desknotes Arnold left the following observation: 'Goethe, on writing destroying thought -- yes -- and expression also -- In that the two modes are incompatible -- a total change takes place in the man passing from one to the other.'¹⁶ Arnold's early writing is, among other things, an articulation of his own fluctuations between thought and expression. 'That the two modes are incompatible' is a key theme to many of the poems which dramatize the conflict between the disparate forces of romance and reason. 'The problem of the antagonism between the creative imagination and the critical intellect . . . lies at the heart of the romantic philosophy,' says Lionel Trilling, an antagonism of which he sees Arnold's poetry as 'an effort of reconciliation.'¹⁷ For the early Arnold there is no middle ground and the poems only represent a synthesis insofar as they become the artistic embodiment of that very conflict. Far from suggesting that Arnold's 'effort of reconciliation' was rewarded with success, however, the poetry seems to suggest that, at least by 1851, Arnold had not reconciled these two factors. Indeed, several obviously conflicting views, the opposing portrayals of Nature in 'Quiet Work' and 'In Harmony With Nature,' for example, are results of Arnold's own uncertainty about his position in the early poetry, and evidence of his own vacillation between assertions about the relationship of the ego and its environment. At one stage he appears to be yearning after a kind of *degagé* subjectivism seated in the emotions while at another he appears to be asserting the need for the recognition of an objective universe, finding meaning in formal existence. These conflicting points of view constitute the opposing tendencies that generate 'Empedocles on Etna,' which may in fact be seen as the embodiment of the conflict explored in the early poems while, at the same time, an attempt to exorcise them. 'Empedocles on Etna' does not, however, represent a final solution: it merely succeeds in

being a full-blown statement of the problem that is evident throughout *The Strayed Reveller*.

The tension between romance and reason, aesthetics and morality, is never more pronounced than in the most potent extra-poetic record of Arnold's developing mind in the forties, his letters to Arthur Hugh Clough. While filled with comments about aesthetics and poetry writing, these letters cannot be said to constitute anything like a united manifesto. They rather illustrate the changing nature of his thinking as he develops, receiving impetus from his lively intellectual relationship with Clough. If there is a common thread that binds the letters, however, a recurrent theme that dominates the discussions of literature, it is the stark difference between the expressive poet and the man of action who lives in the world of thought, and an accompanying ambivalence about the appropriateness of each. At one juncture, we find him saying 'you must plunge yourself down to the depths of the sea of intuition,' asserting that 'a clear almost palpable intuition (damn the logical senses of the world) is necessary . . . the reason why mathematics were ever foolishness to me,' while at another we find him telling his friend that he should begin with a clear 'Idea of the World' and that the study of natural science would serve as a worthwhile antidote to subjectivity. Clearly, many of his statements to Clough are self-referential and have as much bearing on his own work as his friend's. Thus a warning against Clough's becoming 'one of those misanthropical hermits' who are unable to see that 'the Muse willingly *accompanies* life' could as well be applied to himself, for it is of melancholy isolation that his first critics accused him. Unable to come to any conclusions about the tension between art and life, he becomes aware of a corresponding irreconcilability within his own nature. 'Have you a great Force of Character?' he asks in 1845, 'For me, I am a reed, a very whoreson Bullrush,' implying that, unable to master his own view of reality, he finds himself blown by every wind of doctrine. Whereas the French could throw themselves into 'logical absolute reason' -- Arnold's admiration for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* causes him to put his continental neighbours 'in the van of Europe' by virtue of their '*wide and deepspread intelligence*' -- the English, whose natural bent was towards individualism 'as spiritual, poetic, profound *persons*,'

were unable to express themselves clearly and so were left stranded: 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' he asks.¹⁸

It is clear that much of Arnold's anxiety over his inability to embrace the rational is founded on his mistrust of the age and its beliefs. Both Clough and he shared equal distain for the minds and ideas around them and a common disgust with the age as one 'unpoetical.' Arnold goes so far as to call them 'two lambs in a world of wolves,' and on that basis says he will avoid, at all costs, political writing. Although by this time engaged in an official government post, as secretary to Lord Lansdowne, he still writes:

It is so hard to sequester oneself here from the rush of public changes and talk, and yet so unprofitable to attend to it. I was myself tempted to attempt some political writing the other day, but in the watches of the night I seemed to feel that in that direction I had some enthusiasm of the head perhaps, but no profound stirring. So I desisted.¹⁹

Arnold's awareness of the inner dichotomy between head and heart, thought and feeling, suggests that he associates rationalism, an external non-aesthetic standard, with a socio-political discourse wholly removed from the poetic which, as the result of 'profound stirring,' is better suited to his own nature. One aspect of the outward world that Arnold wishes, from the beginning, to avoid, therefore, is its formal thinking. This, coupled with a dislike for his social environment had been apparent as early as 1845. 'A strong-minded poet,' in becoming popular, we learn, subjects himself to 'hideosities . . . Solecisms . . . crudities . . . distortions . . . Grimaces . . . affectations,' and thereby loses his 'self-knowledge.' Arnold's formula for preventing such a contamination is not far from radical: 'we, my love,' he tells Clough, 'lovers of one another and fellow worshippers of Isis, while we believe in the Universality of Passion as Passion, will keep pure our Aesthetics.' The strength of this statement can be attributed somewhat to a zealous student's admiration for decadent romanticism; one, however, that does appear to rest on an accompanying, quite sincere, fear of formal poetic theory: 'Rightly considered, a Code-G.-Sand would make G. Sands impossible.' In other words, to make a creed of his romantic heroine would be to render her ineffectual. How then does one set about developing an aesthetic theory without codifying certain statements? This is the problem that lies at the heart of the search for a vital creative model, that it may petrify and so hamper genius. Apparently it

had been Clough's adherence to 'duty' that had prompted Arnold to speak so forcibly. In his next letter he apologizes for his 'beastly vile note' which did not give credit to 'the great inward precision and force you have attained in these inward ways.' Having set 'individuality' in opposition to duty and other dangerous codified forms, he goes on to warn Clough that he should be on his guard against this very individuality, although, he says, 'I do not really know that I think so,' revealing his own ambivalence on this point.²⁰

Although, it seems, all credos in the modern age are doomed to failure, Arnold nonetheless suffers anxiety over the duties that the poetic office owes Nature. Musing on Shakespeare's belief that in order to realize joy, the imagination must first 'comprehend some bringer of that joy,' he compares Clough's approach to Nature with Tennyson's. While he believes that Clough desires 'to *solve* the Universe,' Tennyson, on the other hand, merely dawdles 'with its painted shell.' Both he finds tiresome. A third alternative, 'to *re-construct* the Universe is not,' he says, 'satisfactory either.' None of these three approaches -- the search for natural order, verisimilitude, or mimesis -- all placing the emphasis on external form, is a sufficient task for the artist. Once again, he comes to rest on individuality as the final reality: 'But have I been inside you, or Shakespeare? Never. Therefore, heed me not, but come to what you can.'²¹

In early 1848, Arnold is quite explicit about the severity of the tensions that exist between the poetic self and its environment and the need for resolution. Although he feigns a romantic withdrawal from the world, he knows that this world provides him with poetic material, a paradox which, in turn, only serves to heighten the problem:

The poet's matter being *the hitherto experience of the world, and his own*, increases with every century. Burbridge lives quite beside the true poetical life, under a little gourd. So much for him. For me you may often hear my sinews cracking under the effort to unite matter.²²

Here, then, is the task that Arnold sees before him: the unifying of outward and inward experience, the synthesis of subjective emotion and objective intellect. Burbridge, like Clough, (and Arnold perhaps) is too much an individual, too much a solitary, and shies away from the world's outward reality. Arnold, it appears, will do his best to avoid any such extremism. And yet he continues to regard thought, or the rational, as antagonistic and therefore set in opposition to a kind of pure expression. 'The service of reason is

chilling to feeling,' he observes, and is exasperated by 'the modern English habit . . . of using poetry as a channel for thinking aloud,' another aspect of the same problem.²³ The dangers of accepting consensus or received opinion is that, as a vehicle of current ideas, the answers it provides are merely temporal. Goethe, notes Arnold, had found a similar state of affairs in his own time:

The Zeitgeist when he was young caused everyone to adopt the Wolfian theories about Homer, himself included: and that when he was in middle age the same Zeitgeist caused them to leave these theories for the hypothesis of one poem and one author, inferring that in such matters there is no certainty, but alternating dispositions.²⁴

Unable to find any intellectual certainty in a world of 'alternating dispositions,' Arnold eventually decides that 'rather than be sucked into the Time Stream,' his only alternative is to take up an Obermannish exile in the forest of selfhood in order to counteract the contradictions of the age. Withdrawal from the old gods of rationalism is a common theme in the poetry and it occurs, most noticeably, in 'Mycerinus,' 'The Strayed Reveller,' 'The Forsaken Merman,' 'The Scholar-Gipsy,' and, not surprisingly, 'Obermann,' all of which serve to highlight the conflict between lives founded on reason and those lived spontaneously in the emotions. What is clear from these works, however, is that the withdrawal from reason represents no final solution, and the act of fleeing from the world has the effect of merely heightening the disparity between thought and feeling.

Dwight Culler has suggested that Arnold's 'poems are not fragments if one regards them, not as a closed philosophical system, but as an imaginative world which provides for several different systems and moves us dynamically from one to another . . . his poems will cohere perfectly with one another.'²⁵ However, if we look closely at Arnold's movement between these systems, we see that the transitions are not dynamic but necessary, the result of a sense of the inevitable inadequacy of each respective position. Culler quite rightly addresses the question of philosophical systems, something that deeply concerned Arnold himself. However, we cannot dismiss, as Culler does, Arnold's regard for closed systems since this problem is at the heart of the conflict. To be sure, he is often highly antagonistic towards fixed philosophical systems but, at the same time, he recognizes that a wholesale dismissal of them is impossible. Arnold is, in fact, undecided,

in the early years, about where he stands in regard to rationalism; although he sees himself as an imaginative poet and not a formal thinker, his poetry is at times decidedly philosophical, becoming itself yet another aspect of the romantic-rationalist dichotomy.

One distinctly philosophical poem, 'In Utrumque Paratus,' suggests ambivalence by its title alone. In it, he introduces us to two different approaches to nature based on opposing cosmological origins. The first three stanzas suggest a deistically created universe which yields a systematic, ordered, and rational view of nature as the product of some divine plan. It is regulated from without and does not therefore rely on men's minds to give it meaning: 'Whether it needs thee count/ Betwixt thy waking and the birth of things/ Ages or hours.' While in an Age of Enlightenment this may have seemed like the best of all possible worlds where all was seen to cohere, the world had lost its newness for Arnold and his contemporaries. The mind of God, it seems, has withdrawn leaving each constitutive element alone in its own place and man and his environment forever separate:

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow,
 And faint the city gleams;
 Rare and lone pastoral huts -- marvel not thou!
 The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
 But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams;
 Alone the sun rises, and alone
 Spring the great streams.

Everything here is as predictable as the movement of the stars and planets, and yet unity with nature is out of the question. Man is alien in a passionless universe where joy is impossible. The second alternative and the subject of the poem's last three stanzas is the 'wild unfather'd mass' which is self-realized nature, creating both herself and man in isolation. While this may seem a more alien existence than the first, it yields in fact a deeper unity for the poet. Whereas in the deistic universe he is at a remove from his 'brother-world,' their only link being a common parentage, the self-realized Earth is man's 'long-vext mother,' thus making him a son and heir of Nature herself.²⁶ In this situation, man has a relationship with his environment as an extension of it. For the poet, the leap from human nature to Nature becomes possible by an act of Wordsworthian meditation. Arnold's lyrical poems often show him engaged in this act, in effect, using nature as a metaphor or tool for examining his own mind. At other times, he deems this impossible in

the light of the multiplicity that the world imposes upon him. Although the meditative seems to offer more unity between subject and object, there is always, in the background, the idea that this view of the world is somehow not 'real.' It does not satisfy the demands made on him by the empirical knowledge of life. He will therefore remain open to alternatives -- *in utrumque paratus*.

In 'Quiet Work' Arnold calls for unity between contemplation and knowledge on the basis of lessons that Nature is able to teach him. Unlike most human aspirations which amount to little more than 'noisier schemes' and 'a thousand discords,' man should allow himself to be instructed by Nature. If the systematic plans of men, here, grant only disharmony, perhaps by this poem, as an act of meditation, the writer has come closer to the source of concord. After lyrically bridging the gap, however, he ends on a note of pessimism. The sonnet form allows him to shift focus in the final sestet asserting the temporality of human nature in comparison with the 'labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.' In 'To an Independent Preacher, who preached that we should be "In Harmony With Nature,"' he similarly dismisses the meditative aspect of 'Quiet Work,' suggesting that men only travail with their environment and must either realize their superiority or be forever subjugated by it. One thing is certain: 'Nature and man can never be fast friends.' This too is the message of 'Religious Isolation.' Instead of a kindly mother, the world is seen as an 'incurious bystander' who has no time for a child 'too fearful or too fond to play alone.' Man, like the child, is unaware of his alienation from others and the final irreconcilability of human nature and Nature. Governed by separate laws, 'To its own impulse every creature stirs.'²⁷ All that can be done is to resign oneself to the fact of one's isolation.

'Fret not to make my poems square in all their parts,' Arnold told his sister in 1849, 'my poems are fragments . . . I am fragments . . . do not plague yourself to find a consistent meaning.'²⁸ If we are to take these statements seriously, we would have to say that any search for overall unity in *The Strayed Reveller* is, by Arnold's own admission, doomed to failure. And yet in order to procure a unified reading of the corpus of Arnold's poetry, Culler resorts to dividing his poems into various landscapes. Using the metaphor

of the river as a continuum for Arnold's changing notion of nature, he examines them in terms of different worlds. At least two of Culler's worlds are, in themselves, convincing: the forest glade and the burning plain. The first is 'secluded from the world, withdrawn and remote.' In the forest glade, the poet senses no conflict with nature or society. The second world, on the other hand, the burning plain:

Is the very antithesis of the forest glade . . . where the glade was an enclosed, protected place, the plain is precariously open and exposed. It is the Victorian equivalent of the Wasteland . . . the one thing it is not is harmoniously unified. For whereas in the forest glade man was in union with God, nature, and his fellow man, here he is abandoned by God, divorced from nature, and alienated from his fellow man. What is more, he is alienated from himself.

Culler's forest glade, then, represents the withdrawn side of Arnold which relies for its force on the poet's capacity for isolated meditation, while the burning plain represents the antithetical necessity of a cold, hard, rational look at nature. Throughout the early poetry Arnold can be seen vacillating between these two poles, exhausting them and himself in an effort to make life 'fit.' He retires to the comfort of the glade to escape the suffering of the plain only to find himself stifled by the ennui that a life of isolation from social activity brings, finding that he must yet again return to the recognition of a rationalistic universe, and so on. Although these points of view are clearly, as Culler so rightly points out, antithetical, his overall thesis concerns itself with Arnold's 'symbolic language' as 'the ultimate source of their unity.'²⁹ It is not the unity, but the disparity that I wish to pursue, using Culler's idea of the two worlds as analogues for the opposition of romanticism and rationalism -- one portraying the poet in unified isolation, the other placing him in commerce with the external world. In this way, the withdrawal into the forest acts as a paradigm for failed rationalism; the inability of complete withdrawal as a paradigm for the failure of aesthetic experience as a suitable basis for poetry or life. At the heart of this vacillation is the belief that 'the two modes are incompatible.' The poems therefore become stages upon which these two forces act out a kind of psychological drama and, as correlatives for the elements engaged in his inward struggle, they are meant to give some cathartic resolution to Arnold's divided sensibility. Some of the poems may be taken as expressions of the aesthetic/moral dichotomy as found in Arnold's early theorizing,

especially those that deal with the withdrawal from the world, such a poignant theme throughout *The Strayed Reveller*.

By giving the 1849 collection this very title, Arnold might have been imputing to himself something of the characteristics of the poem's main character. The narrative is fairly straightforward. Having woken at dawn, the youth leaves his home 'to join/ The rout early gather'd/ In the town.' However, he is soon induced to wander from the company of his fellows. Following a trail, he comes to the 'smokeless' and 'empty' temple of the goddess Circe. On entering the deserted building, he drinks from the bowl of wine on the altar, becomes drunk, and falls asleep. On awaking, he is confronted by two figures, the goddess herself and the epic traveller Ulysses. During the conversation with Ulysses, the drunkenness begins to wear off, and the Reveller calls once more for the bowl. The poem ends with the refrain of its beginning, the Dionysian, all-consuming:

Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!

On the surface of things, the poem is a story of romantic withdrawal. The youth leaves the general life of the town in order to engage in a dream-like ritual in which he gives in to his passions and senses. While the Strayed Reveller represents the individual seeking refuge in the imagination, Ulysses comes, in the midst of his reverie, as a messenger from the other side, a threat to his celebrations. Like Tiresias, his message is from another world and threatens to upset the equilibrium that the youth has created for himself with the aid of the muselike Circe. The youth denies Ulysses' claim that the poet's lot is also to bear the pain that comes from surveying the world, sharing in the toil of ceaseless labour:

But I, Ulysses,
Sitting on the warm steps,
Looking over the valley,
All day long, have seen,
Without pain, without labour.³⁰

In order to claim harmony with the world, the Reveller must deny the disparity that Ulysses has truly witnessed. In his own mind, he has become like a god, surveying a self-ordered

world from his personal Parnassus. Just at the moment when he seems most certain of his ability to comprehend, his confident vision wavers and the images before him begin to fade. The conversation is over as he calls, once more, for the cup.

Ulysses acts as a foil to both Circe and the youth. He has a kind of dominion over the goddess. In the Homeric account, his crew are turned to swine, but he resists the metamorphosis with the aid of the magic herb given to him by Hermes, significantly the god of commerce and trade. Ulysses' feet are so firmly set in the material world that, we sense, he will never be subject to Circe's intoxication. 'As the best of active men,' says M.G. Sundell, Ulysses 'embodies the sort of life now closed to the Reveller.'³¹ Indeed, his opening speech, while paying just homage to the goddess, is nevertheless accusative. He asks her if she has 'lured hither' the youth with her 'magic,' an accusation which she feels obliged to deny.³² By making the Reveller a *potential* poet and not a symbol for a particular kind of poet, Sundell sees little conflict between Ulysses' speech on the necessity of pain and the youth's denial of its existence: 'By struggling with his intoxication . . . he will be able to see and create more intensely . . . but he will also have to suffer more intensely.'³³ But surely, the main point of the poem is that the youth is not struggling with his intoxication. At just the moment when we sense that the words of Ulysses might possibly reach him, he calls for the cup, again inducing the mesmerizing trance. Keats, Arnold told Clough, 'passionately desiring movement and fulness,' obtained only 'a confused multitudinousness.'³⁴ If, then, there is behind 'The Strayed Reveller' any message about poetry, it is a warning against the dangers of just such a passionate intoxication. And yet 'The Strayed Reveller' presents us with both sides of the problem. Although Ulysses, the 'much enduring,/ Wave-toss'd wanderer' is able to survive in a world of labour and pain, this would all prove too much for the young man. In this way, the life in the forest glade may be equated with personal weakness, but it does produce a desirable effect, and at least for a time, personal peace. It is the easiest option for one who desires unity. However this kind of romanticism must be induced by drunkenness and, as such, is illusory and merely temporal. Rather than being an endorsement of withdrawal,

then, the poem shows the dangers of attempting a complete withdrawal and proclaims the final failure of the kind of expressionism that ignores the reality of world weariness.

'The New Sirens' inhabits the same mytho-emotional landscape and further articulates this warning, revealing something of what the Reveller is eventually to experience when he has finally drunk to the dregs of Circe's cup and the emotional intoxication has worn off. Once again, we are reminded of the classical account and the worldly-wise Ulysses. This time, however, the sirens greet the poet, newly awakened, under a cedar in the forest glade. There is little to distinguish between the poet's perceptions in his dream-state and those of his awaking. Indeed, we wonder if he is awake at all. The difference between the new sirens and those encountered by Ulysses, says the young man in Arnold's precis of the poem, is that:

Your love is romantic, and claims to be satisfying to the spirit

And, he says, I cannot argue against you: for when about to do so, the remembrance of your beauty and life as I witnessed it at sunrise on these lawns occupies my mind, and stops my mouth.³⁵

Like the Reveller, seeing he is in danger of breaking the spell in the grove by conversing with Ulysses, the poet has wilfully allowed himself to be seduced in order to prolong his aesthetic experience. The idea that underlies both of these poems is the illusory nature of such an existence. Eventually the sirens depart, leaving him alone under the cedar musing on the '*alternation* of ennui and excitement.' At the last, Arnold tells Clough, 'the elasticity of the spirits will be worn out, and nothing left but weariness.' The very world-weariness that drives Arnold's solitaries into the forest is inevitably replaced by self-weariness. Not only does the isolation become unbearable, but the conditions that produce this kind of poetry make it quite incomprehensible in logical terms. Arnold must have felt that in exploring the subject matter of the poem he had, like Keats, yielded to the multitudinousness and finally calls the poem 'a mumble.' While Ulysses does not literally appear in the poem, Arnold's concession -- that only weariness resulting from ennui can follow -- is an expression of the worldly tendency of which Ulysses is traditionally representative. Sirens have, after all, wholly negative associations. By the beauty of their songs they seduce seamen to such an extent that they die for want of food. Similarly,

Arnold, while not denying the beauty of such songs, is saying that to throw oneself wholly into the sensual life is to fail to see the practical needs that grant survival in a physical universe. The poet must attend to both and he must never lose sight of his task of 'uniting matter.' But Arnold knows that, with the possible exceptions of Goethe, Sophocles, and Shakespeare, there are really none as strong as Ulysses.

The artistic embodiment of all this conflict is 'Empedocles on Etna,' the poem at the centre of the 1853 Preface polemic. The forces that come into play in the poem are not so much individual characters as varying tendencies within Arnold's own mind, a psychological drama hinging on two conflicting perspectives: the objectivity of the physician Pausanias and the subjectivity of the philosopher-poet Empedocles. Both are accompanied by the constant singing of Calicles, a poet. The dramatic poem traces the final movements in the life of a brooding philosopher 'half mad,/ With exile' who is led by his physician into the mountains in the hope that the influence of Nature will cure him from 'brooding on his wrongs.'³⁶ Their dialogue is continually punctuated by the song of Calicles which, hopes Pausanias, with its poetic power will also give comfort to his master.³⁷ At the beginning of the poem we learn that, while Empedocles once had control over his environment, he has now been deposed by sophistry, thus beginning the piece on a note of disorientation, a theme common to the early poetry. In an effort to make Empedocles forget his anguish, Calicles advises the physician to turn Empedocles' mind to the natural beauty around him and 'Lead him through the lovely mountain paths,/ And keep his mind from preying on itself.'³⁸

There follows a debate on the nature of mind and the rational in which Pausanias represents the objective side of the soul while Empedocles speaks for the autonomous spirit. In order to bolster the old man's relationship with nature, Pausanias dwells on a miracle that he believes he has seen the philosopher recently perform, reinforcing his view that this man has a special power over his environment. Empedocles, himself aware of the emptiness of his work -- no real miracle has taken place -- replies that it is not man's ability to master nature that is important, but that the key to life lies within each individual consciousness:

Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven
Man has a mind with which to plan his safety;
Know that, and know thyself!

With this reference to the Delphic Oracle, a favorite maxim of Arnold's, Empedocles seems to be stating quite unequivocally the strength of the subject as final reality. At this point, however, Pausanias subverts this self-assurance, revealing that Empedocles is not as certain of the autonomy of the self as his original statement had implied. Acting as a foil, the spokesman for the objective tendency, the physician quotes to Empedocles his own uncertainty of the power of mind:

The wit and counsel of man was never clear,
Troubles confound the little wit he has.
Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,
To lead those who trust it.'

Empedocles, confronted with his own lack of faith in the intellect, turns from the security of his earlier position to a bitter diatribe on the confusion within the soul, brought on by its conflict with nature. Subject and object are now only pieces in an eternal game in which man's soul, as merely a divine plaything, is victimized:

The out-spread world to span
A cord the Gods first slung,
And then the soul of man
There, like a mirror, hung,
And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy.

Hither and thither spins
The wind-borne, mirroring soul,
A thousand glimpses wins,
And never sees a whole

The Gods laugh in their sleeve
To watch man doubt and fear,
Who knows not what to believe
Since he sees nothing clear,
And dares stamp nothing false where he finds nothing sure.

This image of the soul as mirror stresses the emptiness of consciousness as a reflector of the universe. As 'gusty toy' it is impossible for the continuously moving soul to focus on any object for a sufficient period. The situation is hopeless, since, even if a view of the object itself were possible, it would merely serve to mislead the mind which seeks to comprehend it. Such is the lot of everyone who desires to find recompense in dogma:

I will not judge that man,
 Howbeit, I judge as lost,
 Whose mind allows a plan
 Which would degrade it most.³⁹

When all positions are self-deceptions, no position, in the modern age, is tenable. To see life steadily and whole, as Sophocles did, is no longer possible. In 1848, Arnold had spoken of the difficulty of dealing with matter in the modern age as opposed to the age of Pericles when there was less 'to be reaped.'⁴⁰ This poem, too, is a lament for a lost time, before the arrival of sophisticated thought, when self-assurance was possible. Empedocles' present confusion, then, is that of Arnold himself, who is left only with the mind's dialogue with itself. The man whose mind was nurtured in another age must live in an alien world 'in ceaseless opposition,' thrown back upon himself for comfort.⁴¹ Only by becoming physically one with nature can Empedocles finally 'cut his oscillations short' bringing him 'to poise.' 'Joy and the outward world,' he declares, 'must die to him.' The last remnants of physical experience will, in death, take their place among the eternal elements -- earth, water, fire, air -- and serve to fulfill the eternal life-cycle. But, muses Empedocles, what of the 'mind' itself? Shall we remain forever 'prisoners of our consciousness'? Resorting to 'past times' may provide a temporary comfort, but eventually 'reality will pluck us back.' Empedocles is finally left speculating on his failure to win self-dependence, finding only one alternative. As he plunges into the volcano, only the song of Calicles is heard, celebrating the immortality of the natural order and 'the stars in their calm.'⁴² The background presence of Calicles, as the young poet, is here ironic. Revelling in the joy of his song, he is oblivious to the trials of his master, perhaps suggesting Arnold's own movement from a poet content to live in isolation -- indeed, even deeming it the only appropriate response towards the confusion of life -- to one actually aware of the inevitability of the 'bewildering confusion' that surrounds him, infringing on his personal peace and demanding expression in action.

This is what makes 'The Forsaken Merman' such a pessimistic poem: there is no possible resolution between the two worlds. Poetry has become, as Arnold says, a 'tearing of oneself to pieces,' perhaps an indication that he feels his poetic individuality on public display, like a secret betrayed. But he soon comes to realize that, unable to retire once

more to his solitude, the hidden world of the Forsaken Merman is a lost ideal. 'The Scholar Gipsy,' written in 1852-3, is perhaps a final effort to regain the pleasure of that original isolation. He desperately admonishes the scholar-turned-rustic to escape the world's influence while there is still time:

This strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife --
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friends' approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.⁴³

By now, however, Arnold has already decided that the time has come for the Scholar Gipsy to impart to the world 'the secret of their art' and tells his sister that he intends 'soon to make some strong resolution in this respect -- and keep it.'⁴⁴ That resolution was not long in coming, and by the end of that year the new edition of poems appeared with the preface that showed his readers no longer the melancholy isolationist, the first sample of a combative prose that would engage him in public debate for the rest of his life.

ii. Interregnum (1853-1867)

In 1851, the year in which he took up a post as Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, there is evidence that Arnold began to abandon his early indecision and to move, if ever so haltingly, towards a life of action and right conduct. 'The aimless and unsettled, but also the open and liberal state of our youth,' he told his sister, 'we *must* perhaps all leave and take refuge in our morality and character.' He even told his prospective bride that he would 'get interested in the schools after a little time' because of their influence on the rising generation of working class children who would inevitably possess 'most of the political power of the country.'⁴⁵ Indeed, Arnold's writing between 1853 and 1867 shows a gradual transformation in the way that he came to regard the reading public and his own role in society, no less apparent in his own parallel movement from isolated poet to writer of combative prose. It would be wrong to assume, however, as Sidney Coulling has, that the first sample of Arnoldian prose, the 1853 Preface to *Poems*, marked 'his

decisive emergence from the melancholy poet of "Empedocles" to the "adequate" critic of his era.⁴⁶ Despite the confident tone of the Preface, there often appears a reluctance on Arnold's part to become an engagé critic as he continues to struggle with the prospects of private and public life, threatening once more to withdraw as 'the melancholy poet.' For at least a decade after the *Poems* (1853) he appears to have made little impression on the English public and since his influence, until 1862, was not to go beyond a relatively small audience, it is far from true that in taking up prose Arnold suddenly emerged as 'the "adequate" critic of his era.'⁴⁷ Indeed, it was not really until 1867 that Arnold appears to have felt completely comfortable with his role as a social critic. Throughout this middle period he feels the conscious need to avoid 'immediate practice' while still attempting to create a rapprochement between literature and life, aesthetics and morality.

Coming as it does between the aestheticism of his youth and the fully-fledged moral discourse of the post-*Culture and Anarchy* writing, the period beginning with the 1853 Preface represents not a watershed but might more accurately be called an interregnum in which we see Arnold's attempt to forge a critical method that makes for not only personal reconciliation but also works as a moral force in society. At best, we would have to say that his attitude to criticism during this period is ambiguous.⁴⁸ What is certain, however, is that the 'caprice' that Arnold felt had marred 'Empedocles' would have to be compensated for with a less egocentric vision. In effect, the writing of the interregnum suggests, first with the Preface and later in the *Essays in Criticism*, Arnold's growing concern with the relationship between the individual and his environment and an accompanying desire to balance a purely inward poetic ideal with the more general functions of criticism.

As the first concerted effort to resolve the conflict between the poetic ego and external values by appealing to objective authority, the Preface marks, without doubt, a significant stage in Arnold's development. A.H. Warren says that Arnold gradually:

Becomes aware of the failure of his sensibilities to generate of itself a meaningful pattern for living; as with Keats, the 'multitudinousness' of experience threatens to confound his 'identity,' and he begins snuffing after 'an Idea of the world' to give shape and point to his existence.⁴⁹

Form demanding depersonalization is the plangent note of Arnold's Preface, so that when he concludes by saying, 'let us, at least, have so much respect for our art as to prefer it to ourselves,' the creative consciousness is virtually gone.⁵⁰ The Preface is, in so many ways, about Arnold himself -- at its heart is anxiety about his own poetry. In other words, when [redacted] wrote this piece, [redacted] Arnold was making a perhaps reluctant, but certainly conscious, decision to participate in the world of men. Whereas the earlier poems had been highly personal, he now claimed that there was 'only one esoteric poem in the collection -- only one, that is calculated to interest the writer and a few esprit maladifs.'⁵¹ But Coulling's insistence that the Preface was almost wholly a rejection of romantic tendencies can only be asserted at the expense of a lingering desire for aesthetic withdrawal that is expressed not only in later writing but tacitly suggested in the Preface itself. After all, the Hellenism that informs Arnold's early prose demands a certain rejection of the modern world in favour of a life in the imagination. Only there, for instance, is resolution to be found. While the mind's dialogue with itself is damaging to the poetic sensibility, so, we can assume, would be a dialogue with one's contemporaries. And yet although the Preface can hardly be regarded as overtly political in content, it nevertheless contains the seeds of reaction in Arnold's development in which the desire for a solution to personal alienation eventually results in his complete absorption in contemporary debate. By attacking 'the dialogue of the mind with itself,' Arnold is engaged in a rear-guard action which represents a novel departure from the earlier aesthetic tendencies as they were expressed in 'Empedocles' in favour of objective standards founded on the inherent suitability of certain poetic 'actions' over artistic expression.⁵² Most of the criticisms that he directs at the 'modern poet' therefore have weighty implications for himself and his own future.

There is a tension at the centre of the 1853 polemic, then, that stems from the presupposition that its author is advocating the rejection of modern debate while actually being engaged in it. Although he is at last addressing his contemporaries, the Preface is itself Arnold's indictment of the nineteenth century as 'an age of spiritual discomfort . . . wanting in moral grandeur.' The ancients and moderns inhabit two very different worlds, according to Arnold, and it is out of a need to contextualize this difference that he turns to

the concept of *Zeitgeist*. Arnold's reading of the ancients yields, for him, a unified, organic realm of literature and sensibility while modernity represents the converse. In a letter to his sister, he speaks of the calming and sobering effect that reading the ancients has on him. Accusations that he has been 'living in the exhausted past' Arnold answers by denying any confidence in his own age and saying that the modern artist should receive his instructions from the poets like Sophocles who 'saw life steadily and whole' and could therefore bring sanity to an otherwise confused age. This reiteration of the inadequacy of the present and superiority of antiquity that had dominated the letters to Clough enables Arnold, in one vast sweep, to cast aside his critics as victims of the 'bewildering confusion of our times.'⁵³ Consequently, he predicts the unpopularity of his ideas, saying that the Preface is unlikely to succeed since the leading reviews will be certain to 'disparage it' or 'take no notice at all.'⁵⁴

Almost certainly these feelings about contemporary society had much to do with a wish to escape civil responsibility and give his energy over completely to poetry. In May 1857 Arnold had told his sister of his strong desire to return to Switzerland, the land of Obermann, to work on his poetry. Writing from the Alps the following year, Arnold expressed his frustration in no uncertain terms:

People do not understand what a temptation there is, if you cannot bear anything not *very good*, to transfer your operations to a region where form is everything. Perfection of a certain kind may there be attained, or at least approached, without knocking yourself to pieces, but to attain or approach perfection in the region of thought and feeling, and to unite this with perfection of form, demands not merely an effort and a labour, but an actual tearing of oneself to pieces . . . unless one can devote one's whole life to poetry.

But the sad fact was that Arnold could not devote his whole life to poetry; in modern times, only Goethe, he says, was capable of keeping responsible commerce with the world while being able to 'throw himself . . . into poetry.' The frustration that Arnold feels at not being able to spend all his energy on writing verse only reinforced his view that he was living in an age and a nation not conducive to artistic production. 'Only in the best poetical epochs,' he says, can you 'descend into yourself and produce the best of your thought and feeling naturally,' an idea to which he would return in 'The Function of Criticism' years later.⁵⁵

That his motives for adhering to the classical tradition stemmed not so much from a firm conviction (as the later writing shows) as a need, at that particular moment in his development, for personal resolution is revealed in the conclusion to the Preface itself. The poet, he says, 'will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction . . . in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time.' While on the surface the appeal is to external standards, Arnold's esteem for the ancients might, then, be regarded as another kind of theoretical escapism, the result of his need to quell the conflict he feels between the world and his own art. The real enemy, he asserts, is not a poet's critics but uncertainty: 'In the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients.'⁵⁶ The need for 'the sound and true' is something that, in the early poetry, was deemed impossible where self-dependence was the only consolation. Turning from the early Stoicism, he now submits himself to outward forms, substituting the shifting sands of the self for a 'solid footing' in tradition. From all this, it is plain that the Preface is a reactionary piece. Its tone, says A.H. Warren, 'a little too positive, a little too assured, suggests that underneath there may be something factitious.'⁵⁷ If, on the surface, Sophocles represents Arnold's ideal creative personality, one cannot help feeling that the writers with whom he has most in common are his own Dante, Guérin, Aurelius and Joubert, individuals who were also acutely aware of the inevitable disparities of life.

Although still employed as a school inspector, his appointment as Professor of Poetry at Oxford between 1857 and 1867 was to give Arnold something of a reprieve from practical concerns, enabling him to develop a body of criticism that explored his longstanding interest in aesthetics while still assuaging his developing preoccupation with morals. In a sense, the Oxford professorship must have represented to Arnold a half-way house between the time of his youth as a 'lover of Isis' and the tedious realism of the Education Office. For a start, the city was filled with memories for him, all clothed in the mysterious light of the Middle Ages. It was only natural that a return to the environment of his poetic youth would fire his imagination. Yet he had himself changed. He had

inculcated a greater sense of responsibility when, as he had told his sister, he chose to make the passage from carefree youth to the staunch morality of manhood. Coming in the middle of this passage, the professorship shows Arnold with a foot in each world; consequently, some of the lectures that he delivered at Oxford suggest the duality of his nature at this time and read almost like a public servant's theoretical justification of a lingering desire for poetic solitude.

In the inaugural address, 'On the Modern Element in Literature,' Arnold did little more than reiterate the call for classical form that he had voiced in 1853. Soon afterwards, though, he was to return to the 'modern element' in the form of an essay on Dante that gives a clue to the remaining desire for poetic retreat that lies below the surface of an otherwise self-assured discourse. If nothing else, 'The Modern Element in Dante' suggests that the cut-and-dried classicism with which he had thrown himself into 'actions' over 'expression' had been little more than a temporary solution to an earlier poetic dilemma. From the 'wholeness' granted by the confident external standards of fifth century Athens Arnold now turned to the mysteriously poetic Middle Ages with which he had always associated Oxford, a world of private revelations more suited to the Strayed Reveller than the eminently sane Pericles. While in 1853 Arnold had wholly rejected 'the mind's dialogue with itself' as an aberration serving only to obstruct action, the Dante lecture is, in part, a justification of the poet's removal from the world into the realm of pure spiritual consciousness:

We know how the followers of the spiritual life tend to be antinomian in what belongs to the cultural life: they do not attach much importance to such irregularity themselves; it is their fault, as complete men, that they do not; it is the fault of the spiritual life, as a complete life, that it allows this tendency: by dint of despising the outward life, it loses the control of this life, and of itself when in contact with it.

Although he begins with this apparent restatement of the 1853 rejection of artistic solipsism, Arnold does not go on to assert that the individual consciousness requires fixed external standards to overcome fragmentary existence and so achieve 'completeness.' Rather, there appears now a clear distinction between the 'spiritual life,' an internal condition, and the external reality that previously had been so important to his perception of the poet's place in the world of noble actions. It would have to be said that, in practical

terms, the pursuit of the spiritual would render the medieval as ineffectual as the drunken poet in the Reveller's forest glade, but, says Arnold, 'my present business is not to praise or blame Dante's practical conduct of his life, but to make clear his peculiar mental and spiritual constitution.' Despite this disclaimer, Arnold's approach is not merely descriptive: the essay, at times highly judicious, shows him not only in sympathy with Dante's spirituality but even as an advocate of the inward life. Those who dwell on the mere biographical data surrounding his life misunderstand Dante's vision since they do not perceive that his:

Vital impulse . . . is towards reverie and spiritual vision . . . the task Dante sets himself is not the task of reconciling poetry and reality, of giving to each its due part, of supplementing the one by the other; but the task of sacrificing the world to the spirit, of making the spirit all in all, of effacing the world in the presence of the spirit.

Arnold could not have chosen a more appropriate subject than Dante's Beatrice for an examination of the way that perception transforms and makes personal the objective world. The relevance of her flesh and blood existence to the composition of the *Vita Nuova* had been the subject of endless debate, a debate that under 'the conditions of art,' Arnold argues, is irrelevant to Dante's true genius. The true significance for Arnold is the success with which Dante set his own aesthetic conditions, regardless of external standards, so that while the artist cannot dispense with the basis of fact and reality, art requires the 'freest handling of the object.' Knowing the ever-present danger of being too close to the object, Dante sets himself apart from it with the result that his art exhibits 'an irresistible bent to the inward life, the life of imagination, vision and ecstasy; with an inherent impatience of the outward life, the life of distraction, jostling, mutual concession.' In some ways, then, Dante represents Arnold of the early poetry desiring the unity that withdrawal from an unpoetic environment brings, one who does not even concern himself with the fusion of poetry and reality, 'a born solitary' sacrificing 'the world to the spirit.' Thus, 'when his genius comes to its perfection,' and the author of the *Divine Comedy* composes his immortal poem, 'Beatrice is spirit altogether.'⁵⁸ By suggesting that Dante's 'expression' is far more significant than the actuality of his 'subject,' the prescriptions of 1853 are therefore rendered irrelevant, making his central thesis a direct contradiction of the Preface.

Although Arnold was to withhold the Dante lecture from the *Essays in Criticism*, this same tension between individual aesthetic sensibility and external standards lies at the heart of many of the pieces he chose for publication. Never again was he to defend such extreme antinomian inwardness, nor indeed to advocate the completely objective non-personal, but throughout the *Essays* and in his treatment of individual writers therein Arnold appears to be seeking a balance between the regulation of the Preface and the spirituality of Dante that often finds articulation in a series of definitive opposites: genius and intelligence; poetry and prose; cosmopolitanism and provincialism; disinterestedness and engagement; and, of course, Hebraism and Hellenism. 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' stands at the centre of the collection as an attempt to formulate these opposites and thereby bring unity to the *Essays*. For all its strident language, though, there is an overall tentativeness that is often betrayed by obvious theoretical contradictions. If the book has an underlying theme, it is the continual restatement of the question, 'What is the true function of criticism?' In response, Arnold suggests that true criticism should not confine itself to literature only but '*the best that is known and thought*' in every area of human endeavour.⁵⁹ At the same time, only by keeping aloof from 'the practical view of things,' he says, will the critic maintain a disinterested stance. Arnold appears to want it both ways: disinterested criticism must be politically disengaged while, at the same time, influencing society for good. While claiming to reject 'immediate practice' and seeking to establish a self-conscious criticism on 'the free play of the mind,' the *Essays in Criticism* nevertheless assume the right for criticism to make moral proclamations. Many of the logical problems that emerge from the *Essays* are therefore founded on the old aesthetic/moral dichotomy that had haunted Arnold since his earliest days. How can the critic argue for the value of the 'personal estimate' while maintaining the importance of objective judgment? How can criticism avoid polemical discourse yet be persuasive when dealing with controversial issues? How can a truly flexible critic legislate disinterested morality? That two contradictory tendencies were at work here was to find evidence in the conflicting ways in which later critics came to regard Arnoldian criticism. Walter Pater and his followers were to put the emphasis on personal perception while others affirmed a

belief in the inherent quality of 'the object itself.' This Arnoldian tension between the buried life of pure intellectual perception and the life of active public duty, not surprisingly, finds articulation in not only 'The Function of Criticism' but also in the individual writers with whom he chooses to deal.

Arnold has understandably been criticized for the indulgent choice of Maurice de Guérin as a subject for one of his *Essays in Criticism*, but if his choice of Guérin is taken as the treatment of a writer with whom he shared profound sympathies, then there is nothing eccentric about it at all. Perhaps he did not achieve the personal perfection of Dante, but Guérin appealed to Arnold for his similarly profound spirituality. As a recluse, Arnold's Guérin keeps himself aloof from society and, unlike Keats whose emphasis was on the outward and sensuous, it was the 'mystic' and 'inward' quality of Nature that attracted him. Arnold is careful to establish, however, Guérin's avoidance of the extreme inwardness of Dante; for Arnold, to whom the subjectivity of complete self reliance is no longer an attractive option, it is poetry's ability to act as an agent for rapprochement between man and the world that Guérin's work comes to symbolize:

The grand power of poetry is its interpretative power; by which I mean, not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them. When this sense is awakened in us, as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us as no other can.

By reconciling man 'with himself and the universe,' poetry interprets in two ways: through 'natural magic' and 'moral profundity,' one appealing to 'the outward world,' the other to 'the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature.'⁶⁰ If in the past Arnold had seen no solution to the alternations of ennui and excitement that arise from the conflict of imagination and reality, then this revised view of the reconciling function of poetry -- as a means of bridging the divide between subject and object -- suggests an attempt to overcome the dilemma of Keatsian 'multitudinousness' on the one hand and 'the mind's dialogue with itself' on the other.

Shakespeare, for one, appears to Arnold to have achieved something of a balance in this respect, and yet 'even in him the balance leans; his expression tends to become too little

sensuous and simple, too much intellectualised.' Arnold's diagnosis of the failure of his Romantic forbears derives from exactly this fear of imbalance, their principle weakness being an overtly internalized perception of their relationship with nature. Perhaps the most convincing evidence of Arnold's own transformation from this kind of extreme aestheticism is the revision of his attitude towards his childhood mentor, Wordsworth. His earlier admiration for the poet's inwardness is now qualified by the criticism that Wordsworth had 'retired (in Middle-Age phrase) into a monastery;' by thus isolating himself, 'he voluntarily cut himself off from the modern spirit,' making him guilty of the typically Romantic failure to 'apply modern ideas to life.' In the 'Heine' essay this concept of the 'modern spirit' therefore comes to signify not a negative influence, as in 1853, but a benevolent zeitgeist, that body of progressive thinking that challenges stock notions and the caprice of individualist thought. Here, too, the theme of engagement and isolation is also conspicuous. Heine, whose greatest achievement, for Arnold, lay in his ability to challenge conventional ways of thinking nevertheless successfully avoided becoming directly engaged in political issues. 'His direct political action was null,' a situation not to be regretted, says Arnold, since 'direct political action is not the true function of literature, and Heine was a born man of letters.' For Arnold, who saw himself as primarily a literary critic -- 'a humble citizen' in the 'Republic of Letters' -- the ability of Heine to fight in 'the liberation war of humanity' while, at the same time, to resist the temptation of becoming entangled in political controversy was exemplary; so too, for Arnold the frustrated poet, was Heine's admission that, for all his love of verse, it had always remained nothing more than 'a divine plaything.'⁶¹

The 'Heine' essay may be regarded as a prototype for much that was to be addressed in *Culture and Anarchy*. Standing against the background of German Philistinism, this figure represents, for Arnold, the epitome of the man of culture. He understands, in accordance with Goethe's 'putting the standard . . . inside every man,' that personal perfection and intellectual deliverance are closely allied, yet there is wanting in Heine the necessary accompanying 'moral deliverance.' Again Arnold admits the dangers

involved in the pursuit of a too exclusive Hellenism, warning that without moral authority, the outcome of 'free play of mind' will be only 'a half-result.'⁶²

The conflict between personal intellectual standards and public moral duty is the theme of the Aurelius essay, accordingly structured around a comparison of the 'outward troubles and inward perplexity' of an emperor who, like Arnold, considered himself at odds with his age. External values lay upon Aurelius an intolerable burden 'well-nigh greater than he can bear,' so that, despite the nobility of his soul, his actions towards Christianity show him as the victim of an antagonistic zeitgeist. The prejudices of his age, thus impeding his disinterested view of the object, make it 'impossible for him to see Christianity *as it really was*.' That the early church was open to misunderstanding Arnold explains by the movement's inward quality, its 'anti-social' nature, derived from its origin 'in the catacombs, not on the Palatine.'⁶³ Nurtured in privacy, ancient Christianity is portrayed as the product of Hellenic vitality, drawing strength from its introverted character. As an organically changing community, the early church, without any prescribed scriptural canons or creeds, represents for Arnold a powerfully poetic symbol. After Constantine faith became formal and, by making the Christian church a social body, says Arnold, its inner strength became depleted. Because 'the kingdom of heaven is within you,' the very language of religion is likely to be misunderstood, he says, a point well illustrated by the old controversy regarding the suitability of outward works as evidence for inward spirituality. In 'Dante' Arnold had likened the followers of the spiritual life to the Antinomians, a sect whose emphasis on personal faith had caused them to dispense with moral law; in this, one of Arnold's earliest treatments of religion, he appears again to be thinking about the conflict between personal faith and verifiable experience.

By excusing the inappropriateness of Aurelius's actions towards the proponents of this inward faith as the symptom of a decadent age, he then chooses to pass 'from his outward to his inward life'. Structurally, his approach is based on this division. Arnold's Aurelius draws his strength, like Dante and the early church, from his profound inwardness, the contents of his journal being 'incomparably more valuable than the external form.' Although faced, because of his social station, with the necessity for social

interaction, a sense of the disparate nature of the world forces him to nurture the inward, though he soon finds that isolation from the natural world leads only to an alternative internal disunity. Refusing to brood on 'the misery of his condition,' he instead dwells on 'the inspiring thought that man is blessed with the power to escape from it.' "'Suppose that thou hast detached thyself from the natural unity,'" Aurelius tells himself, "'it is in thy power again to unite thyself.'"⁶⁴ Aurelius's struggle to unite matter -- subjective and objective -- is not unlike Arnold's own and provides further evidence of a significant departure from the clashing inward being of Empedocles.

If Aurelius provided Arnold with a sympathetic expression of his own conflicting sensibility, it was to Joubert that he owed his belief that personal unity could not only be achieved but that the search for personal perfection could actually be compatible with, and even inform, external values. Joubert, too, knew what it was to live in an 'alien' intellectual environment. While his friends became increasingly famous and immersed themselves in politics, Joubert, Arnold tells us, 'remained in the shade.' (One thinks here of the relative obscurity of Arnold's own work at this time against the fame rapidly being achieved by his old Rugby and Oxford contemporaries). Refusing to throw himself into public issues, he preferred instead 'to hide his life' in the cultivation of his own personality, striving to achieve 'balance of soul.' Refusing to bow the knee to Hebraic values, Arnold's Joubert is nevertheless aware of the dangers of a self-indulgent Hellenism which he calls:

Life without actions; life entirely resolved into affections and half-sensual thoughts; do-nothingness setting up for a virtue; cowardliness with voluptuousness; fierce pride with nullity underneath it; the strutting phrase of the most sensual of vagabonds.

Joubert's great achievement therefore lies 'in the union of *soul* with intellect,' and it is this same sentiment which leads Arnold to coin a phrase that comes to stand as an epigram for his own desire to unite aesthetics and morality, to give poetic values contemporary credibility while at the same time arguing for the relevance of such values in traditionally non-aesthetic areas: 'the end and aim of all literature . . . is, in truth . . . *a criticism of life*.'⁶⁵ It is hardly surprising that this dictum in particular was one over which subsequent generations of critics were to wrangle. It stands for Arnold's chief mission in the *Essays in*

Criticism: the reassertion, in modern life, of the classical belief in the ameliorizing power of poetry and the recovery of artistic experience from ultra-personal isolation.

The movement from Dante to Guérin, Heine, Aurelius, and Joubert highlights the shift that had already occurred in Arnold's development. Although 'Dante' was conceived after 1853, it shows a lingering desire for poetic isolation. He is all poet and, as such, has found resolution in the spirit, the kind of confidence that Arnold the poet had experienced in 1845. These others, though, are more in tune with Arnold's later critical spirit; despite his desire for 'profound inwardness,' he is painfully aware of the struggle that exists between the spirit and the world and the accompanying responsibility that he must face in the social sphere. Neither is this conflict restricted to Arnold's critical statements; there are not surprisingly manifest correspondences in his private life, especially in the letters where, between his appointment as Inspector and election as Poetry Professor, he expresses an increasing interest in political issues. 'How interesting are public affairs!' he remarks animatedly while composing his pamphlet on *England and the Italian Question*. Indeed, letters from this period are filled with excited commentary about continental life and society. Even as late as 1861, he acknowledges that 'public matters are . . . absorbingly interesting.' His involvement with the Newcastle Commission and the campaign against the Revised Code suggest that, by 1862, he has become completely engrossed in educational issues. This early hint at a developing interest in social questions is not without ambivalence, however; much of the correspondence throughout the 1850s and early 1860s shows that Arnold saw himself as the poet *manqué* driven, by financial necessity, into a life of exile in officialdom. In 1861, for instance, he determines to give up criticism and devote the following ten years to poetry for fear that he might become 'prosaic altogether.' Perhaps thinking again of Goethe's ability to combine practical responsibility and artistic genius, he writes, in 1862, that although 'routine office work' provides 'a good balance to . . . literary work' it is only by really throwing himself into poetry that he can avoid being overcome by the 'irrationality' of the Education Office. Over subsequent years he was to make numerous attempts to escape absorption in other matters and retrieve what he could of a neglected poetic gift. In 1863 this conflict of interests appears to have come to a head.

'Next year,' he continues to tell himself, 'I mean to do nothing for the magazines . . . but hope to do some poetry and to ripen.' That same year, however, he reports with enthusiasm that 'it is very animating to think that one has at last a chance of *getting at* the English public. Such a public it is, and such a work as one wants to do with it.' Disraeli, Arnold recounts, has lately praised his poetry while saying that, unlike Cicero, he himself has given up literature because he cannot engage in both spheres at once. That choice is not so cut-and-dried for Arnold who continues to hope that:

I shall come some day and see the honour that has been done to my poems. One is from time to time seized and irresistibly carried along by a temptation to treat political, or religious, or social matters, directly; but after yielding to such a temptation I always feel myself recoiling again, and disposed to touch them only so far as they can be touched through poetry.⁶⁶

By 1867, though, he seems to have made a significant concession in this respect.

iii. *Cultural Phase (1867-1888)*

In his final Oxford lecture, Arnold's mind turned, more obviously than ever, to socio-political matters; no longer suggesting the exclusivity of individual expression from public discourse, he now recognized that both were intimately linked:

The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward.⁶⁷

Whereas before he had made a distinction between the poetic sensibility and public duty, now Arnold began to attempt, more than ever, a reconciliation between the idea of personal development and social conscience; the attention that he gave to temporal controversies like the Hyde Park riots and the Deceased Wife's Sister reflect what he identified as 'an almost painful anxiety about public matters' and, despite statements to the contrary, undermine continuing claims to avoid immediate practice.⁶⁸ Half ironic (but also half serious) he makes his awareness of this transformation in his own purpose public:

It cannot but acutely try a tender conscience to be accused, in a practical country like ours, of keeping aloof from the work and hope of a multitude of earnest-hearted men, and of merely toying with poetry and aesthetics. So it is with no little sense of relief that I find myself thus in the position of one who makes a contribution in aid of the practical necessities of our times.⁶⁹

By the application of criticism to life, Arnold's new aim, in short, is to create a force for active social change.

Some later commentators are quite mistaken, despite this increased sense of moral obligation, to regard 1867 as the point at which Arnold relinquished his aesthetic sense. Although subtitled 'an essay in political and social criticism,' *Culture and Anarchy*, both in its language and content, may not be seen as an outright departure from literary matters but yet another attempt to appease the longstanding conflict between art and ethics; while *Culture and Anarchy* represents Arnold's most sustained treatment of social questions, there is throughout a conscious effort to maintain the importance of aesthetics to not only individual development but also civic cohesion. This ongoing concern with the moral influence of literary values is no less apparent in the theological writing of the seventies and is finally consummated in Arnold's return to literary subjects shortly before his death, finding its boldest pronouncement in the 1880 essay on 'The Study of Poetry.'

That there always continues to be an underlying aesthetic emphasis in Arnold's social theorizing is evident from his claim that culture, in its use of language, is 'like poetry,' its proponents being both 'men of culture and poetry.' Reiterating the mission that he had envisioned for literary criticism two years earlier (an effort to promote 'the best that has been known and thought in the world'), he prescribes a combination of 'reading, observing, and thinking' as the means by which an individual might approach the cultural ideal. Despite the general movement from 1867 towards polemical discourse, then, Arnold retained not only his concern for aesthetics but also his earlier advocacy of personal perfection. Distancing himself from both the mechanism of political reform and the 'external culture' of Barbarianism, he continued to advocate the need to 'stand aloof from the arena of politics, and rather try and promote . . . an inward working.' At the same time, he wanted his readers to understand that such an emphasis on the internal condition did not signify a return to the old quietism, a selfish pursuit having no bearing on social issues of the day. In a rejoinder to Frederic Harrison, who had accused him of 'trifling with aesthetics and poetical fancies,' Arnold denies the indulgent belletristic image of his new Hellenism, suggesting that the spontaneous consciousness, 'when it is allowed to play

freely and disinterestedly upon the actual facts of the social condition,' is more likely to combat poverty and 'to better that condition' than any misplaced Liberal nostrum.⁷⁰ Throughout the last two decades of his life, Arnold tries, more than ever, to avoid either extreme aestheticism or outright moralism and, by attempting to devise an artistic theory which will inform ethical values, claims for criticism the role of cultural centrality.

The desire, in *Culture and Anarchy*, to assuage the tensions between self and society, poetry and politics, that had plagued Arnold since his earliest days is perhaps most apparent in his use of various rhetorical strategies; the very language in which he couches his social criticism indicates a desire for resolution in one who suffered anxiety over the passing of his artistic gift while acquiring a greater sense of public duty. At the centre of this accommodating strategy is the word 'culture' itself, a significant choice since its etymology alone suggests both aesthetic and social connotations. Yet, almost too vague to support its own weight, the Arnoldian concept of culture is more functional than descriptive, its rhetorical purpose being, at times, more important than its actual meaning. Conspicuous only by its absence, its definition is, at best, only approximate; as something that is absent from English society, it works as the panacea which, when fostered, will bring about totality, intelligence, and excellence. The two-fold claim that Arnold makes for this missing force is revealing, coming as it does from one who has struggled for years with the conflict between the life of profound introspection and that of affirmative action:

[Culture] moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good. As, in the first view of it, we took for its worthy motto Montesquieu's words: 'To render an intelligent being yet more intelligent!' so, in the second view of it, there is no better motto which it can have than these words of Bishop Wilson: 'To make reason and the will of God prevail!'⁷¹

The same fusion of the individual and the general that he had attempted in the *Essays in Criticism* therefore occurs throughout Arnold's social and religious writing often finding expression in the use of opposing concepts that show this two-fold character of culture at work. One of the means by which he closes the gap between personal and social development, for instance, is in the complementary concepts of 'best self' and 'state.' In the best of all possible worlds the state, or 'nation in its corporate and collective character,' is made up of individuals who have cast off their natural humanity in order to pursue

cultured perfection and so achieve their 'best selves.' As the 'organ of our collective best self,' Arnold's state represents a similar authority to that he had prescribed in his lecture on the French Academy. As a means of tempering individual will, the ideal state allows for the pursuit of personal perfection only insofar as it adheres to high standards. Specific executive proposals for national administration would undoubtedly have represented, to Arnold, a move towards rigid authoritarianism and away from the Hellenic 'free play of mind,' but the state remains for him a spiritual ideal and, as such, is able to coexist with individual 'humane' values in a symbiotic relationship that verges on the tautological. While the existence of Arnold's state concept (finding its own identity in the collaboration of ideal individuals) serves to keep the personal will from capriciously 'doing as it likes,' the best self, if truly pursuing that ideal, works to the same end, so that the outcome of all this cooperation is the harmonious blending of self and society and, by implication, aesthetic taste and moral values.

In a similar way, 'Hellenism' and 'Hebraism' become paradigms for the two sides of the Arnoldian personality, one representing flexible intelligence and 'spontaneity of consciousness,' the other 'strictness of conscience,' governed by morality. 'Hellenism,' with all of its associations, could therefore accommodate the free-flowing consciousness that had possessed the Strayed Reveller, while the practical-mindedness of Ulysses found justification in the value granted to 'Hebraism.' Throughout history, says Arnold, these ideals have been 'rivals dividing the world between them,' causing most commentators 'to exalt and enthrone one of the two' at the expense of the other. What is really needed, he says, is the realization that each contributes to human development. By asserting that neither is, in itself, good or bad but that an equal distribution of both makes for a healthy individual and society, Arnold is once more attempting to balance the tendencies between which he has oscillated for years. Instead of attempting to deny disparity, he finally comes to the point of realizing that the two sides of his personality 'arise out of the wants of human nature,' and only by fostering the alternation between 'a man's intellectual and moral impulses' does 'the human spirit proceed.'⁷² By working for harmony and totality, then, and recognizing the importance of these two tendencies, culture represents the

construct by which Arnold addresses and, in *Culture and Anarchy*, keeps at bay the old anxiety of the aesthetic-moral conflict.

The underlying desire to fuse Hebrew and Hellene, morality and aesthetics, becomes even more apparent in Arnold's work of the seventies. Deciding in 1869, as he told Lady de Rothschild, that he would write no more on politics, the quite substantial body of theology that he began that same year shows an even greater concern with the need to solve the conflict between poetry and action.⁷³ *Saint Paul and Protestantism* and *Literature and Dogma*, despite their subject matter, were not departures from literary critical concerns any more than *Culture and Anarchy* was. Arnoldian criticism, by addressing subjects that had traditionally stood outside the literary domain, was once again challenging the autonomy of aesthetic experience while claiming for it an important role in the moral life of society. The point of departure for each of Arnold's excursions into theology is that most contemporary religious errors derive from the attempt to glean literal meaning from religious texts whose language is 'poetic.' Rather than approaching the Bible with the apparatus of logical reason, says Arnold, what is really needed is 'the tact which letters . . . alone can give.' The criticism that many readers had found in Arnold's use of words and phrases only rhetorical significance but little exact meaning he now met with the assertion that literary language was, by necessity, only approximate:

Bible-language is not scientific; but the language of . . . poetry and eloquence, approximate language thrown out at certain objects of consciousness which it does not pretend to define fully . . . at the same time . . . this language deals with facts of positive experience most momentous and real.⁷⁴

Here, we might say, is the key to Arnold's own critical language from *Culture and Anarchy* onwards. In an attempt to preserve the aesthetic side of his method while simultaneously forging an effective agent with which to address general experience, he invokes literature as the mysterious force which unconsciously informs morality.

Equating poetic language, as always, with a profound inwardness and opposing it to the mechanical observance of external values, Arnold once more turned to the excessive Hebraism of his countrymen. As the historical successor of Puritanism, English nonconformism tended to give 'exclusive attention to the moral side of our nature,' says

Arnold, 'to doing rather than knowing.' Whereas Puritanism begins with 'authority,' Arnold sees the central message of Paul as 'psychological.' Similarly, the appearance of Christ is interpreted as a break from the Old Testament emphasis on the legislation of behaviour on a national and social scale, to a more 'personal religion.'⁷⁵ Jesus, observes Arnold, taught his disciples to attend to the 'inward' rather than 'outward' and, as ever, Arnold uses such evidence to support his view that any community, religious or otherwise, can only progress after its individuals have attended to their own development. This is why the concept of 'righteousness' appeals so much to Arnold: whereas in the Old Testament it signified the Law, a form of codified behaviour, it could also take on, in the teachings of Christ, a more personal and spiritual connotation (another example of the way in which the desire for rapprochement is inherent in Arnoldian vocabulary).

Lest he be accused of advocating an overtly subjective spiritualism that might lead to moral degeneracy and social inefficiency, Arnold was careful to establish that, in his view of things, conduct stood for 'three-fourths of life.' Refusing to throw himself wholeheartedly into a sensual aestheticism, he was similarly reluctant to claim without reservation the opposite moralism. 'The danger of the one world is weariness in well-doing,' he says, while 'the danger of the other is sterile raptures and immoral fanaticism.' The importance of Paul to the Arnoldian programme is his centrality and his ability to 'take from both worlds what can help him and leave what cannot.' This great figure, standing astride two traditions, and like Joubert intent upon 'harmonising Hebraism and Hellenism,' gives Arnold yet another symbol with which to work out this effort of reconciliation. Paul's main achievement, he tells us, is that 'he instinctively sought to combine' the world of 'rationalism' and 'moral choice' with the 'mystical' world of 'sympathy' and 'emotion.' Here too was a character who felt the conflict between internal and external values but had found in the personality of Christ :

A point in which the mighty world outside man, and the weak world inside him, seemed to combine for his salvation. The struggling stream of duty, which had not volume enough to bear him to his goal, was suddenly reinforced by the immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion.⁷⁶

Even his definition of religion itself, '*morality touched by emotion*,' suggesting the same linguistic ambiguity that had given Arnold 'culture,' is yet another example of the rhetorical strategy by which externals are fused with inward values. While his theology -- with its commitment to conduct as 'three-fourths of life' -- represents, on the surface, then, a movement towards philosophical moralism, that fourth quarter remains, for Arnold, the crucial part. Like the portion of the iceberg which lies below the surface, the inward, mystical, and spiritual aspect of life is that part which informs and vivifies all the rest.

That he gives deference to outward ethical considerations in the form of a necessary Hebraism cannot detract from the fact that, at this point, Arnold is often dangerously close to embracing an almost wholly subjective Hellenism in his treatment of not only literature, but society and religion as well. While T.S. Eliot and others were to see the second series of *Essays in Criticism* as an attempt to replace morality and philosophical thought with an insipid kind of aestheticism, Arnold's final return to literary criticism in 1879 was interpreted by Swinburne as an attempt to smuggle morals into a purely artistic domain. Both of these responses are understandable, but nevertheless stem from a basic failure to comprehend Arnold's lifelong search for middle ground between art and morality, for in the mature literary essays, Arnold continues the work in which he had been engaged since 1867: the definition of an aesthetically based ethical discourse.

The main theme of 'The Study of Poetry' is both the social and personal influence of art. The claims that are made in this essay for its ameliorizing power depend on an almost radical redefinition of poetry itself. Earlier, he had asserted that the most potent part of religion was its aesthetic content; now art appears to take on a life of its own, even challenging the place of traditional Christianity as a means of redemption. Although Arnold had long argued for the importance of the Hellenic element in religion and the 'interpretative power' of literature as 'a criticism of life,' in 'The Study of Poetry' the role prescribed for aesthetics suggests a force autonomous from all mundane ethical considerations:

We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been customary to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called for higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us.

'Wordsworth,' written a year before, had been a call for the redefinition of concepts like 'morality' and 'thought.' While Wordsworthians had looked in their poet's verse for formal philosophical meaning, Arnold argued that 'under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth,' such dogmatic concepts were of only minor importance compared with Wordsworth's own poetic vision. This does not mean, as is so often thought, that Arnold was creating an aesthetic religion, but that by this stage in his development he has ceased to make any fundamental distinction between life and art. There is implicit a strong warning, not only against formalized moral systems but also against a poetry which is indifferent to morality. 'A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life*,' he says, 'a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life.'⁷⁷ Swinburne was, perhaps justifiably, exasperated by what he regarded as the banality of this opposition of life and art:

All sane men must be willing to concede the truth of an assertion which he seems to fling down as a challenge from the ethical critic to the aesthetic -- that a school of poetry divorced from any moral idea is a school of poetry divorced from life.⁷⁸

What Swinburne seems to misunderstand (perhaps because he is himself the model aesthete) is that, while it may not be expressing anything unique, Arnoldian criticism finds its very justification as an act which does, in fact, challenge separate ethical and aesthetical discourses and presupposes the existence of a mediating central position.

As always, Arnold is careful to dissociate himself from anything that may be interpreted as a decadent strain in his view of art. When he comes to Keats and Shelley, therefore, it is to issue a warning against an aestheticism which is based on the autonomy of emotional and artistic experience from moral values. Arnold follows Keats only insofar as he appears to want a similar rapprochement between art and life -- 'Truth is beauty; beauty truth,' for instance meets with wholehearted approval -- but when he perceives in Keats such an overabundance of sensuality that emotion tends to obscure thought Arnold rapidly draws back: Keats has 'natural magic;' however:

For the second great part of poetic interpretation, for that faculty of moral interpretation which is in Shakespeare, and is informed by him with the same power of beauty as his naturalistic interpretation, Keats was not ripe.

A similar criticism is levelled against Shelley who, for all his ability to write beautiful verse, effects no influence on society. Shelley the man as well as the poet, says Arnold, 'is not sane.' While he may be 'a vision of beauty and radiance' he is guilty of 'availing nothing, effecting nothing;' then that notorious echo: 'And in poetry, no less than life, he is "a beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."⁷⁹

If 'Keats' and 'Shelley' represent a response to the forest glade that had similarly seduced the Strayed Reveller from his responsibilities in the real world, 'Amiel' and 'Tolstoi,' both written in the last year of his life, present Arnold's final optimistic reaffirmation of the possibility of an aesthetic that allows for the experience of beauty without detracting from the necessity of action. Both essays can be read as a concluding call for unity and totality, and an outright dismissal of extremism on either side, a rejection of formalism on the one hand and subjectivism on the other. Amiel's moral philosophy, technically superior as it was to that of Senancour, the creator of Arnold's beloved 'Obermann,' was in the end futile. Philosophic thought, as the construct of formal logic, has, as ever, little appeal:

My sense for philosophy, I know, is as far from satisfying Mr Frederic Harrison as my sense for Hugo's poetry is from satisfying Mr Swinburne. But I am too old to change and too hardened to hide what I think.⁸⁰

Neither the system of positivism nor the gospel of aestheticism offers to Arnold any conclusive solutions, but each has contributed to the dynamic tension that led him to search, throughout his life, for a reconciliation and point of centrality from which to mediate between both.⁸¹

It is, in part, because of this search for resolution -- from the earlier statements of conflict in the poetry and letters to Clough; to the forging of a critical language in the sixties with which an aesthetic temperament could address moral issues; and finally to the reaffirmation of the power of poetry to address, and finally solve, the aesthetic-moral dilemma -- that Arnold was to command the interest of so many of his immediate successors. Inheriting the Victorian sense of cultural crisis, many writers at century's end continued to address the Arnoldian dilemma of political engagement versus aesthetic withdrawal -- perhaps more so as the distinction between aestheticism and social awareness

became even more obvious with the simultaneous rise of the mutually antagonistic tendencies of *fin de siècle* and modern socialism. That Arnold functioned and continues to function as a potential mediator between such antagonistic extremes is recognized by E.D. Hirsch who sees in Arnoldian sweetness and light 'the recurrent tendencies of literary criticism.' This connection Hirsch attributes to the fact that 'Arnold saw that neither the aesthetic nor the moralistic attitude to life and literature can be reduced to its contrary.'⁸² It is little wonder that, in the ensuing series of battles between aesthetes and moralists, the image of Arnold was so often at stake. One result of his concerted balancing act was the ease with which Arnold could so easily be made to stand for either extreme, and frequently was.

Notes

- ¹While Arnold was at Oriel, a concerned Clough wrote to Shairp: 'Matt is full of Parisianism; Theatres in general, and Rachel in special: he enters the room with a chanson of Beranger's on his lips -- for the sake of French words almost conscious of tune: his carriage shows him in fancy parading the Rue de Rivoli; and his hair is guiltless of English scissors: he breakfasts at 12, and never dines in Hall, and in the week or 8 days rather (for 2 Sundays must be included) he has been to Chapel *once*.' [Quoted in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, edited by Howard Foster Lowry (London, 1932), 25].
- ²Arnold in 1853, quoted in Carl Dawson, *Matthew Arnold: The Poetry*, Routledge Critical Heritage Series (London, 1973), 132.
- ³G.D. Boyle, Review of *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*, *North British Review*, 9 (1853), 214; William Aytoun, Review of *The Strayed Reveller*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, 66 (1849), 344.
- ⁴Charles Kingsley, 'Recent Poetry and Recent Verse,' *Fraser's Magazine*, 39 (1849), 345.
- ⁵Dawson, *Matthew Arnold: The Poetry*, 7.
- ⁶*Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold*, edited by Arnold Whitridge (London, 1923), 20-21.
- ⁷F.R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London, 1932), 20.
- ⁸*Letters to Clough*, 99, 101, 21, 65, 95.
- ⁹*The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, edited by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor, 1960-69), I: 5.
- ¹⁰Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, edited by H.D. Traill (London, 1897), 108.
- ¹¹*The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, edited by Kenneth and Miriam Allott (London, 1979), 137.
- ¹²*Poems*, 648, 264.
- ¹³*Unpublished Letters*, 20.
- ¹⁴*Poems*, 140.
- ¹⁵E.D.H. Johnson, *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry: Sources of the Poetic Imagination in Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold*, (Princeton, 1952), xi.
- ¹⁶Yale M.S., quoted in Park Honan, *Matthew Arnold: A Life* (London, 1981), 100.
- ¹⁷Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1939), 24, 79.
- ¹⁸*Letters to Clough*, 110, 97, 89, 84, 56.
- ¹⁹*Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1888*, edited by G.W.E. Russell (London, 1895), I: 5.
- ²⁰*Letters to Clough*, 59.
- ²¹*Letters to Clough*, 63.
- ²²*Letters to Clough*, 65.
- ²³*Unpublished Letters*, 17.
- ²⁴*Letters to Clough*, 86.
- ²⁵A. Dwight Culler, *Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold* (London, 1966), 3.
- ²⁶*Poems*, 45-47.
- ²⁷*Poems*, 112-113, 44, 110.
- ²⁸*Unpublished Letters*, 18-19.
- ²⁹Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, 3.
- ³⁰*Poems*, 67, 69, 78.
- ³¹M.G. Sundell, 'Story and Context in "The Strayed Reveller,"' *Victorian Poetry*, 3:2 (1965), 167.
- ³²*Poems*, 70.
- ³³Sundell, 'Story and Context in "The Strayed Reveller,"' 168.
- ³⁴*Letters to Clough*, 97.
- ³⁵*Letters to Clough*, 104.
- ³⁶*Poems*, 157.
- ³⁷The choice of the historical figure of Empedocles for this poem is particularly fitting. A Sicilian philosopher of the fifth century B.C., Empedocles sought, through his poetry, to explain the flux and fixity in nature. His cosmogony allows for both change and stasis based on an immortal cycle. Objects that appear fixed to us, claimed Empedocles, are in their current state temporary, yet made up of combinations of eternal material elements. What we believe to be change is merely our perception of transformations involving different proportions of the elements. Being is many, says Empedocles, not one. In *Purifications*, he associated man with the 'Sphere' of all existence, suggesting that he is a

fallen entity or lesser deity who is, for the time being, subject to strife in nature but who is destined 'one day to be united with all its other fragments and with all other things in one perfect thinker.' According to G.S. Kirk, in this system the *psyche* is nowhere to be found, but 'what is clear is the force of Empedocles' convictions that there is an 'I' which survives such changes, whose perspective on life and death and everything else can never be entirely subsumed within a cosmic perspective . . . 'I' is ineliminable.' [G.S. Kirk, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge, 1983), 321]. Empedocles, then, comes to rest on the 'I' as something eternal which outlives the temporality of natural forms. For the present the 'I' is therefore potentially subjected to the resulting confusion of being a changeless, grounded entity spacially existing in an environment of continual flux.

Although Empedocles' ideology is particularly positive, and he himself represents a formidable figure in ancient thought, it is the resulting uncertainty of the disunity between the ego and its environment that Arnold chooses to exploit in 'Empedocles on Etna,' making the poem a suitable allegory of the conflict that he felt within his own mind.

³⁸*Poems*, 163.

³⁹*Poems*, 165, 167-168.

⁴⁰*Letters to Clough*, 65.

⁴¹Throughout the poem, Empedocles is continually thrown back upon himself. Even the dichotomy of subject and object, he thinks, may itself be a deception, all experience and consciousness being essentially the same:

All things the world which fill
Of but one stuff are spun,
That we who rail are still,
With what we rail at, one. [*Poems*, 177].

Although the idea of the oneness of Being is not actually Empedoclean, Arnold's employment of it -- in keeping with the nature-mirroring soul -- serves to show his concern for the self and its environment, the relationship which generates his conflict. How can the mind, as an integral component in this eternal struggle, perceive anything else but the confusion caused by it? The 'gusty toy' is incapable of seeing truly beyond itself and is thus unable to comprehend even the nature of the self:

We shut our eyes, and muse
How our own minds are made...
And spend our wit to name what most employ unnamed. [*Poems*, 179].

Thrown from pole to pole, Empedocles once again refutes himself asserting, this time, the supremacy of the object:

No, thou art come too late, Empedocles!
And the world hath the day and must break thee,
Not thou the world
Take thou one way left;
And turn thee to the elements, thy friends

Receive me, hide me, quench me take me home! [*Poems*, 196-188].

⁴²*Poems*, 196, 198, 200, 203, 206.

⁴³*Poems*, 367.

⁴⁴*Unpublished Letters*, 22.

⁴⁵*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, I: 14, 17. According to David Hopkinson, from 1852 onwards 'his sense of mission grew and his concern to express himself on questions of moment developed steadily.' ['The Body By the Wall: Arnold as Educator,' *Arnoldian*, 15:1 (Winter, 1987) 60].

⁴⁶Sidney Coulling, 'Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface: Its Origins and Aftermath,' *Victorian Studies*, 7 (1964), 234.

⁴⁷'I am the most unpopular of authors,' he wrote to Alexander Macmillan, 'but I think [*Essays in Criticism*] will pay its expenses. If not, I shall retire into a monastery, and try this infernal public no more.' [William Buckler, *Matthew Arnold's Books: Towards a Publishing Diary* (Geneva, 1958), 66-7].

⁴⁸The continued uncertainty of Arnold's position in 1853 is shown in the conflicting reports he gives to Clough and his mother. To his friend, he speaks of 'how difficult it is to write prose . . . because of the *articulations of the discourse*.' By replying to his critics he had been forced into a rhetorical mode with which he felt uncomfortable. Always he had preached against poetry becoming a mere vehicle for ideas, but now he felt called upon to say exactly what he meant, without being able to place thought 'cheek by jowl.' [*Letters to Clough*, 144]. To his mother, however, he says 'I have never felt so sure of myself, or so really and truly at ease as to criticism.' [*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, I: 30].

⁴⁹A.H. Warren, *English Poetical Theory: 1825-1865*, (Princeton, 1950), 154.

⁵⁰Super, I: 15

⁵¹*Unpublished Letters*, 21.

⁵²So radical are the reforms that Arnold proposes in 1853, that Frank Kermode has said 'Arnold's attitude to ['Empedocles'] -- in some ways a great poem, profound and finely designed -- is exasperating. We might paraphrase Blake's remark on Wordsworth's criticism, and say of the 1853 *Preface*, 'I do not know who wrote this Preface; it is very mischievous, and directly contrary to his own practice.' The misfittedness of the Preface is indisputable, but Kermode fails to see that an alternative appeal to objectivity, and not the suicide of his hero, contains Arnold's ultimate 'solution.' [Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London, 1957), 12].

⁵³Super, I: 19.

⁵⁴*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, I: 32.

⁵⁵*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, I: 73.

⁵⁶Super, I: 14, 15.

⁵⁷Warren, *English Poetic Theory*, 153.

⁵⁸Super, III: 4, 5, 8-9, 11.

⁵⁹Super, III: 283.

⁶⁰Super, III: 13.

⁶¹Super, III: 33, 121-122, 118, 107.

⁶²Super, III: 132.

⁶³Super, III: 134, 145, 148.

⁶⁴Super, III: 146, 139, 150.

⁶⁵Super, III: 206, 208, 209.

⁶⁶*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, I: 98, 130, 142, 208, 233.

⁶⁷Super, V: 94.

⁶⁸*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, I: 382.

⁶⁹Super, V: 135.

⁷⁰Super, V: 102, 141, 254, 115, 87, 219-220.

⁷¹Super, V: 91.

⁷²Super, V: 130, 171-172.

⁷³To Lady de Rothschild, Arnold wrote on January 28, 1869: 'Now I have done with social and political essays for a long time to come.' [*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, II: 1].

⁷⁴Super, IV: 196, 244.

⁷⁵Super, IV: 21, 33, 217.

⁷⁶Super, VI: 47, 127, 38, 43.

⁷⁷Super, XI: 161, 46.

⁷⁸A.C. Swinburne, review in *Nineteenth Century*, 15 (April, 1884), 583-609; reprinted in Carl Dawson and John Pfordresher, *Matthew Arnold: The Prose Writings*, The Routledge Critical Heritage Series (London, 1979), 366.

⁷⁹Super, XI: 327.

⁸⁰Super, XI: 269.

⁸¹This is something of which Arnold's Tolstoi with his Russian appreciation for personal and social experience is acutely aware. As 'the master of a spell to which the secrets of human nature -- both what is external and what is internal . . . willingly make themselves known.' Tolstoi's view of religion comes, not surprisingly, close to Arnold's own. [Super, XI: 284].

⁸²E.D. Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago, 1976), 139.

CHAPTER TWO

Two Views of Arnold (1888-1900)

The Siamese twins, Philip Drunk and Philip Sober, two Oxford dons with lawnmowers appear in the window embrasure. Both are masked with Matthew Arnold's face.'

-- James Joyce, *Ulysses*

As with most prolific writers whose careers span several decades, Arnold's death was met by a general desire to evaluate the significance of his large corpus. Since his rise to prominence as a critic had coincided with the phenomenal increase in the literary journalistic trade about twenty years before, it was only natural that a large proportion of the vast body of commentary to appear in 1888 was to be found in the literary reviews. His loss would be most acutely felt, said one obituary, by 'that growing section of society which takes its mental food or pastime in monthly installments.'¹ Throughout his life Arnold had used the periodical press to his advantage, publishing many of his articles in serialized form in monthly journals like *The National Review* and *Cornhill Magazine*. Not surprisingly, it was in these same journals that the first responses to his ideas had appeared and which consequently gave him most attention immediately after his death. Despite obvious prejudices, the types of writers dealing with Arnold in the monthly reviews of the late 1880s and early 1890s provide a colourful selection of individuals who, in their attempt to identify the 'real' Matthew Arnold, laid the foundation for the way in which critics were to approach his works for years to come.

The cross-section of individuals assessing Arnold at the close of the nineteenth century was as diverse as the topics he touched: politicians, poets, literary critics, teachers, university dons, religious ministers, librarians, editors, and school inspectors, with articles appearing in all major journals and literary newspapers. What is perhaps most striking is that from the beginning there was a distinct lack of consensus in these evaluations, so that in the major periodicals the points of view were almost as numerous as the writers themselves. With such a diversity of opinion, it soon became clear to his critics that the

posthumous Arnold provided a problem perhaps unprecedented among his contemporaries. The scope of his writing -- on subjects from Ordnance Survey to translations of Homer -- had been so broad that to speak about him comprehensively was quite impossible. If anything, an even greater sense of chaos pervaded approaches to Arnold in 1888 than had been apparent during his lifetime. Whereas most of the earlier essays had been reviews on the appearance of individual works, now the need to say something definitive about the whole corpus of Arnold's writing made the task more problematic. To a large extent, the issues were largely determined by the current reviewing style and often told more about the writer himself than his subject. Even the monthlies, which were able to distance their treatments of Arnold by weeks, and in some cases years, from his death, added to the merely evaluative nature of this criticism, the most common convention among critics being to 'place' Arnold. What makes most of the ideas expressed in these reviews interesting, however, is not so much what they reveal about Arnold himself as what they reveal about different approaches to Arnold at the turn of the century. As Alfred Austin remarked, 'we lay stress on that portion of his work which we ourselves, in our narrowness, and with our limitations, alone are interested, and pass over the rest.'² The situation in 1888 was best expressed by H.D. Traill, one of the few who recognized the biased plane which such assessments tend to inhabit:

In endeavouring to appraise the work of a departed poet and essayist, [the critic] runs a risk of supplying his readers with little else than an edifying disclosure of his own orthodoxy or heterodoxy from the Arnoldian point of view on theories in question Those who have adopted equally with those who dissent from, Mr Arnold's canons of art in many instances assigned him a place in English literature with a noble unconsciousness of the fact that they are merely sitting in judgment upon, and with judicial gravity deciding in favour of, their own prepossessions.³

If, as this suggests, it is possible to detect, behind certain assessments of Arnold, various presuppositions held by the writers themselves, in this chapter I would like to explore two dominant and conflicting sets of values as they emerged in these early reviews, corresponding as they do with two main intellectual tendencies distinguishing men of letters from this period, two views which I believe provided the basis for most debates on Arnold over the next half century, and possibly beyond.

'Since Arnold wrote *Culture and Anarchy*,' Hugh Kingsmill observed in 1928, there have been two other Oxford movements.' These movements he identifies as 'Christian Socialism' and 'Oscar Wilde's Aesthetic Movement,' one with its sights clearly set on the reformation of society and culture, the other demanding the artist's refusal to participate in that society preferring instead to realize himself only in terms of self-culture and individual experience.⁴ Similarly, Francis Gribble told of the tension at Magdalene College in the nineties between the socially withdrawn culture of the aesthetes and their counterparts who were engaged in 'Canon Barnett's scheme for conveying the higher life to the lower orders through the medium of University settlements in the slums of London.'⁵ Curiously, adherents to both points of view could find justification for their thinking in the writing of Arnold which, at different times, had exhibited both tendencies. While the poetry and early prose often prescribed withdrawal or suggested that criticism should strive to be self-consciously authenticated on aesthetic principles, the essays of the seventies, by their subject matter alone, recognized that criticism had a duty to society and culture. It is little wonder, therefore, that aesthetes and social critics were to divide Arnold's canon, privileging those works that verified their own predispositions.

Many who had followed his career since the early 1860s and before had long felt Arnold's excursions into politics and theology mistaken, that his *forté* was either as a literary critic or poet. The *Essays in Criticism* and *On Translating Homer* had always received acclaim from those literary minded reviewers who felt they knew him best. However, it was with contributions like *Friendship's Garland* to newspapers and journals that Arnold had become one of the best known polemicists of the century. This literary-political dichotomy was one that was to dominate discussion for years to come. Many felt that the issues dealt with in the socio-religious work would in time pass, making the works themselves temporal, while the criticism, like the poetry and its dealings with 'immortal' subjects, would 'live.' Still others felt that the general principles of *Culture and Anarchy* and the essential 'charm' of *Friendship's Garland* would preserve them for posterity. So

began the debate on the 'real' Matthew Arnold, based on the common notion that mediocrity tended towards temporality while Arnold's best work would withstand the test of time. By far the most widely discussed issue after his death was the form that his future canon would take. In earnest, critics began to offer predictions as to the Arnoldian works that would be read by generations who inhabited some far-off time, perhaps not realizing that they were in the process of determining the future canon themselves.

While it may be argued that 'Arnoldism' had existed during his lifetime -- many of Arnold's contemporary reviewers were more than sympathetic with his aims -- it was largely diffuse and could hardly be regarded as a consolidated movement. Its articulation was largely left for a younger generation who were able to escape the temporal controversies that had given rise to the works themselves and discern what they felt was most relevant in his vast corpus. Certainly, after Arnold's death there seems to have been a steady increase in the number of 'disciples,' younger men who were somewhat disparaged by older critics for their zeal. Referring to them, Mowbray Morris noted, ironically, how Arnold would have himself objected to 'the indiscriminate homage of a clique' and the *Saturday* blamed them for having damaged his reputation, attributing 'much of the half-contempt that has been shown towards Mr Arnold' not to himself but 'his maladroit imitators and exaggerators.'⁶ So consistently did Arnold's reputation continue to grow among the younger generation that, by 1904, W.H. Dawson was able to remark that 'there is to-day a cult of Matthew Arnold.'⁷

At Oxford, Arnold had been a hero since the sixties and it would be difficult to exaggerate the place of the university in the spread and shaping of Arnold's reputation beyond his death. 'Arnoldism there had grown into a cult,' said the *Athenaeum*, 'each brilliant paradox of his had become a shibboleth.'⁸ Judging by those who were writing favourably immediately after his death, this association was not altogether unfounded. As the writer of 'Thyrsis' and 'The Scholar Gypsy,' Arnold was considered by many to be the quintessential Oxonian, one who had articulated feelings and thoughts about the city for

those who felt themselves heirs of an intellectual and social inheritance that bound them to the romantic idea that was, for them, Oxford. Indeed, most of his posthumous commentators were, in some way, attached to the university with which his name had so long been associated. As one contemporary observer remarked, 'the lectures at Oxford made a deep impression on his hearers, and as his hearers extended to a wider circle it assumed somewhat of an authoritative character.'⁹ Another, similarly remarking on the importance of the university to the spread of his reputation, noted that, while Arnold had founded 'no school to adopt servilely his every dictum,' by setting up 'a modern standard for judging both books and conduct, he directly inspired the numerous bands of writers . . . who have since issued from that university.'¹⁰ Yet another, recalling Arnold's own attitude towards the spread of his reputation at Oxford, remembered 'his once saying that the reputation of an author is made . . . by certain persons whose number is very limited; their verdict gradually filtering downward.'¹¹

One of Arnold's most fervent student admirers was A.E. Housman who, it has been said, modelled himself after the older poet. Later, friends recalled how the young Housman resembled 'certain portraits of Matthew Arnold' and how, at St. John's College, he had spent hours learning Arnold's poetry by heart and then 'would challenge us to cite a line in the continuation of which he could not give. We never caught him out.'¹² Yet another friend recalled how Housman used to say that 'Empedocles on Etna' contained 'all the law and prophets.'¹³ Such devotion to the Scholar Gipsy was not to pass with the poet's death, however; if anything, his reputation at Oxford was to continue to grow. Indeed, passages from Edward Thomas's 1903 guide to the city show that Arnold's poetry was still pre-eminent with university students beyond the close of the nineteenth century. Not only were there 'drags at every college gate' to take students to explore 'the haunts of the immortal "Scholar Gipsy,"' but, said Thomas:

To some Oxford men, Matthew Arnold's 'Thyrsis' is the finest poem that was ever written; and he knows it by heart already; has sighed ignorantly over it; and as his train draws near to Oxford, he repeats it to himself, with a most fantastic fervour, as if it were half a prayer and half a love-song, and certainly more than half his own.¹⁴

The Oxford poems had won support for Arnold when they first appeared and were at least partly responsible for his election as Professor of Poetry. This appointment, in turn, served to re-inforce his position and the *Essays in Criticism*, made up of lectures given from the Poetry Chair, won instant support from Oxford men who sympathized with the 'Beautiful city' eulogy with which the collection's Preface, and Thomas's book, concludes.¹⁵ So close was the association in many minds that commentators spoke of his as 'the Oxford style' and himself as 'the Oxford poet.' By defining, in poetic terms, what Swinburne called the 'effusive Oxonolatry' that was so prevalent, Arnold had appeared in perfect time to meet the need in that community for a spokesman and poet that it could proudly call its own. Cambridge, after all, had her Tennyson but there had been, before Arnold, no nineteenth century equivalent at Oxford. Amy Cruse has noted that while 'Thackeray, Tennyson and their friends . . . are . . . the representatives in Victorian literature of the University of Cambridge . . . in a different and far more special sense, Matthew Arnold is the representative of Oxford.'¹⁶ Oscar Wilde, for one, appears to have thought of Arnold as a spokesman for Oxford sentiment. As part of an attempt to change Helena Sickert's mind about matriculating at Cambridge, Wilde sent her a copy of Arnold's poems, particularly asking her to read 'Thyrsis' and 'The Scholar Gypsy' and saying, 'though you are determined to go to Cambridge, I hope you will accept this volume of poems by a purely *Oxford* poet.'¹⁷ In 1893, Leslie Stephen attributed his long-standing differences with Arnold to this very factor. 'Arnold was a typical Oxford man,' said Stephen, and as a 'prosaic' son of Cambridge, it had been difficult for him to appreciate Arnold's 'poetic' nature.¹⁸ For years, writers like Stephen had felt ambivalent about enthusiasm over Arnold, but feelings were quite different among the new Oxford generation. In calling it 'the home of lost causes' Arnold had invoked a potent image founded on a long tradition of the university as the last bastion of truth and beauty. While some might hardly regard an immunity to the 'fierce intellectual life' of the century as an asset for a university, Osbert Burdett has attributed Arnold's appeal at Oxford in the

nineties to a basic desire for withdrawal from an age of devastating change by those 'who regarded beauty as the latest of lost causes.'¹⁹ As 'our own poet,' said W.P. Ker, 'he keeps alive an Oxford still recognizeable. He claims, and has, our loyalty through the religion of the place, which none of us blame as superstitious.'²⁰

The Aesthetic Arnold

The Arnoldism of Wilde, Housman, and Ker was based almost exclusively on Arnold's pre-1867 writing, with the possible exception of 'The Study of Poetry.' To fully understand the reason for this decidedly biased reading of the Arnold canon, especially in the light of the fact that his reputation outside of the Oxford community was largely founded on best-selling editions of *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*, it is helpful to consider the influence of one of Arnold's first disciples who was undoubtedly most responsible for this phenomenon.

Walter Pater, whose influence was indelibly stamped on Oxford aestheticism, it has often been said, took over from Arnold in the seventies when the latter deserted artistic for socio-political concerns. While this may be an oversimplification and hardly fair to Pater himself, whose artistic vision was a complex of many such influences, it may be granted that entering Oxford as he did, in 1858, Pater would not have been immune from the enthusiasm for Arnold that was widespread there. The older man's influence is evident throughout the now famous introduction to *The Renaissance*. Long considered as the manifesto of the 'Art for Art's Sake' movement in England, *The Renaissance* was perhaps the first example of the extensive use of Arnoldian poetic terminology, taken apart from its original context without its origins being cited. It is hardly surprising that Pater avoided mentioning Arnold by name since his aesthetic approach was, in many ways, based on a desire to subvert Arnoldian terminology and thereby change its meaning, a lesson that was to be learned and later implemented by critics like Oscar Wilde and George Saintsbury.



According to T.S. Eliot, whereas Arnold Hebraised and Hellenised at turns, Pater Hellenised consistently. The claim that Arnold the artist, by becoming a moralist, had somehow compromised himself was also evident to Swinburne, who had been one of the earliest and most enthusiastic advocates of Arnold's poetry. It is hardly surprising that Swinburne approved of the romantic melancholy tone of *The Strayed Reveller* but, predictably, showed no such enthusiasm for the later prose. Swinburne was to regret that Arnold had, in his prose, become 'David the Son of Goliath,' suggesting the dangers of becoming engaged in a battle with the Philistines, and thereby compromising oneself and upsetting the fine balance between Hebrew and Hellene.²¹ Swinburne had made his general position on the relation between art and ethics quite clear in his 1862 essay on Baudelaire when he said that 'the poet's business is presumably to write good verses, and by no means to redeem the age, and remould society.' Later he was to bring to English readers the phrase of Gautier that was to become the clarion cry of the aesthetic movement: 'Art for art's sake first of all . . . but from the man who falls to work with a moral purpose shall be taken away even that which he has.'²²

Pater's consistent Hellenising, as Eliot called it, necessitating an emphasis on the artistic to the exclusion of the moral, is a principle central to understanding the aestheticism of the nineties and provides a focal point for examining the movement's effect on the way in which many saw Arnold at that time. Pater is Arnold modified or, perhaps more accurately, the Pater of *The Renaissance* represents one side of Arnold.²³ The aesthetic was always important to Arnold but, by 1853, with his emphasis on the importance of the subject over its expression, only part of a constitutive whole that he later would call culture. The ostensible effect of Pater's redefinition was the neutralization of the moral content of Arnoldian language thereby making it exclusively aesthetic.²⁴ There is no mistaking the influence behind 'the object as in itself it really is' in the introduction to *The Renaissance*, but Pater took the Arnoldian phrase and made it his own, transforming it into the recognized presupposition of the new aesthetic criticism that certain of his more

extreme followers were to endorse. The first step towards achieving this end, Pater said, 'is to know one's own impression as it really is.' While Pater was here making his own departure into a more romantic view of criticism, he knew that by invoking Arnoldian terminology he had found a strong ally. Richard Ellmann has said that, in this respect, Pater was only 'pretending to agree with Arnold's definition of criticism' while, in reality, he 'made the critic's own work more important as well as more subjective. If observation is still the word, the critic looks in upon himself as often as out to the object.'²⁵ Not a little of *Culture and Anarchy*, with its concern for 'culture' and 'Hellenism,' had rubbed off on Pater, but in his schema these words took on far more personal significance. Although Pater's fifteenth century Italy provided, as did Arnold's fifth century Athens, an environment beneficial to individual artistic production, there was nothing to suggest that Pater's culture had anything to do with contemporary society but was rather to be cultivated in 'intellectual isolation.'

The earlier element of poetic isolation in Arnold had found favour with other exponents of mid-Victorian romanticism. William Rossetti had, in the Pre-Raphaelite magazine *The Germ*, hailed *The Strayed Reveller*, and Pater's successors, that group now commonly known as the 'aesthetes,' also appreciated Arnold's poetry for what they detected as its decadent flavour. Consequently, in the nineties, when Victorianism was deemed most unfashionable, part of Arnold's appeal was not to be found in his authoritarian views on State and Church, but rather in the decidedly un-Victorian way in which he pictured the world-weary poet in isolation. Despite his dislike for poetry 'in which suffering finds no vent in action,' the mood of much of Arnold's own poetry, as David Daiches has recognized, is really one of 'relished melancholy' not unlike that which underlies the poetry of those belonging to the art for art's sake movement.²⁶ 'Arnold's . . . warnings against direct action, and his antipathy for Philistinism,' says Douglas Bush, became for certain writers 'a sanction for withdrawal from the bourgeois world into the ivory tower of aestheticism.'²⁷ Although the later response to an alien environment, by

prescribing the taking of refuge in complete inwardness, was far more extreme than anything in Arnold, the strong element of anti-Victorianism in Arnoldian prose, characterized by his persistent attacks on middle class values, also endeared him to aesthetes who found themselves similarly out of place in an age of machinery. In his book on *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry*, E.D.H. Johnson traces the logical development from Victorian writers like Arnold, Ruskin, and Carlyle, who were at odds with their age, to the aesthetic belief that:

The conflict . . . had been lost and the artist had come to accept as a foregone conclusion his inefficacy as a shaping influence on the lives of his contemporaries. In compensation, he now espoused the aesthetic creed which goes by the name of art for art's sake, and with Pater and then Wilde as his apologists and Rossetti and Swinburne as his models, embraced his alienation from all but a coterie of initiates like himself to value forms of art above its message.²⁸

Arnold, for instance, would have agreed with at least half of Arthur Symons's defence of the decadent movement:

There has been great talk of late of degeneracy, decadence, and what are supposed to be perversities: such as religion, art, genius, and individuality. But it is the millionaire, the merchant, the money-maker, the sweater, who are the degenerates of civilization.²⁹

Significantly Symons, himself a follower of Pater, was to develop an idea that echoed Arnold's 'Study of Poetry' in the *Symbolist Movement in Literature*, a work which was to claim for art a religious status 'with all the duties and responsibilities of the sacred ritual.' The other side of Arnold, though, calling for a necessary moral influence, found no place in Symons' thesis which claimed 'the infinite insignificance of action [and] its immense distance from the current of life.'³⁰

It is interesting to note that of those who admired Arnold at century's end, many were, like Symons, contributors to the decadent organ, *Yellow Book*. Among those who wrote poems on, wrote articles about, or edited selections from Arnold between 1888 and 1920 were A.C. Benson, Max Beerbohm, Ernest Dowson, Richard Le Gallienne and George Saintsbury, all *Yellow Book* writers. Certainly, many of these 'decadents' were dismayed with the direction that Arnold had taken after 1867, with his emphasis on conduct; Tissot's caricature of Arnold declaring that 'the critic should keep out of the

region of immediate practice' was more than merely an ironic witticism. Even today we find it difficult to imagine such a strong link between Arnold the scrupulously respectable civil servant and the flamboyant Oscar Wilde. 'If Oscar Wilde is culture,' asked Lionel Trilling, could Arnold 'be culture too?'³¹ The answer to that must be affirmative; Wilde could dissect Arnold as ably as anyone else.

Like many of the aesthetes of the nineties, Wilde's formative years had been spent at Oxford where, between 1874-78, he had come under the influence of his aesthetic master, Pater. As Philip Cohen has rightly said, Wilde accepted Arnold's ideas 'as transmitted by Pater or boldly contradicted them as they stood in original form,' the means that Wilde used to contradict being similar to the Paterian subversion of language.³² *The Critic as Artist* was, among other things, an examination of Arnoldian criticism from the aesthetic point of view. Taking Pater's formula to its conclusion, Wilde spoke of 'the object as in itself it really isn't,' thus showing that Pater's view was, with its emphasis on expression rather than subject matter, decidedly un-Arnoldian. It was instead the earlier note of poetic isolation in Arnold that most certainly appealed to Wilde who, when he sent Arnold a copy of his first poems in 1881, had written of 'the constant source of joy and wonder your poetry was to all of us at Oxford' and how he had thereby learned 'how all art requires solitude as its companion,' a principle of which he believed Arnold was 'a master illustrious and supreme.'³³ This solitary element -- something which Arnold was to abandon in his prose work in favour of a theory of objectified criticism that had not only personal value but social significance -- Wilde missed in the later Arnold and had Gilbert make the comparison:

It has been said by one whose gracious memory we all revere, and the music of whose pipe once lured Porserpina from her Sicilian fields, and made those white feet stir, and not in vain, the Cumnor cowslips, that the proper aim of Criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is. But this is a very serious error, and takes no cognizance of Criticism's most perfect form, which is in its essence purely subjective.³⁴

From an episode recounted by Frank Harris it can be assumed that Wilde himself shared Gilbert's uneasiness over the tension between the romance of 'The Strayed Reveller' and 'Thyrsis' and the reasoned objectivity of 'The Function of Criticism':

Oscar and I went together once to Whitechapel to hear Matthew Arnold lecture 'What Puritans Englishmen all are,' said Oscar as we came away. 'The burden of Arnold's song:

I slept and dreamed that life was beauty
I woke and found that life was duty:

Yet he's a real poet, Frank, an English saint in sidewhiskers!³⁵

Yet there was so much of Arnold in Wilde's own criticism that, in 1891, even Pater credited him with carrying on 'more perhaps than any other writer, the brilliant critical work of Matthew Arnold.'³⁶ But the 'work' that Pater had in mind was not anything that Arnold would have recognized as the proper function of criticism. That the original title of *The Critic As Artist* was 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' indicates that it was meant to be, like Pater's *Renaissance*, Arnold modified. Wilde's object was to take Arnold's apologetic as far as it helped support an impressionistic kind of criticism that 'the free play of mind' allowed, but found he had to stop short of accepting the 'wholesome and regulative laws' that Arnold had insisted upon.³⁷ For Wilde, unlike Arnold, there was no distinction between criticism and creation, thus allowing the critic the same complete subjectivity that a romantic poetic affords. Wilde's whole essay/drama was an experiment in this very principle. This element of creative subjectivity was, of course, the essence of aesthetic criticism and yet, despite their differences, Gilbert's speech on the 'true critic' shows just how many of Arnold's ideas the aesthete could entertain without compromising his sensibility:

The culture that [the] transmission of racial experiences makes possible can be made perfect by the critical spirit alone, and indeed may be said to be one with it. For who is the true critic but he who bears within himself the dreams, the ideas, and feelings of myriad generations, and to whom no form of thought is alien, no emotional impulse obscure? And who the true man of culture, if not he who by fine scholarship and fastidious rejection has made instinct self-conscious and intelligent, and can separate the work that has distinction from the work that has it not, and so by contact and comparison makes himself master of the secrets of style and school, and understands their meanings, and listens to their voices, and develops that spirit of disinterested curiosity which is the real root as it is the real flower, of the intellectual life, and thus attains to intellectual clarity, and, having learned 'the best that

is known and thought in the world,' lives -- it is not fanciful to say so -- with those who are the Immortals.³⁸

The idea of a self-conscious Criticism as the vessel for the 'transmission of racial experiences' also appealed to other aesthetes, especially proponents of the Celtic Renaissance who felt indebted to the influence of Arnold's *Study of Celtic Literature*; but the utilitarian side of Arnoldian thought W.B. Yeats set in opposition to the true aim of literary criticism when he talked of two movements, one of which was outmoded and 'found its explanation when Matthew Arnold called art a criticism of life.' The 'new movement,' on the other hand, would not seek 'to interpret the world,' but to bring men 'into the world of dreams and passions.'³⁹ In his autobiography Yeats related how the artists of the nineties, in their desire to 'create once more the pure work,' had consciously distanced themselves from Victorians who 'had filled their work with . . . "impurities," curiosities about politics, about science, about history, about religion.'⁴⁰ A similar desire to purge Arnoldian criticism of moral dictates, and the illusion that behind every creation stands a fixed body of principles that, if properly implemented, would reveal the object as it is, is what caused Wilde to assert that the critic's job was not to discover the truth but to consciously tell lies.

The solution put forward by some aesthetes to the failure of the objective critical position was to wholeheartedly embrace a belief in the authenticity of impressionistic perception, each man his own artistic critic seeing the object as it really isn't. He could thus only walk with Arnold so far, echoing the call that the ideal critic should be the self-conscious '*ondoyans et divers* being of Montaigne' but passionately opposing the right of the same critic to legislate truth or claim any kind of closure. This shift in emphasis demanded a redefinition of the Arnoldian vocabulary. When Wilde employed 'Philistine,' for instance, it was with a much narrower definition, his Philistine not being merely the adherent of middle class stock notions that oppose the work of Culture, but the enemy of artistic culture, someone unable to conceive of aesthetic experience apart from its functionality.⁴¹ To Wilde, the real decadence was the imposition of life onto art; thus, as

Ellmann has said, 'the approach he proposed was less salvationist than that of Matthew Arnold, whose recent death appeared to make room for a new aesthetic.'⁴²

Another Oxford disciple was A.C. Benson who, in 1900, produced an edition of Arnold's poetry, complete with decadent illustrations by Henry Osipov. Benson's choice of poems emphasized the withdrawal theme, giving pride of place to pieces like 'The Scholar Gipsy,' 'The Forsaken Merman,' and 'Empedocles on Etna,' while Osipov's illustrations focused on post-Hellenic images of nymphs, satyrs, and languishing lovers. In his introduction, Benson recalled his own student regard for Arnold who, he said, had held 'a kind of natural dictatorship over other minds.' Regretting, like Wilde, the later preoccupation with politics and theology, Benson went on to announce that, in his opinion, 'it is as a poet alone that he will live; his controversial and religious writings have passed . . . into the thought of his generation.' Even Arnold's literary criticism, claimed Benson, could not hope for the permanence of the more 'creative' essays of Pater.⁴³

While few were as willing as Wilde and Benson to associate themselves with this kind of overt decadence, it soon became apparent that, as these graduates took their places among the literati, the influence of Oxford aestheticism was to have a significant effect on the way that Arnold was perceived after his death. One common notion often found in the literary press, therefore, was that the withdrawn poet and master of literary taste was the 'true' Matthew Arnold who was in later life corrupted by a sense of duty and interest in temporal controversy. One writer in the *Academy*, for instance, regretted 'Matthew Arnold's recent activity as a polemical writer in the magazines' since it had 'tended to obscure his earlier fame as a poet and critic.'⁴⁴ Even Arnold's old friend from the Education Office, Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff, regretted that if he were to write a review of *Culture and Anarchy* it would not be 'altogether of a eulogistic character.' Claiming that there was only a temporal interest in the political side of the work, he, too, saw the work of Arnold in this respect as a past expedient: 'It was twenty years since it was given to the public, and there is nothing now worth doing in connection with it.' *Friendship's*

Garland, he said, 'is so full of allusions which were of the moment momentary,' that even a person who lived through that same 'political melee' would have difficulty in placing them.⁴⁵ Others held similar views of Arnold's passing influence in the political sphere. Laurence Binyon, still a young Oxford student in 1888, remarked that, whereas the essays were 'apt to be too closely in touch with the thought of their own age to serve another,' the 'poetry . . . is never out of date.'⁴⁶ Alfred Austin, too, reconciled his differences by placing Arnold historically in a different time, 'the middle-class, *bourgeois*, or truly Philistine period between the first Reform Bill and the demand for a wider measure of Enfranchisement.' As a staunch conservative, Austin took solace in the belief that English society had, once more, gained equilibrium, 'the years that have intervened . . . constituting . . . one of the greatest and most stupendous epochs in the history of the human race.'⁴⁷ The conservatively based *Athenaeum* took its political Arnold with a similar grain of salt. Arnold was, said its reviewer, a critic 'of the age of transition which separates so widely England of to-day from the England of the Reform Bill.' He too argued for a historical shift in 'general attitude' since the polemical atmosphere that yielded Arnold's social writings.⁴⁸ Although the *Athenaeum* credited Arnold himself with having an effect in this direction, there was an underlying assumption that he had been addressing a different time, thus making *Friendship's Garland* and *Culture and Anarchy* somewhat obsolete as documents for instruction. These are hardly surprising responses for the time in which they were written. Arnold himself -- while arguing for the importance of criticism and culture -- always seems to have considered prose more transient than poetry by nature, in accordance with the prevailing belief that verse is better equipped to address 'immortal' subjects while prose deals with the mainly temporal. 'The kings of science will die,' proclaimed Mowbray Morris on Arnold, 'but the poet lives for ever.'⁴⁹ To a certain extent, Arnold's emphasis on the value of poetry in his own life and his own feeling that it had somehow been usurped by demands put upon him by school-inspecting, political debate, and theological controversy was merely being echoed by his posthumous readers.

If many minimized Arnold's work as a controversialist, then, by far the most popular aspect of Arnold with literary reviewers in 1888 was the poet. Consequently, another notion for which the aesthetic temperament was probably responsible was the almost universal belief that, while the general reader knew him by the populist controversies for which he had regrettably left literature proper, Arnold's poetry was for a very select audience. Ironically, then, one reason for the popularity of the poetry among so many readers was a widespread belief in its exclusivity. A self proclaimed elitism among readers of the poetry based on the belief that it was for the 'fit but few' was therefore a commonplace. More than one critic, for instance, went back to Swinburne's 1867 review in the *Fortnightly* in which he noted 'a strong personal tone of character stamped and ingrained into a man's work, if more offensive at first to the mass, is likelier to find favour before long in the sight of some small body or sect of students.'⁵⁰ So distinct and individual was the poetry, according to Benson, that Arnold was 'never likely to be a popular author,' even less so since his was 'a poetry which it requires a special initiation to comprehend.'⁵¹ Although Arnold was not a popular poet, Frederic Harrison later said, he always appealed 'to those who thirst for the pure Catalian spring, inspired by lofty thoughts, who care for . . . that "high seriousness."⁵² Even Leslie Stephen, who, perhaps half ironically, included himself among the 'Philistines' of Arnold's readership, nevertheless admitted that Arnold had written 'for a small class of cultivated people.'⁵³ The strongest expression of the exclusivity of Arnold's poetic audience, however, came from H.D. Traill who lamented the fact that there was little chance of Arnold 'finding his way to the hearts of the restless and emotion-seeking Many as he is assured of a perpetual place in those of the quiet and contemplative few.' Offering an explanation for the poems' restricted appeal, Traill suggested that their lack of 'popular emotion' made them appear 'cold' to all but those with 'cultivated taste.'⁵⁴ The *Athenaeum* similarly attributed the poetry's exclusive appeal to the fact that its sentiments appealed only to the sensitive minority and since 'the moods are rare among men . . . the appeal of the poems must be as

rare.⁵⁵ Stephen suggested that it was the 'hybrid genus, in which the critic shows through the poet,' that was 'not likely to suit the popular mind. And the same may be said of the particular mood which is specially characteristic of Arnold.'⁵⁶ Among many of the spokesmen for the aesthetic elitism, however, there was a prevailing belief that, although they had few readers, Arnold's future reputation would lie in the poems. One of these was W.J. Dawson writing, ironically, in the low brow, middle class, popular monthly, *Great Thoughts*. 'What a few were satisfied of before his death has been generally admitted since,' noted Dawson, 'that all the best qualities of Arnold's genius are manifested in his comparatively unknown poetry.' And it was in that poetry, he argued, 'that he will claim attention from the next generation.'⁵⁷ Traill had quite rightly questioned those who said that Arnold would be remembered as a poet rather than as a prose writer while still claiming that he had a select audience. This, he said, is trying to say that 'he will be remembered . . . for those achievements which have failed to attract the attention of the public which is to remember him.'⁵⁸ This was more than a *non sequitur* breach of logic, however. It appears, judging by the number of editions of Arnold's poetry on the market, that the elitists were working with a faulty premise.⁵⁹ The exclusivity of Arnold's poetic audience was an illusion that had been easily propagated and widely believed. It had not been hard for individuals to believe that they were members of a privileged body of intellectually sensitive readers. Perhaps the mood of the poetry itself, its tone of melancholy isolation, was somewhat responsible for creating a similar feeling in the reader. Some of these writers, after all, had been acquainted with *The Strayed Reveller* and *Empedocles on Etna*, virtually unknown editions, and often pointed to the fact that Arnold had written little poetry since the sixties. And yet they failed to realize just how steadily his reputation had increased in the intervening years, so that by the time these reviews were written there had appeared over thirteen editions of the poetry alone. Nevertheless, even a knowledge of the facts was not enough to deter one writer in the *Spectator* from retaining an elitist stance in a piece ironically titled 'Matthew Arnold's

Popularity,' which offers no more than an unconvincing attempt to explain away the disparity between the belief in the poetry's exclusivity and its statistical popularity:

Matthew Arnold can hardly be called a popular poet, but yet he is a poet who is probably more especially popular with the literary class than any other poet of our day. Messrs Macmillan have just issued the thirteenth reprint of the selected poems . . . so that there has been a reprint of this little volume of Selections very nearly once in every year since it was first issued. Yet we should have thought that a small volume of selected poems would hardly have sold so well, in the case of an author the bulk of whose work was so moderate, as the poems themselves. And it is likely enough that this may be actually the case. For it is very probable that the greater number of those who buy the selected poems for their small size, may really possess some complete edition of the poems as well, using the Selections only for the purpose of carrying about from place to place.⁶⁰

While the poetry had elicited aesthetic elitism, to a certain extent this factor also featured in responses to the literary criticism. Nothing better illustrates the exclusivity of the early reviewers than the sympathy that was expressed for the lectures *On Translating Homer*. There had been only an initial 500 copies published in 1860-61, after which it had been out of print for over twenty five years. One explanation for its apparent popularity seems to have been that of the dozen or so major reviews from 1888, over half were written by old Oxonians, and most of those were ex-Balliol men who had attended the university at the time when Arnold was delivering the original lectures as Professor of Poetry. *On Translating Homer* had no greater admirer at Oxford than A.E. Housman who, in 1892, made the following incredible claim:

Heap up on one scale all the literary criticism that the whole nation of professed scholars ever wrote, and drop into the other this green volume of Matthew Arnold's 'Lectures on Translating Homer,' which has long been out of print because the British public does not care to read it, and the first scale, as Milton says, will straight fly up and kick the beam.⁶¹

Despite isolated enthusiasm for lesser-known and, by now, largely forgotten works like *On Translating Homer* and *On The Study of Celtic Literature*, of all Arnold's literary criticism it was the 1865 *Essays in Criticism* which, predictably, received the most notice.⁶² Still, it must be remembered that the audience for the *Essays* had been, in comparison with that of *Literature and Dogma*, proportionately small in 1888, a fact which literary reviewers seemed to ignore. For most of them, whose business was criticism, Arnold's literary essays were paramount. Looking to him as the forefather of modern criticism, the *Essays in Criticism* marked a historic point of reference for many of these

critics, who shared the belief that the book's appearance had been not only a landmark in their own lives, but a watershed in literary criticism in general. Anticipating George Saintsbury's comments about the demise of English criticism in the first half of the nineteenth century, the *Saturday Review* said that, on the basis of the *Essays*, historical critics would eventually do Arnold justice.⁶³ The *Times* suggested that only by recalling the days of 'Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt and Macaulay . . . the older *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh*' could one truly grasp 'all that the *Essays* and their successors have done for us.'⁶⁴ Traill called the *Essays* 'epoch-making,' in that although the principles expounded were not new, they were ones that had undergone 'a phase of neglect.' In the end, Arnold had practised a criticism that was to give 'a healthy stimulus and a true direction to English literary theory.'⁶⁵ A similar view was held by Morris, who held that 'it was not that he made any new discoveries in the criticism,' but rather that:

He recalled the spirit of criticism to its proper functions at a time when it seemed to have grown rather forgetful of them . . . All this he did in a manner singularly fresh and piquant, and entirely unlike any other that had gone before it in English literature. The style and method of . . . the *Essays in Criticism* may truly be said to mark an era in English criticism.⁶⁶

For these and other critics, the posthumous appearance of *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*, was one of the most significant events in 1888, affording commentators an opportunity to distance themselves from Arnold's death, treating him from solely a literary critical standpoint, and allowing for more clinical treatment than had been respectfully possible earlier in the year. As a result, the weekly *Saturday Review*, *Spectator*, *Academy*, and *Athenaeum* were given another opportunity to consider Arnold, this time more candidly than ever. In general, the heightened moral concern, giving the second volume a more 'Philistine' tone, was badly received by critics who earlier had hailed Arnold as the prophet of Hellenism. A somewhat aggressive appraisal appeared in the *Academy*, for example, in which its writer, classical scholar, G.A. Simcox, was impressed with 'The Study of Poetry' but found 'Tolstoi' too 'Hebraistic' for serious treatment.⁶⁷ With all but one of the major reviews, the essay on Shelley and its notorious

comment about his being 'a beautiful and ineffectual angel' found no sympathy. Coleridge, perhaps anticipating the reaction that it would cause among literary men, made provision in the preface by suggesting that 'in order to gather the mind of Mr Arnold on the whole of any subject, literary, political, or religious, it is often necessary to read more than one paper' since each essay was often 'supplemented or completed by another. It is especially necessary to bear this in mind in reading what has become his last utterance on Shelley.' In a subtle attempt that amounts to no less than a mild apology, Coleridge informed his readers that 'in Shelley's case he is known to have intended to write something more.'⁶⁸ Despite Coleridge's advocacy, though, the 'Shelley' piece provoked even more criticism the second time around. Even the usual admiration of R.H. Hutton was thwarted by the essay's appearance. The collection, he said, was 'a worthy memorial' for 'a critic so nearly infallible as Matthew Arnold.' Yet 'he is thrown out when he touches Shelley.' Arnold, he suggested, with his strong emphasis on poetry as a criticism of life, was unable to fathom 'poets who attempted something altogether different.' Ironically, Hutton saw in Shelley the exclusivity of mood that many others perceived in Arnold's own poetry. Because poets like Shelley 'create a world of their own . . . it will be the few rather than the many who enjoy such a world.' And of all faults with which to charge the great spokesman for *ondoyans et divers* criticism, Hutton suggested that Arnold had simply not been 'flexible enough' to appreciate Shelley.⁶⁹

Although the *Saturday* reviewer claimed for himself the role of 'an impartial, not to say, friendly, critic,' he was not nearly so sympathetic as Hutton, echoing the common disapproval for Arnoldian theology and politics, and sharing his regret that Arnold had not concentrated on poetry and literary criticism. Although the poetry was most likely to 'live,' Arnold's true worth in prose, said the *Saturday*, was as a popularizer of literature. They found "'Milton" . . . marred by a diatribe,' 'Amiel' as giving 'nothing of worth' except what Arnold had learned from the *Saturday Review*, and pointed to 'the rubbish . . . which he has talked about Burns.' In general the new series of *Essays in Criticism*

had done little more than show how subjective were Arnold's judgments and served to 'exhibit Arnold's defects pretty clearly.' Despite these and other reservations about the heightened moral element in the 1888 *Essays*, the *Saturday* was typical in welcoming Arnold's return to literary subjects, yet not without 'the deepest regret that Mr Arnold has not left more examples of this kind of work, instead of the dreary and worthless excursions into politics and theology on which he wasted so many of the best years of his life.'⁷⁰

The Controversialist and Prophet of Culture

Such an aesthetic preoccupation required, of course, a decidedly one-sided reading of the Arnold canon since, as Edward Dowden so perceptively saw, there were really two sides to the Arnoldian personality:

A thoughtful observer might have predicted long since that the poet, the shy, refined, elder brother in Mr Arnold's two-fold nature -- would have withdrawn, saddened and unnerved, while the stirring, effective, and happier younger brother, the critic, came forward and played a brilliant part in the world.⁷¹

Although Dowden held to the aesthetic view -- much as he admired the controversial writings, he continued to 'revert fondly to the elder brother' -- his recognition of Arnold's two-fold nature serves to highlight an alternative tendency among those Arnoldian critics who were to regard the ethical side of his work, particularly the social criticism, as the most valuable. While the Arnoldism of Wilde and others was based almost exclusively on Arnold's literary works, there were other Oxonians who were to admire the later prose and see him as the defender of not only 'beauty,' but 'culture' itself.

Lionel Johnson was a young student in the late eighties who saw Arnold as the eminent critic, something of a paternalistic figure who dined from time to time with students as the guest of dons and college officials between School Inspecting and public lectures. In 1891, the year in which Johnson left Oxford for a literary career with the *Academy* in London, he reflected on how the poetic admirers of Arnold were 'in danger of being his worshippers also, unless they show themselves aware of his faults.' Despite the

opinions of his fellow students, Johnson still felt that, as a poet, Arnold ranked well behind Milton and Sophocles. However, if he had been more reticent than those around him to worship Arnold the poet, he imbued the critic of culture with all the best qualities that had been prescribed in the essays:

From the Greek culture, he took a delight in the beauty of life and of fine imagination; from the Hebrew genius, a sense of reverence and meditation; from the French, a certain grace and lucidity of spirit; from the German, a steady seriousness of mind. By descent he was, in part, a Celt: that gave him a 'natural magic' of emotion and of soul; while from his English origin, he took that daring common sense which enabled him to hold in harmony with these various qualities.⁷²

Not only by adopting Arnold's cultural values wholesale, but also by equating Arnold himself with these ideals, Johnson and others were able to raise him by association from ethnological critic to cultural prophet figure. By employing these values in such a way, Johnson represents an example of the power that the figure of Arnold held for certain young Oxford men in the eighties. While the Arnold worship of some Oxonians was focused on the poetry and early literary criticism, still others, like Johnson, thought of him as a unified complex of all that was best in his later criticism, particularly the cultural synthesis that had been at the centre of *Culture and Anarchy*. As J.F. Kirk remarked, it was the enthusiasm of such Oxford students that was, in part, responsible for 'giving rise to the designation often applied to him, of "the apostle of culture."⁷³ These cultural Arnoldians, in particular, were to provoke criticism from older, more literary minded, reviews. The *Athenaeum*, for instance, spoke of 'the cultus of "culture" to which he gave the vogue' but which, in the hands of others, had become less 'precise.'⁷⁴ Mowbray Morris, another political conservative, portrayed Arnold's Oxford students as vulnerable and uncritical who had, in the name of culture, in their simplicity, raised Arnold's personal opinions to the doctrinaire, crediting him with 'all the best qualities of men so highly and variously gifted as . . . Cardinal Newman . . . Thackeray and . . . Professor Jowett.'⁷⁵ It was clearly much harder for those writers who saw Arnold as primarily the poet of aesthetic withdrawal to imagine him taking on the prophetic mantle of mutual formative heroes.

Unlike their aesthetic counterparts, critics who had an active interest in social questions were, more often than not, to regard Arnold as chiefly a prose writer. 'Many of Mr Arnold's critics have indulged in speculations on his chance of literary immortality being founded in his prose or his poetry,' even Morris was forced to admit, 'such speculations may be interesting, but they are fruitless.'⁷⁶ Had not his prose always been more popular than his poetry, and was it not always to be? On the basis of book sales, the general reader knew Arnold best as the socio-political commentator and theologian. As Traill noted, although *Essays in Criticism* had been widely recognized by the cultivated class, 'yet there is a very large public which knows him mainly by his graver treatises.' To this end, Traill cited, as evidence, a '*plébiscite* recently taken by a democratic newspaper' which had found that *Literature and Dogma* was most widely regarded as 'his most valued work.'⁷⁷

While aesthetes had tended to regard Arnold's departure from poetry as a symptom of passing genius, others saw the later prose as merely an extension of the moral dilemmas posed in the poetry. Whereas critics like Yeats and Wilde were apt to deride Arnold's definition of poetry as 'a criticism of life,' at least two writers, recognizing the relationship between poetry and its moral content, rallied to its defence.⁷⁸ Leslie Stephen, noting how the phrase had initially given great offence, used the opportunity to show how, if taken as an epigram and not a philosophical dogma, a proper understanding of 'criticism of life' could show that current attempts to deny the connection between art and morality were essentially misled.⁷⁹ Laurence Binyon also used 'criticism of life' in this broad sense, as a phrase connoting a general link between literary criticism and art.⁸⁰ W.A. Appleyard, too, recalled how the phrase had originally registered hostility, only, he claimed, because there had been little explanation of its real meaning. The phrase was founded on the fact that forty years before, according to Appleyard, Arnold had been reacting to the growing separation of feeling and intellect by becoming a philosopher-poet.⁸¹ To these readers,

Arnold was certainly not the poet of romantic withdrawal but the writer of verse which struggled to articulate questions to which all men could relate.

The idea that Arnold's poetry was only for a few readers with superior aesthetic dispositions was perhaps most audaciously challenged by that champion of intellectual democracy, W.T. Stead, who published two volumes of selections from Arnold in his 'Penny Poets' series. The second volume contained the following preface:

When I published the first series of selections from Matthew Arnold's poems, I wondered greatly whether a poet so exclusive and so cultivated would meet with a welcome from the masses.

The result has proved that the multitude is capable of appreciating poetry which has hitherto been regarded as the exclusive luxury of the cultivated few To most of them his very name has been unknown, and it was with unfeigned surprise they discovered how great a treasure had laid so long within their reach. Librarians reported that a new demand for Arnold's poems had sprung up. Ministers were surprised to find working men, to whom they were paying a pastoral visit, full of interest in Matthew Arnold

It is welcome evidence as to the wide diffusion of taste for good literature that it should be possible to produce and to sell within less than six months nearly 200,000 copies of Matthew Arnold's poems.⁸²

Clearly, the real issue at stake here was not Matthew Arnold's poems. The same *Spectator* writer who, three years earlier, had spoken of Arnold's 'genius,' published a reply to Stead, once again entitled 'The Popularity of Matthew Arnold:'

Mr. Stead may well congratulate himself 'on the wide diffusion of taste for good literature,' of which he has produced evidence by the sale, 'within less than six months,' of 'nearly two hundred thousand' penny copies of Matthew Arnold's poems. But even now, looking to the special selection made in the little penny number . . . we venture to doubt whether the popularity was gained as much by his finest verse as by the didacticism of his strange little versified sermons against popular modes of thought.

Granted, the penny edition excluded most of the elegiac poems that established literary men had widely recognized as Arnold's best, but the *Spectator* did not stop at criticizing Stead's editorial abilities. They went on, after being challenged to admit that the audience of good poetry was not as exclusive as they had at first thought, to swiftly appropriate a u-turn. There were, they observed, more didactic passages in Arnold's poems 'than we remembered till we took up this penny selection from his poems.' All that could be concluded, therefore, was that 'Matthew Arnold's conventional verse is a new-fashioned jog-trot didacticism without a ring of true poetry in it.'⁸³ In his reply to the *Spectator*,

Augustine Birrell defended the moralistic element in 'East London' and 'The Better Part,' both of which were included in the Stead edition, by saying that 'there are finer sonnets in the English language . . . but there are no better sermons.' Birrell called on Arnold's own admittance that his chief readers were 'the middle classes . . . and love sermons,' and concluded by drawing attention to the new 1890 edition of *Poetical Works* which he was sure would 'immensely increase' Arnold's readership further. 'The times are ripening for his poetry,' said Birrell, 'which is full of foretastes of the morrow.'⁸⁴ Lionel Johnson, in a review of the same popular edition, had applauded the publication of a cheap one volume edition and argued vehemently for the poetry's democratic readership. 'Arnold's thoughts and emotions are profoundly human,' he said, 'we cannot say of them that only an Oxford man, under such and such influences, at such and such a time, could have felt them.'⁸⁵ Appleyard also suggested that the publication of the *Poetic Works* 'happily testifies to the growth of his admirers.'⁸⁶ But, on this matter, none was more able than the educationist, Mountstuart Grant-Duff, to speak in a more informed way about the wider dissemination of 'culture,' and place the debate in a larger context, perhaps in terms that Arnold himself would best have understood. His observation was most perceptive:

It is often said that [Arnold's poetry] appeals only to a limited circle of readers, and that to the great mass . . . it says nothing at all If the enormous machinery of education which has been called into existence in the last thirty years is producing any real effect on our national appreciation of literature, I should be led to augur that the readers of Mr Arnold's poetry will be far more numerous thirty years hence than they were in his lifetime. The phase of thought which gave birth to most of the poems is one which, confirmed at first to a limited number of mind, has been and is spreading rapidly.⁸⁷

That Arnold had contributed to the spread of intellectual standards in every strata of British society was to become a key claim by critics for whom Arnold was the prophet of social cohesion. To these, rather than the poet *manqué* whose genius had been buried beneath a welter of departmental duties, Arnold was seen as the conscientious inspector whose work at the Education Office was an important contributing factor to his overall development. Perhaps there was no greater tribute to Arnold's influence outside the purely

literary sphere than that offered by John Morley who, in a House of Commons debate on education, paused to express:

For many on both sides of the House our sense of the loss of one who was a man of letters of the first eminence and distinction, who, besides that, was a public servant of the greatest usefulness, and who, finally, constantly showed a very keen and luminous insight into some of the most urgent social, intellectual, and political needs of his generation and his country.⁸⁸

Among other tributes to Arnold's perceptiveness as a critic of education were the posthumous publication of Arnold's *Reports on Elementary Schools* by the head of the Education Office, Sir Francis Sandford, and Sir Joshua Fitch's *Thomas and Matthew Arnold and Their Influence on English Education* (1897). In his introduction, Sandford recommended 'many of his opinions and suggestions . . . to the careful study of those who, in Downing Street and Parliament,' had to deal with a subject on which Arnold had had 'such high authority as an expert.'⁸⁹ Among those who welcomed the publication of the *Reports* was P.A. Barnett who saw in them the importance and continuing relevance of Arnold's educational thought, especially as it touched on many of the issues surrounding the New Code.⁹⁰ However, there was no greater testimony to the importance of Arnold's educational work than Fitch's monograph. Despite the widespread belief that the most important aspect of Arnold was his literary work, Fitch informed his readers that 'it was as an educationist that a large section of the public insisted on regarding him.' Regardless of the fact that Arnold himself had on occasion rebelled against the tedium of school inspection, Fitch, a longtime H.M. Inspector of Training Colleges himself, said that he was 'unable to agree with those who think his great gifts were thrown away upon a thankless and insignificant office.' In fact, he claimed, Arnold's 'influence on schools was . . . far more real and telling than he himself supposed.'⁹¹

Undoubtedly, the greatest source of ammunition for those who wanted to dispel the image of Arnold as a poet-critic first and only secondarily as a public servant, was George Russell's edition of *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*. By devoting only a dozen pages to the correspondence before his appointment as H.M. Inspector of Schools in 1851, Russell's

edition all but overlooked Arnold's most decadent period.⁹² Many of the 1895 letters are consequently taken up with public duty, reflections on contemporary politics, and observations gleaned from foreign educational missions. In effect, the Arnold that emerges from Russell's edition is the respectable family man and conscientious civil servant fully immersed in the social life of his era. This is the Arnold who revels in the prospect that he has at last a chance of 'getting at the English public' and who foresees himself becoming 'interested in the schools after a little time.' It was hardly an exclusive aesthete that Russell had in mind when he wrote in his introduction:

His faculty of enjoyment was peculiarly keen, and there were few departments of life which it did not touch . . . his manifold culture and fine taste enabled him to appreciate at its proper value all that is good in high civilisation; and yet his character found a zest in the most commonplace pleasures of daily existence. Probably Art . . . affected him less than most men of equal cultivation; but there never lived a human being to whom Literature and Society -- books and people -- taking each word in its most comprehensive sense, yielded a livelier or a more constant joy.⁹³

Even the couplet chosen as the epigraph for the collection, the original lines that Wilde had parodied in his quip to Frank Harris, attested to the emphasis that Russell was to lay on Arnold the public servant over the isolated artist:

O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this is love, and love is duty.

To some literary reviewers, the *Letters* were a great disappointment, reinforcing as they did the idea that Arnold's creative energy had been wasted on momentary interests. The *Guardian*, preferring to stress the importance of the poetry, repounded most vehemently:

Of that aspect of Arnold's mind of which it would have been of the highest interest to learn more -- of the hidden, solitary life of thought and meditation which has received in the poems such delicate and subtle expression -- the letters seldom give a glimpse. It requires an effort to realise that they are the outcome of the same mind.⁹⁴

The *Spectator*, too, grieved that Arnold 'was not at his full height in letter-writing, as he was in writing his poems.' These private revelations did little more, they said, than prove that his 'mind was too full of practical duties to spare for poetry the full room needed to kindle intense imaginative life.'⁹⁵ Not all were so ready to attack these later developments, though, and much as he continued to favour 'the older brother,' Dowden

welcomed the *Letters* by suggesting that although 'circumstances checked his full development as a poet,' Arnold had bravely 'transformed himself into a critic of society, of politics, of literature.'⁹⁶ Morley, who also saw Arnold's future worth in his poetry, nevertheless recognized in the *Letters* 'one of the most occupied men of his time' and an individual who 'took the deepest, sincerest, and most active interest in the well-being of his countrymen.' If nothing else, said Morley, Arnold had shown, 'saturated as he was with literature and the literary spirit,' that literature was no 'end in itself, apart from life, conduct, character, and all that makes either the base or the structure of society.'⁹⁷

Other commentators, not just willing to concede that the later, more public phase was an important part of the overall Arnold but who regarded his controversial writings as his most significant, were to hail the *Letters* as a vindication against the narrow aesthetic view that seemed to dominate the literary reviews. Fitch, for instance, anticipating that their publication would 'hardly add to Arnold's *literary* reputation,' nevertheless said that they revealed 'a career of steadily increasing honour and public usefulness.'⁹⁸ Charles Fisher saw in them 'a portrait of the real man,' and noted particularly how, 'being . . . brought into touch with the centres of political life,' Arnold's expertise enabled him to promote important reforms 'upon those responsible for the administration of public affairs.'⁹⁹ Fisher's claim for 'the real' Arnold and Fitch's emphasis on 'honour and public usefulness' were undoubtedly prompted by Russell's introductory claims that the *Letters* were 'in a word, *himself*,' revealing that 'a more genuinely amiable man never lived.'¹⁰⁰ From now on, it was clear that the *Letters* could to be invoked against those who charged their author with being supercilious in politics and impious in theology. 'How can superciliousness be attributed to one who showed such kindness to all classes of his fellow men,' asked one advocate, while Russell himself, noting how Arnold's theology had once been 'the subject of some just criticism, seems now a matter of comparatively little moment.' As far as he was concerned, the *Letters* had revealed that 'his nature was essentially religious.'¹⁰¹

Yet Russell's attempt to skirt the theological Arnold bears testimony to the fact that, although the religious pieces were by far the most controversial side of his work, they were, with one or two exceptions, the least talked about among critics in the eighties and nineties; even among those who saw Arnold's polemical phase as his most important, then, his religious position was often found least favourable. There were, after all, readerships to think of, and, despite the growing liberalization of thought on such matters, these were still highly divisive issues. Even many who would call themselves Arnoldian had certain reservations over, what was called by some, the 'irreverence' of *Literature and Dogma*, *St. Paul and Protestantism*, and *God and the Bible*. These works had aroused anger in even his 'admirers and disciples,' observed Coleridge, 'and have drawn forth the only notes out of harmony with that full chord of tender, melancholy, respectful regret which has been poured forth over his tomb.'¹⁰² Ever Arnold's advocate, Coleridge was sympathetic, however, and, with certain reservations, sought to dispel claims of irreverence and to show that Arnold's overall influence had been for good. Once more defending his friend, this time from those who criticized anonymously, Coleridge put the final test of propriety in 'the sincerity with which we have striven to see God's will and to do our duty,' terms that sound uncannily Arnoldian. Coleridge, in Arnold's defence, tried to put the religious polemics in their historic setting. When Arnold addressed these tender issues, he argued, 'no one questioned belief -- reason was divorced from religion.'¹⁰³ Even Leslie Stephen, who was responsible for bringing the series that was to become *Literature and Dogma* to a speedy conclusion when he took over as editor of the *Cornhill*, while, like Coleridge, refusing to commit himself to any specific ideas, stressed Arnold's ability to stir and agitate 'many brains.'¹⁰⁴ Although few could wholeheartedly embrace all of Arnold's controversial beliefs, therefore, it became quite common to argue for the overall value of Arnold's usefulness. Nor was this idea restricted to theological commentary, but carried over into the socio-political writings as well, where his dislike for immediate practice and dogma had earlier earned Arnold the charge of impracticability and

vagueness. Concepts like 'culture,' 'sweetness and light,' 'hebraism and hellenism,' had been largely the fruit of reactions, ideas taking their meaning from very specific contexts. Now that the individual debates which had initiated them were long forgotten, only the principles themselves remained in critics' minds.

Invariably, by treating his catch-phrases and key concepts, stylists were taken up with the general Arnold as opposed to the very opinionated social commentator. The *Pall Mall Gazette* spoke of Arnold's 'happy sayings, which stuck like burrs,' and Frederic Harrison was to remark how 'the very name of Matthew Arnold calls up to the memory a set of apt phrases and proverbial labels which have passed into our current literature How could modern literature be carried on,' he continued, 'were it forbidden to speak of "culture,"' and the many other words and phrases for which Arnold was, to a great extent, responsible.¹⁰⁵ By far the most significant Arnoldian concept in these reviewers' minds, the one which recurred most often in discussions of him, was 'culture' which, according to Grant-Duff, was 'the only one worth talking about.'¹⁰⁶ There was little doubt that the repeated use of such terms was deliberate, but opinion was divided over the purpose behind it. While some saw it as a decoy for Arnold's inability to think strenuously, others saw it as a deliberate rhetorical device.¹⁰⁷ Augustine Birrell saw telling 'a common jury half-a-dozen times the view of a case you wish them to entertain' as nothing less than 'a sound forensic maxim.' Since the majority of Arnold's readers were middle class and thereby constituted just such a jury, Birrell reasoned, then he was largely successful.¹⁰⁸ The *Athenaeum*, exasperated by Arnoldian repetition, nevertheless saw that it 'effected its purpose,' the coined formulae having 'bitten more deeply into the contemporary consciousness,' therefore allowing them to be 'easily recalled.'¹⁰⁹ If these commentaries are anything to go by, Arnold was indeed successful. Even if the original controversies were long forgotten, he had managed to bring the germs of his ideas to the marketplace and make them current.

Even Leslie Stephen, whose earlier criticism had struck at the heart of Arnold's critical method by attacking his desire to shun 'immediate practice,' expressed sympathy for Arnold's ideas in the abstract. To his earlier charge that concepts like 'culture' and 'sweetness and light' were merely smokescreens for the absence of practical solutions, Stephen now said that Arnold 'replied fairly enough that it was not his business . . . to mix in actual politics and draft Acts of Parliament . . . [but] to modify ideas.' Thus, even for this most unlikely of candidates, Arnold, after his death, had become separated from the issues that actually gave rise to the socio-political works, in order to affect thinking in a more general and idealistic way. Although his position was clearly 'impractical,' said Stephen, his works had had a beneficial effect on society. Hence, even Stephen was now able to accept the message of *Culture and Anarchy* by reducing it to its essentials:

We want, above all things, to get rid of prejudices in general, not of any special prejudice; to have our opinions constructed out of pure, impartial, unbiassed thought, free from all baser alloy of mephistic vapours. The mere self-willed assertion of our own fancies can never lift us to the higher point of view which would reveal our narrowness and ignorance. Hence the vast importance of 'culture.'¹¹⁰

In this reading of Arnold, the specific issues are characteristically neutralized, taken out of their historic context, and made idealistic, a fitting development given Arnold's dislike for 'immediate practice.'

While many of the aesthetic critics had dismissed *Culture and Anarchy* and *Friendship's Garland* as merely temporal expedients, then, the majority of writers who saw continuing worth in the social criticism often took issue with Arnold's political prescriptions while claiming permanence for his broader ideas, tone, and method. While it is almost impossible to find anyone agreeing with all of Arnold on specific legislative details, many zealously acclaimed his stance. 'It is very possible to disagree with him,' said W.E. Henley, 'but it is very difficult to resist his many graces of manner.'¹¹¹ G.E. Meredith, too, claimed that his essential 'charm did not depend on his being indisputably right in all his judgments . . . this he was not.' Citing the playfulness of Arminius, Meredith said that 'we loved him because of his temper.'¹¹² With those who supported

Arnold's campaign for 'sweetness and light' and the cultivation of 'culture,' political questions -- especially divisive issues like Ireland and the Deceased Wife's Sister -- were secondary. J.F. Kirk, clearly one of those who was sympathetic to Arnold's cause as the 'Apostle of Culture,' claimed for Arnold no systematic polity, saying 'it was, perhaps, the tone, rather than the substance, of his criticism which exercised a strong attraction, not unfelt by those who dissented from his opinions on many topics.'¹¹³ The idea of an Arnoldian stance as opposed to a delineated position, without any specific dogma to give it hard and fast definition, became common, not only in the treatment of society, but literature also, and a phenomenon that was to accelerate in the coming years.

One reason for the ease with which this abstraction of Arnoldian ideas became possible must surely have been in Arnold's own rhetorical use of language. By separating Arnold's works from the controversies that inspired and first gave them currency, his followers were to effect a distillation of Arnold's teaching, projecting him more and more in terms of self-justifying concepts and catch-phrases. This, in turn, was to result in a severe compartmentalization of the Arnold canon and, like the alternative aesthetic view, give rise to a distinct bias that the distillation process only served to make more potent. A divided Arnold was most certainly not a new phenomenon, as the previous chapter has shown; at the close of the century, however, with the first sustained images of Arnold, a polarization became apparent, partly due to historical determinants, partly to personal bias, and partly to the emergence of two corresponding strains of thought that had developed at Oxford in the late nineteenth century, one of which laid stress on the autonomy of art and letters, one of which stressed the social function of the critic. As a result, two kinds of Arnoldism were to emerge from Oxford at the end of the century, based on the development of these trends and effecting the emphasis that readers tended to put on various items in the Arnold canon. One concentrated on Arnold the literary figure, defining him as the poet and literary critic. The chief spokesman for this 'aesthetic Arnoldism' was to be the critic George Saintsbury with the first Arnold biography in 1899.

Alternatively, there were those, like George Russell, who in his 1904 monograph was to define Arnold in terms of *Culture and Anarchy* and *Friendship's Garland* and who saw Arnold's significance mainly as a critic of culture and only secondarily as a literary figure. Consequently, each of these positions was to lend heightened significance and varied meaning to their watchwords, 'Criticism' and 'Culture,' and the works that had enshrined them, *Essays in Criticism* and *Culture and Anarchy* respectively. For many years it had been supposed that the change in Arnold's career had occurred in 1853, the point at which it was believed he abandoned quietist poetry for combative prose. At the end of the century, however, when readers began to see connections between the literary criticism and poetry, it became more reasonable to assume that the change had come in 1867, the year in which he practically gave up poetry and temporarily abandoned purely aesthetic criticism in order to publish *Culture and Anarchy*, a watershed that many later critics were to come to recognize.

Notes

- ¹Anonymous, 'Occasional Notices,' *Journal of Education*, 226 (May 1, 1888), 241.
- ²Alfred Austin, 'Matthew Arnold in His Letters,' *National Review*, 26 (October, 1895), 483.
- ³H.D. Traill, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Contemporary Review*, 53 (June, 1888), 809
- ⁴Hugh Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1928), 46.
- ⁵Francis Gribble, *The Romance of the Oxford Colleges* (London, 1910), 164-70.
- ⁶Mowbray Morris, 'Leaves from a Note-Book,' *Macmillan's Magazine*, 65 (December, 1891), 156; 'Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Saturday Review*, 2 (April 21, 1888), 459. In a conversation shortly before his death in 1881, Disraeli had told Arnold that he envied the fact that 'the young men read you; they no longer read me.' [Quoted in G.W.E. Russell, *Collections and Recollections* (London, 1904), 248-9].
- ⁷W.H. Dawson, *Matthew Arnold and His Relation to the Thought of Our Time* (New York, 1904), iii.
- ⁸Anonymous review of *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*, *Athenaeum*, 3201 (March 2, 1889), 129.
- ⁹J.F. Kirk, 'Matthew Arnold,' *A Supplement to Allibone's Critical Dictionary of English Literature*, volume 1 (London, 1891), 49.
- ¹⁰Anonymous obituary, *Academy*, 833 (April 21, 1888), 273.
- ¹¹Austin, 'Matthew Arnold in His Letters,' 474.
- ¹²Quoted in Richard Perceval Graves, *A.E. Housman: The Scholar-Poet* (Oxford, 1981), 40; letter from E.W. Watson, May 25, 1936, quoted in George Watson, *A.E. Housman: A Divided Life* (London, 1957), 80.
- ¹³George Watson has said that the relationship between Moses Jackson and Housman 'corresponded in reality' to that of Clough and Arnold, suggesting that, like other young Oxford men, Housman found a correlative for his own university experience in 'Thyrsis' and 'Scholar Gipsy.' [Watson, *A.E. Housman*, 90]. Housman appears to have retained an admiration for Arnold all his life; he himself told of copying down *verbatim* from the *Daily Chronicle* Lord Coleridge's speech on the occasion of the unveiling of the Westminster bust and carrying it with him 'ever since . . . as a sort of intellectual salvolatile.' [A.E. Housman, *Selected Prose*, edited by John Carter (Cambridge, 1961), 196-7].
- ¹⁴Edward Thomas, *Oxford* (London, 1903), 109.
- ¹⁵'Beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene . . . steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, -- to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side? -- nearer, perhaps, than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties!' [Super, III: 290].
- ¹⁶Amy Cruse, *English Literature Through the Ages* (London, 1914), 556.
- ¹⁷*Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Rupert Hart-Davies (Oxford, 1979) 23.
- ¹⁸Leslie Stephen, 'Matthew Arnold,' *National Review*, 22:130 (December, 1893) 459.
- ¹⁹Osbert Burdett, *The Beardsley Period: An Essay in Perspective* (London, 1925), 267.
- ²⁰William Paton Ker, *The Art of Poetry: Seven Lectures 1920-22* (Oxford, 1923), 141; Ker's biographers noted how, in later life, he would escape London 'to take his way across Hinksey Ferry and up the hill that Arnold and Clough had walked.' [J. and F. MacCunn, *Recollections of W.P. Ker* (Glasgow, 1924), 34].
- ²¹A.C. Swinburne, [review], *Fortnightly Review*, 2 (October, 1867), 424.
- ²²*The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, edited by Edmund Gosse and Thomas Wise, (London, 1926), volume 13: 417, 134; volume 16: 137-138.
- ²³Douglas Bush goes so far as to call Pater's emphasis on Hellenism at the expense of 'its essential helpmate, Hebraism . . . a perversion' of Arnold. [Douglas Bush, *Matthew Arnold: A Survey of His Poetry and Prose* (New York, 1971), 130]. Kevin O'Brien similarly sees in Wilde and the nineties decadence something by which, 'had Arnold lived long enough . . . [he] would have been appalled.' [Kevin O'Brien, 'Matthew Arnold and the Hellenism of the 1890s,' *Antigonish Review*, 35 (Autumn, 1978), 80].
- ²⁴Pater's actual relationship to Arnold is, of course, much more complex than this one-sided influence on the Arnoldian tradition would suggest. For a well-documented and extremely thorough examination of this

complex relationship, see David DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater* (London, 1969). René Wellek points to the emphasis on morality in Pater's essay on *Measure for Measure* in order to refute 'the common cliché about Pater's amoral aestheticism.' [René Wellek, *History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950*, volume 4 (London, 1966), 385].

²⁵Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1987), 308.

²⁶Daiches sees a parallel between the 'mood poetry' of Arnold and the late nineteenth-century aesthetic movement. This mood, says Daiches, 'responded to the same doubts and uncertainties that oppressed Hardy and Housman and others but the response took the form of total refuge in inward feelings . . . There is a curious parallel between art for art's sake and endurance for endurance sake.' [David Daiches, *Some Late Victorian Attitudes* (London, 1969), 40].

²⁷Bush, *Matthew Arnold*, 130.

²⁸E.D.H. Johnson, *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry: Sources of the Poetic Imagination in Tennyson and Browning* (Princeton, 1952), xi.

²⁹Arthur Symons, 'In Praise of Gypsies,' *Gypsy Lore Society Journal*, 1 (1908), 296.

³⁰Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London, 1899), 10, 175. Symons' own allegiance to Pater was most strongly expressed in *The Study of Walter Pater* (London, 1932), in which he claimed that *The Renaissance* was 'all inspired.' [46].

³¹Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1939), 395.

³²Philip Cohen, *The Moral Vision of Oscar Wilde* (London, 1976), 256; Cohen goes on to admit that later Wilde was to accept more of Arnold's emphasis on community over individuality and thereby 'narrowed the intellectual gap considerably.'

³³Wilde, *Selected Letters*, 28. Interestingly, Arnold responded favourably to Wilde's letter and replied along similar lines: 'I see you have found out the force of what Byron so insisted on:- that one must shake off London life before one can do one's best work.' [Quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 137-8].

³⁴Oscar Wilde, *The Artist As Critic: The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Richard Ellmann (London, 1970), 366.

³⁵Quoted in *Interviews and Recollections*, edited by E.H. Mikhail, volume 1 (London, 1979), 31.

³⁶From an 1891 review of *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*, reprinted in *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, edited by K. Beckson (London, 1970), 83.

³⁷Other men of letters were also to play down the objective element in favour of Arnold's subjectivity. The *Athenaeum*, for example, deemed Arnold's introduction of the *causerie* most valuable: 'It is usual to speak of Matthew Arnold as having revolutionised English criticism, by which is usually meant book-criticism . . . In introducing the methods of Sainte-Beuve into England he transferred the interest in criticism from the books to the man. What he did in criticism was to introduce the *causerie*, and with it the personal element . . . a *causerie* with him charmed not so much by adding to our information about the author or his book, as because it added to our knowledge of Matthew Arnold. ['Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Athenaeum*, 3156 (April 21, 1888) 500]. This 'personal element' was a common talking-point, simply because the concepts of 'disinterestedness' and 'seeing the object as it is' had been so central to Arnold's critical vocabulary. Leslie Stephen, for one, saw Arnold's pursuit of 'the object in itself' as an impossible aim. Arnold, in reality, had been seeking a solution for himself, said Stephen, and not some kind of vastly objective critical end. 'The weaker side . . . of the poetical criticism is its tendency to be "subjective" . . . He will scarcely be human,' said Stephen, 'if his judgments are not affected by his personal equation.' [Stephen, 'Matthew Arnold,' 464].

³⁸Wilde, *The Artist As Critic*, 384.

³⁹William Butler Yeats, *The Uncollected Prose of W.B. Yeats*, edited by J.P. Frayne and Colton Johnson, volume 2, (London, 1975), 92.

⁴⁰W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (New York, 1953), 102.

⁴¹Christopher Gillie says that, while Wilde's thesis in *The Decay of Lying* 'was not what Arnold meant at all . . . yet Wilde was also defying the Philistines.' [Christopher Gillie, *Movements in English Literature 1900-1940* (Cambridge, 1975), 5].

⁴²Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 285.

⁴³*Poems by Matthew Arnold*, edited by A.C. Benson (London, 1900), xxiii, xxxiii. Benson's allegiance to Pater is more than apparent in his *Walter Pater* (London, 1906).

⁴⁴Obituary, *Academy*, 833 (April 21, 1888), 273.

- 45 M.E. Grant-Duff, 'Matthew Arnold's Writings,' *Murray's Magazine*, 8:39 (March, 1890), 293, 292.
- 46 Laurence Binyon, 'Matthew Arnold's Poetry,' *Temple Bar*, 84 (September, 1888), 106.
- 47 Alfred Austin, 'Matthew Arnold,' *National Review*, 11:636 (May, 1888), 417.
- 48 Anonymous, 'Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Athenaeum*, 3156 (April 21, 1888), 500.
- 49 Mowbray Morris, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Quarterly Review*, 167 (October, 1888), 415.
- 50 Quoted by Carl Dawson in *Matthew Arnold: The Poetry*, Routledge Critical Heritage Series (London, 1973), 163.
- 51 Benson, ed., *Poems by Matthew Arnold*, xxxiv.
- 52 Frederic Harrison, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Nineteenth Century*, 39:229 (March, 1896), 440.
- 53 Stephen, 'Matthew Arnold,' 402.
- 54 Traill, 'Matthew Arnold,' 876, 874.
- 55 Anonymous, 'Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Athenaeum*, 3156 (April 21, 1888), 501.
- 56 Stephen, 'Matthew Arnold,' 462.
- 57 W.J. Dawson, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Great Thoughts*, 3 (July 27, 1889), 57.
- 58 Traill, 'Matthew Arnold,' 869.
- 59 Please see appendix.
- 60 Anonymous, 'Matthew Arnold's Popularity,' *Spectator*, 70 (March 25, 1893), 382.
- 61 A.E. Housman, quoted in Carl Dawson and John Pfordresher, editors, *Matthew Arnold: Prose Writings*, Routledge Critical Heritage Series (London, 1979), 409. Although Housman was probably correct about the majority of the British public not caring to read the Homer lectures, its being out of print was not for lack of effort. Augustine Birrell had, in 1892, also called for the book's immediate republication, [Augustine Birrell, *Res Judicatae* (London, 1892), 191] and no less than two publishing houses had sought permission from Arnold's widow to reissue but were prevented on the basis that, according to Mrs Arnold, 'Matt resolved not to republish it during the lifetime of Mr Francis Newman . . . and . . . reopen, a now . . . forgotten trouble.' [For Mrs Arnold's correspondence with George Smith, see the author's 'Ten Letters from Mrs Arnold,' *Arnoldian*, 15:2 (Winter, 1988), 12-17]. As it happened, Smith did eventually secure permission and, in fact, published a popular edition of *On Translating Homer* in 1896, with very little consequence.
- 62 The 1888 response to Arnold's other literary critical works was more subdued. *On the Study of Celtic Literature* was forgotten by most, and those who thought it significant enough to mention, were cool. Stephen called it 'delightful' but differed with its basic use of ethnological comparison, and Grant-Duff ranked it below *On Translating Homer* and *Merope* on the basis that Arnold was an amateur in this area of ancient literature. The preface of *Poems* (1853), Arnold's first real critical essay and one that is today widely regarded as a landmark in his career, received only the rarest of mentions. Although both Morris and Dawson were perceptive enough to mention it, the latter referred to it as the '1854' preface.
- 63 Anonymous, 'Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Saturday Review* (April 21, 1888), 459.
- 64 'Death of Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Times* (April 17, 1888), 10.
- 65 Traill, 'Matthew Arnold,' 878.
- 66 Morris, 'Matthew Arnold,' 406-7.
- 67 G.A. Simcox, Review of *Essays in Criticism Second Series*, *Academy*, 865 (December 1, 1888), 345-46.
- 68 Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*, introduced by J.D. Coleridge (London, 1888), iv; Coleridge's defence was perhaps initiated by Alfred Austin's piece on 'Matthew Arnold and the Loves of the Poets' in January's *National Review*. Arnold had to be admired, said Austin, in that 'he has been picking his way among naked swords for many years; and, till within a month ago, he had never once wounded himself.' Picturing the great enemy of the Philistines sitting down to eat with his former adversaries, Austin remarked that with this essay 'Mr Arnold has tripped at last!' [Alfred Austin, 'Mr Matthew Arnold on the Loves of the Poets,' *National Review*, 10:59 (January 1888), 768].
- 69 R.H. Hutton, 'Matthew Arnold as Critic,' *Criticism on Contemporary Thought and Thinkers Selected from the Spectator* (London, 1894), volume 1: 223, 224. It is unfortunate that reactions to 'Shelley' obscured the merit of the book as a whole. As R.H. Super has said, the piece 'is somewhat out of place in the collection.' Not only that, but it is possible that readers were taking its various comments out of

context. After all, one must bear firmly in mind that it is a review of a biography, 'one more of Arnold's demolitions of humourless pedantry, but not an essay on poetry.' [Super, XI: 471-472].

⁷⁰Anonymous Review of *Essays in Criticism Second Series*, *Saturday Review*, 66 (November 17, 1888), 589-90.

⁷¹Edward Dowden, *Transcripts and Studies* (London, 1888), 209.

⁷²Lionel Johnson, Review of *Poetical Works*, *Academy*, 975 (January 10, 1891), 31.

⁷³Kirk, *Allibone's Critical Dictionary*, 49.

⁷⁴'Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Athenaeum*, 500.

⁷⁵Morris, 'Leaves from a Note-Book,' 156.

⁷⁶Morris, 'Matthew Arnold,' 414.

⁷⁷Traill, 'Matthew Arnold,' 720.

⁷⁸Apart from 'the object in itself,' the Arnoldian phrase that had always attracted attention was 'criticism of life.' Traill called it a 'crotchet,' [Traill, 'Matthew Arnold,' 877] while the *Saturday Review* called it, like his other general theories, illogical and unmeaning. ['Mr Matthew Arnold,' *Saturday Review*, 459].

⁷⁹Stephen, 'Matthew Arnold,' 463.

⁸⁰Laurence Binyon, 'Matthew Arnold's Poetry,' *Temple Bar*, 84 (September, 1888), 107.

⁸¹W.A. Appleyard, 'Matthew Arnold: Criticism of Life,' *National Review*, 95 (January, 1891), 660.

⁸²W.T. Stead, editor, *Matthew Arnold: Selected Poems*, Penny Poets Series (London, 1896), 2.

⁸³Anonymous, 'The Popularity of Matthew Arnold,' *Spectator*, 76 (June 6, 1896), 800.

⁸⁴Birrell, *Res Judicatae*, 178, 202.

⁸⁵Lionel Johnson, Review of Arnold's *Poetical Works*, *Academy*, 975 (January 10, 1891), 32.

⁸⁶Appleyard, 'Matthew Arnold: Criticism of Life,' 666.

⁸⁷Grant-Duff, 'Matthew Arnold's Writings,' 302.

⁸⁸*Hansard*, 325 (April 27, 1888), 820. Not all politicians shared Morley's opinion. As he himself later reported: 'It fell to me to have to express in the House of Commons, one night shortly after his death, our sense of his services to education; and of the loss of them to the country. It was felt that a proper ceremony had been gone through, but, except for a few of the elect on both sides, the recognition was received with respect, without any particular warmth of comprehension. [John Morley, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Nineteenth Century*, 38 (December, 1895), 1048].

⁸⁹Sir Francis Sandford, ed., *Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882* (London, 1889), viii.

⁹⁰P.A. Barnett, Review of *Reports on Elementary Schools*, *Academy*, 891 (June 1, 1889), 369.

⁹¹Sir Joshua Fitch, *Thomas and Matthew Arnold and Their Influence on English Education* (London, 1897), 157, 170-71.

⁹²The most important source for tracing the development of Arnold's mind during his undergraduate years, the letters to Clough, were not to appear in print until 1932.

⁹³G.W.E. Russell, ed., *Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1888*, volume 1 (London, 1895), ix.

⁹⁴Review of Russell's *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, *Guardian* (January 22, 1896), 129.

⁹⁵'Matthew Arnold's Letters,' *Spectator*, 3517 (November 23, 1895), 719-20. Another reviewer who speculated on the possibility that civil service duties had usurped Arnold's poetic genius was Charles Fisher who said that 'lovers of good poetry will eagerly turn to these letters to discover how it was that so exquisite a poet . . . discarded the art . . . and devoted himself to prose essays and political pamphlets.' From the letters it could be deduced, said Fisher, that the transition was most probably due to 'the absorption of his powers in the ordinary routine work of inspection.' [Charles Fisher, 'Matthew Arnold as Seen Through His Letters,' *Gentleman's Magazine* 283:2003 (November, 1897), 495-6]. The *Athenaeum* also observed that 'with Matthew Arnold the continued application of criticism to life made the creative impulse come more and more rarely.' [Review of *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, *Athenaeum*, 3553 (November 30, 1895), 745].

⁹⁶Edward Dowden, 'Matthew Arnold's Letters,' *Saturday Review*, 80 (December 7, 1895), 757.

⁹⁷Morley, 'Matthew Arnold,' 1044, 1053, 1050.

⁹⁸Fitch, *Thomas and Matthew Arnold*, 160-61.

⁹⁹Charles Fisher, 'Matthew Arnold as Seen Through His Letters,' 499.

¹⁰⁰Russell, ed., *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1: viii.

¹⁰¹G. Le Grys Norgate, 'Some Aspects of Matthew Arnold's Letters,' *Temple Bar*, 59 (November, 1896), 544.

¹⁰²J.D. Coleridge, 'Matthew Arnold: The Prose,' *New Review*, 1 (August 1889), 224. Perhaps Coleridge had been thinking of such offerings as the Bishop of Derry's poem mourning Arnold's death yet constrained by the absence of the subject of Christ in his verse. [William Derry and Raphoe (Bishop of Derry), 'Matthew Arnold,' *Spectator*, 3122 (April 22, 1888), 575].

Others voiced opinions that must have been common among the clergy. Expressing regret 'that Matthew Arnold was ever drawn into the conflicts of controversy at all,' Reverend Dawson, otherwise extremely sympathetic, said that 'the urbanity, the coolness, the patience of the accomplished critic of literature forsake him when he enters the arena of theological controversy.' Charging him with being both unreasonable and discourteous when it came to theology, Dawson likened Arnold to 'the narrowest bigot.' [Dawson, 'Matthew Arnold,' 57]. Another minister, Rev Robert Watson of the United Free Church, was a little less antagonistic. But as the title of his book, *Gospels of Yesterday*, tacitly conveys, Watson felt Arnold's 'Nature-religion,' by then, obsolete. His discovery was, said Watson, in the end, a worthless formula 'when comprehended.' [Robert Watson, *Gospels of Yesterday: Drummond, Spencer, Arnold* (London, 1888), 184]. Arnold's theology had not sat well with clergymen. In fact, it had been as much an attack on them -- particularly Nonconformists and bishops -- as it had on the idea of a personal God. As they bore the brunt of his biting humour, it was only natural that they should become his chief opponents. With the frequent reprinting of the religious works, it is probable that Arnold made more enemies over the religious proclamations than any of his other critical ventures combined. Despite all the ministerial rebukes, however, various of the commemorative poems pictured Arnold crossing over to the other side unscathed, and there is never any mention of Arnold's forfeiting eternal security on account of his various blasphemies. Robert Louis Stevenson, while suggesting that Arnold was almost certainly bound for Heaven, in a quip to a friend, said that he was not sure that Arnold would like God very much! [Quoted in Justin Wintle and Richard Kenin, ed., *Dictionary of Biographical Quotation* (London, 1978), 31].

Examining the responses to *Literature and Dogma's* first appearance, Sidney Coulling notes the 'sharply contrasting difference between the responses of religiously oriented publications and those without ecclesiastical affiliation.' [Sidney Coulling, *Matthew Arnold and His Critics* (New York, 1974), 236]. The situation had not really changed by 1888 and, although many chose to ignore the issue, Arnold's theology continued to receive the most sympathetic hearing from literary critics and non-ecclesiastics. Grant-Duff went so far as to suggest that 'most people who think at all will agree with him.' Few could study *Literature and Dogma*, he said, 'without learning a good deal.' [Grant-Duff, 'Matthew Arnold's Writings,' 296]. By far the most enthusiastic commentator on Arnold's theology, Grant-Duff had written in his diary of 1889, after a meeting of the Westminster memorial committee at the Abbey: 'Here were we assembled in . . . the very place in which the Westminster divines had set forth in elaborate propositions the curious form of nonsense which was Christianity to them, to do honour to a man who, standing quite outside their dogmas, had seen more deeply into the heart of the matter than all of them put together.' [M.E. Grant-Duff, *Notes From a Diary, 1889-1891*, (London, 1901), 48].

Frederick Myers, whose father had been a clergyman, devoted the larger portion of his *Fortnightly Review* article to the treatment of Arnold's religion. Taking upon himself the task of explaining 'the line of work on which [Arnold] would . . . have wished us to dwell,' he set about justifying points on which Arnold 'was often misunderstood.' Instead of seeing the religious works as many others had, a cul-de-sac, or as Saintsbury was to later call them, products of Arnold's time 'in the wilderness,' Myers considered the treatment of religion to be a natural development in one who was accustomed to dealing 'with dominant ideas.' Unfortunately, said Myers, Arnold had been treated 'as a flippant and illusory Christian, instead of as a specially devout and conservative Agnostic.' At its base, Myers found he had to take issue with Arnold's perception of the person and significance of Christ, harking back to the issue that had stormed around *Literature and Dogma's* first appearance, the actuality of the Resurrection. Nevertheless, in tone and method he was on Arnold's side. Indeed, the essence of Arnold's teaching, 'to live up to the best light that conscience gives,' was, said Myers, 'the position which is becoming perhaps commoner than any other among our leading minds.' Myers, possibly the most perceptive reader of Arnoldian theology from this period, appears to be the first to have stated the formal connection between Arnold and Mrs. Humphrey Ward's *Robert Elsmere*. [F.W.H. Myers, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Fortnightly Review*, 257 (May 1, 1888), 720, 724, 721].

¹⁰³Coleridge, 'Matthew Arnold: The Prose,' 230, 226.

¹⁰⁴For Stephen's part in the cancellation of *Literature and Dogma*, see Coulling, *Matthew Arnold and His Critics*, 334; Stephen, 'Matthew Arnold,' 476.

105⁵The Sudden Death of Matthew Arnold,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, (April 16, 1888), 9; Frederic Harrison, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Nineteenth Century*, 229 (March, 1896), 433.

106⁶Grant-Duff, 'Matthew Arnold's Writings,' 274.

107⁷Objecting to Arnold's practice of repeating these very phrases, Mowbray Morris attributed it to 'a partial failure of ideas.' [Morris, 'Matthew Arnold,' 405]. The *Saturday Review* called it 'damnable iteration' and also associated it with intellectual inadequacy, in that 'he could repeat the phrase . . . four times in a paragraph and apparently think that the repetition constituted an argument.' [Anonymous review of *Essays in Criticism, Second Series, Saturday Review*, 66 (November 17, 1888), 590]. 'His incessant iteration,' remarked Traill, was merely 'a tactical expedient.' [Traill, 'Matthew Arnold,' 880].

108⁸Birrell, *Res Judicatae*, 193.

109⁹*Athenaeum*, 'Mr Matthew Arnold,' 500.

110⁰Stephen, 'Matthew Arnold,' 466, 470.

111¹W.E. Henley, *Views and Reviews* (London, 1890), 88.

112²G.E. Meredith, 'The Source of Matthew Arnold's Power,' *Church Review*, 52 (1888), 66.

113³Kirk, *Allibone's Critical Dictionary*, 49.

CHAPTER THREE

The Aestheticism of George Saintsbury

Perhaps the most important, certainly the most influential, commentator on Arnold at the turn of the century was the literary critic, George Saintsbury. 'Generations of students and readers have accepted his authority,' says Dorothy Richardson, and, although Saintsbury may be little regarded today, Christopher Morley spoke of him in 1937 as 'the king of critics in our lifetime.'¹ Walter Leuba numbers Oliver Elton, Herbert Grierson, W.P. Ker, Walter Raleigh, and many others among 'the scholars who read and honoured Saintsbury,' many of whom were probably first introduced to Arnold through Saintsbury's work.² Throughout his numerous books on literary and critical history, Saintsbury was not only to record his debt to Arnold, but even to place him at the centre of the English critical renaissance that he believed had taken place at the end of the nineteenth century. So numerous and severe were Saintsbury's reservations, however, that the epithet 'Arnoldian' can only reservedly be applied to him. Although he was one of the first to use the term, both as adjective and noun, it was almost always employed in a negative sense or in order to distance himself from Arnold's view on a particular subject. Nevertheless, as the author of the first monograph on Arnold and several influential essays on his place in literary history, Saintsbury's response cannot be ignored.

Apart from the authority that comes from having such an influential status among one's contemporaries, another reason for Saintsbury's relevance to a discussion of Arnold's changing reputation is because he was the first to attempt a sustained definition of the aesthetic-moral conflict that underlay most views of Arnold at the turn of the century. Although he consistently separated himself from the decadence of Wilde and his contemporaries, Saintsbury's response owes much to the Oxford influence of Paterian criticism, making him the most vocal representative of the aesthetic view of Arnold at *fin de siècle*. Consequently, it is only really in the light of its author's development under the

influence of Oxford aestheticism that the real significance of the first Arnold biography can be understood.

As a student at Oxford, as he was later to recognize, Saintsbury, like Wilde, had lived in the historic proximity of Arnold's influence:

Among the subjects of these papers there is hardly one in regard to whom I can speak in the tone of 'How it struck a contemporary,' to the same extent as I can with regard to Mr Matthew Arnold. Not of course that I can claim to be a contemporary of Mr Arnold's in the strict sense; for he had taken his degree before I was born, and was an author before I was able to spell. But I can lay claim to having seen the birth of his popularity, its whole career since till death, the stationary state which preceded and succeeded that death, and something like a commencement of the usual depreciation and spoilation which so surely follows.³

Saintsbury spoke as one qualified with first-hand knowledge of the changing fortunes of his subject. He had matured as a critic in the shadow of Arnold and had probably even heard some of the original lectures from the Poetry Chair. Certainly, they would have had mutual acquaintances. Saintsbury had entered Merton College in 1863, the year after the Homer lectures, and had, like Arnold himself, taken a second in *literae humaniores*. As a young critic with literary aspirations Saintsbury must have watched with keen interest, until his departure in 1868, the rise of Arnold's literary star with such works as *Essays in Criticism* and *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. For all his admiration, though, Saintsbury always harboured reservations about Arnold's critical method. 'I think I have always recked my own rede from 1865 to the present day in this respect,' he was later to warn, "'Admire, enjoy, and be thankful for Mr Arnold as a critic; but be careful about imitating him, and never obey him without examination.'"⁴ Looking back at that first 1865 appearance of the *Essays*, Saintsbury recalled how his own response differed from those around him:

Most young men of twenty who had any taste for English letters when the 'Essays' appeared fell in love with them My own admiration for them was . . . a good deal lukewarm at first; and though it has never got any colder since, and has, I think, a little increased in temperature, it has never been, and I do not think it ever will be, at boiling point.⁵

This should hardly surprise us. The image that we have of Saintsbury as an undergraduate at Oxford is as a misanthrope, due, in no small part, to his commitment to unpopular High

Church and Tory ideals.⁶ The reservations that he felt over the *Essays* must have owed something to the comments that Arnold had made about the Tory establishment in 'The Function of Criticism' and his challenges to orthodoxy in 'The Bishop and the Philosopher,' so that, while most around him marvelled at this revolutionary critic who not only had a fresh, new way of looking at literature but seemed to articulate the liberal temper that engulfed Oxford at that time, it is easy to see why Saintsbury's reception of the *Essays* was 'lukewarm.' Added to this is the fact that, at this time, Saintsbury appears to have been less concerned with the need for religious and social reform than with the romantic beauty of Swinburne's newly published *Poems and Ballads*. Apparently, at Merton he spent his time 'reading aloud by turns in a select company *Delores*, and the *Triumph of Time*, *Laus Veneris* and *Faustine*, and all the other wonders of the volume.'⁷ His enthusiasm for Swinburne, in sharp contrast to a cool regard for the *Essays*, is the earliest sign of a tendency that was to stay with Saintsbury for the rest of his life.

If he had felt certain reservations over the *Essays in Criticism*, the new direction that Arnold was to take with *Culture and Anarchy* was, Saintsbury felt, an outright mistake. While this period saw Pater moving steadily towards an articulated aesthetic that would soon find expression in *The Renaissance*, Arnold, much to the disappointment of certain Oxford men, was beginning to engage himself in political and religious debate. It was at this juncture that Saintsbury found himself breaking with Arnold, who not only had offended the sensibilities of those who had believed that literary critics should have souls above mere political conflict but, to Tories like Saintsbury, appeared to have thrown in his lot with the Liberal revolution. This new engagé bent was later to be associated in Saintsbury's mind with 'the great political change' brought about by the rise of Gladstone's Liberal party, regretfully giving Arnold's somewhat 'bland' political convictions 'an unusually clear field.'⁸ By example, Pater had given as consolation to young Oxonians like Saintsbury a mandate which allowed them to dismiss the social aspect of Arnoldian criticism as false while still retaining a firm belief in the essential relevance of Arnold as a

literary critic. Although Arnold cannot be said to have founded any school, Saintsbury later remarked, 'the most remarkable approach to such a school that has been made since was made by Mr Pater,' the school to which Saintsbury was himself to subscribe.⁹ In a retrospective essay on Pater, in which he showed himself wholly sympathetic with what he took to be the older critic's aims, Saintsbury remarked:

I knew Mr Pater myself; not intimately, but for a considerate number of years. I had known him before the *Studies* appeared, and I knew him after Though I was a younger man by more than one Oxford generation, the days which we saw were, in a larger sense, the same days.

Although Saintsbury was in general sympathy with Paterism -- he saw 'no reason why his method should not be applied with an infinite gain of satisfaction' -- he was often to rebuke the more decadent followers of Pater. 'Pater and Paterism are things rather ambiguous and double-edged,' he said in the same essay, crediting his mentor's 'false brethren' with having encouraged, 'by their example,' certain 'unscrupulous satires.'¹⁰ Despite constant attempts to distance himself from the more decadent contingent among Pater's followers, Saintsbury did, in fact, admit to being one of the early 'apostles' of his critical approach, so much so that 'when he left Merton in 1868,' according to Dorothy Richardson, 'he was already "indoctrinated" with the [aestheticism] which he championed the rest of his life.' Indeed, Richardson has shown, in her article on 'Saintsbury and Art For Art's Sake in England,' that almost all of Saintsbury's critical principles have their origins in that movement, only really in terms of which Saintsbury's approach to Arnold and others can be properly understood.¹¹

It is perhaps significant that Saintsbury left Oxford just as Arnold was beginning the series of essays that was eventually to become *Culture and Anarchy*. Although he was to devote the next two decades to literary journalism, Saintsbury avoided writing about Arnold for many years, probably in observance of his belief that it was improper to criticize living writers, perhaps in disappointment over the direction that Arnold had taken after 1867.¹² Not long after Arnold's death, however, Saintsbury was to include his first

sustained appraisal in *Corrected Impressions*, in which he recalled his departure from Oxford just as 'the great political change of 1867 happened, and a reign of sharp social and political changes began.' Expressing a sentiment echoing that of many of his Oxford colleagues, Saintsbury noted a 'failing *fineness* of power in a man whose power had at its best been nothing but fine.' He spoke scathingly of 'the Apostle of Culture with his bland conviction, first, that most things were wrong in England, and, secondly, that he was born to set them right.' Even worse, was the fact that 'he allowed his energies to drift almost wholly into the strange anti-theological kind of theology which . . . brought on him much odium and never attained for him much reputation.' Since Arnold's 'proper line' was as 'a poet and literary . . . essayist,' Saintsbury was clearly convinced that, had he recognized the autonomy of aesthetic values from moral questions, Arnold's career would have been far more successful.¹³

When he came to write his *History of Nineteenth Century Literature* in 1896, Saintsbury was to include a substantial section on Arnold, the overall approach of which was obviously based on the notion of the exclusivity of aesthetic values from moral discourse. Speaking of the essential merit of the prose works, Saintsbury said that despite the 'wide-ranging scatter of sometimes hap-hazard arrows' there was an underlying 'solid literary value in Mr Arnold's method.' Dwelling on the poetry and literary criticism, Saintsbury was able, on purely aesthetic grounds, to dismiss in one sweep *Culture and Anarchy*, *Friendship's Garland*, *Literature and Dogma*, *St. Paul and Protestantism*, and *God and the Bible*, by saying that 'they have not been generally thought quite worthy of their author.'¹⁴ The idea that these works were somehow unworthy of Arnold and therefore not really representative of his true work as a critic was one that had been tacitly implied by Pater and more overtly by Wilde's selective Arnoldism. Saintsbury, however, was the critic who would go on to articulate this aesthetic view most comprehensively when, in 1899, as the professor of English Literature and Rhetoric at Edinburgh University, he was invited to contribute a monograph on Arnold to the *Modern English*

Writers series. With it, he was to become the first of a number of critics at the turn of the century whose task was to somehow make sense of, to bring order and definition to, the vast complex that was Arnold's life and work.

If the *History of Nineteenth Century Literature* is any indication, before 1899, Saintsbury's knowledge of Arnold's extra-literary work was far from complete -- at one point, for instance, he referred to *Friendship's Garland* as '*Friendship's God*' -- his serious treatment being confined to the poetry and literary criticism. In the earlier, more general studies, it had been possible to deal quite confidently with only these aesthetic aspects of Arnold's writing to the virtual exclusion of the rest of his large corpus. But, as Saintsbury himself admitted, thanks to the opportunity afforded by Blackwoods to write the Arnold volume, he was able 'to work out these [earlier] views . . . pretty fully.'¹⁵ George Russell's *Letters*, with their concern for practical politics and contemporary controversies, revealed a side of Arnold that could hardly be regarded as peripheral to their author's concerns; after 1895, it had become obvious that critics could no longer ignore the socio-political aspect of his writing but had to treat it as an essential factor in the whole programme that Arnold had envisioned for criticism itself. As we have already seen, that is not to say that all were in sympathy with both sides of Arnold, least of all Saintsbury who, from the beginning, exempted himself from any responsibility to intentionality. Although he acknowledged his debt to the *Letters* in his introduction, Saintsbury made it plain that the perspective he was going to take in the 1899 monograph was not intended to be primarily biographical. To a life in which 'things literary' were pre-eminent, other details were, he argued, unnecessary. This was to be, rather, a strictly 'critical examination.' After all, said Saintsbury, it was regrettable that there was no chronicle of Arnold's early Oxford aesthetic phase since the '*Letters* do not begin till he was just five-and-twenty,' and even then told 'next to nothing about his literary work.' Having acknowledged the importance of Russell's edition, he then went on to render it irrelevant to his overall purpose: 'We must . . . make what we can of the subject,' he retorted, 'and of course a

great deal more is to be made in such a case of the work than of the life.'¹⁶ The emphasis on his own perception of the Arnoldian canon was to be, from first to last, the fundamental principle on which Saintsbury's biography would proceed, even if that meant disregarding authorial intention as revealed in contemporary documentation. Russell's argument that, in the *Letters*, Arnold's true mind and personality were revealed held no claim on Saintsbury, whose whole critical method was calculated to oppose such a belief in the objectivity of certain documents.

In an earlier essay on the nature of biography, Saintsbury outlined the expectations he had for such a book. The conclusions are revealing, especially if applied to his own role as biographer:

It cannot be too often repeated that a real biography ought to be something more than the presentation of mere materials, however excellently calendered, something more than mere Memoirs, Letters, Diary and so forth. The whole ought to be passed through the mind of a competent and intelligent artist, and to be presented to us, not indeed in such a way that we are bound to take his word for the details, but in such a way that we see a finished picture, a real composition, not merely a bundle of details and data.¹⁷

This anticipation of the Stracheyan method, with its emphasis on perception rather than the common Victorian notion of verisimilitude, was to have a very definite effect on the way in which Saintsbury was to present Arnold. One reviewer, noting the slightness of the 'biographical element' in Saintsbury's study, suggested that the work was prepared in 'a slipshod and confused manner.'¹⁸ Such criticism, however, stems from a basic misunderstanding of Saintsbury's whole method. While many readers were looking for a detailed historical study that would attempt to recreate Arnold's own life and vision as accurately as possible, this was clearly not Saintsbury's aim, which was, says David Daiches, meant to be deliberately 'personal, unsystematic [and] eclectic.' Saintsbury was making no demand for the objective accuracy of a biography or even its estimate of the individual concerned, only that from the contact of the biographer's mind with that of his subject another work of art should arise. By implication, Saintsbury's method relied on the extent to which he was able to combine his own personality with that of Arnold, creating a

modified version of the works with which he was dealing, its success being contingent upon the extent to which Arnold's work could 'be passed through' his own mind, resulting in a synthesis, a portrait of Arnold impressionistically coloured by his own perception. 'Out of this confrontation,' says Daiches, 'whatever is valuable in his criticism emerges.'¹⁹ The outcome of this confrontation was a modified aesthetic Arnold, the combination of Arnoldian thought as it came into contact with Saintsbury's complex character. Having already established that the critic's primary responsibility was to his own perception of things, he could unashamedly dismiss the importance of both intentionality and the existence of objective data as factors that could somehow unlock a more authentic reading of Arnoldian works. True to this principle, Saintsbury was almost always judicial, sifting and sorting, here approving, there modifying, on the basis of his own various predispositions. In this respect, he is particularly interesting as the spokesman for two points of view, the new professional aesthetic criticism, and an older, more established political and religious position.²⁰ When he treated the poetry and criticism, therefore, it was in a sympathetic vein. Of Arnold the poet, Saintsbury was an admirer; of the critic, a student. In his treatment of Arnold's theology and social criticism, however, Saintsbury represented a continuation of the ideological conservatism that had been expressed by many of Arnold's contemporary reviewers.²¹

Saintsbury's *Matthew Arnold* he divided roughly into three chronological phases, based on the nature and subject matter of the Arnoldian works themselves. In effect, we might say that in his approach to Arnold there were -- to borrow an Arnoldian metaphor -- three Matthew Arnolds: the eminent, if pessimistic, poet; the expedient, if wayward, critic; and the interferer in the affairs of God and men. First, Saintsbury dealt with the promising years of the early poetry and literary criticism, in which Arnold concerned himself almost exclusively with 'pure literature;' second, with the decade 'in the wilderness' in which Arnold mistakenly ventured into the socio-political and theological arenas; third, the final decade, in which Arnold was treated as the wiser and almost repentant prodigal returning to

the fold of letters, once again to establish himself as a valuable member of the intellectual community. With Arnold's pursuits in the first and third phases, Saintsbury was in overall sympathy, but was diametrically opposed to the pursuits of the seventies, chiefly embodied for him in the polemical works, *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*.

In his estimate of Arnold's poetry, Saintsbury followed other Oxford aesthetes in hailing *The Strayed Reveller* as 'the most remarkable first book of verse' that had appeared since Tennyson's and Browning's in the early thirties and 'The Scholar Gipsy' as 'the equal of anything that was written in its author's lifetime.'²² Despite an earlier claim that his enthusiasm for the poem's being 'nearly faultless' was not due to 'the old Oxford prejudice,' such disinterestedness seems unlikely.²³ So effusive was his praise for the latter that Saintsbury forsook his usual preoccupation with impressionistic criticism to speak of 'the intrinsic greatness of this noble poem' overcoming the alienation experienced by readers who 'be not sons of Oxford by actual matriculation' and enabling them to become 'citizens of her by spiritual adoption.'²⁴ Recounting elsewhere his own Oxford years, Saintsbury recalled how they corresponded closely with the poetic rise of Swinburne and Arnold, a similar response to that which had caused Wilde to dub the latter 'a purely Oxford poet.'²⁵ Despite this characteristic enthusiasm, however, Saintsbury's differed from conventional readings in the aesthetic-moral dichotomy that he applied to the poetry. While Swinburne and Rossetti had been attracted by the melancholy tone, Saintsbury condemned its 'vague life-philosophy' as 'pessimist quietism.' While he took issue with the earlier poetry for its 'pessimism and water' philosophy, he mocked 'Heine's Grave' for its 'slightly pusillanimous lines' which had since become the motto of 'mid-century Liberal policy.' 'Dover Beach' quite naturally troubled the churchman, who was reluctant to admit the withdrawing sea of faith, arguing that 'nothing is so certain a testimony to the flood as the ebb.' In order to have avoided philosophical and political controversy, Arnold should have pursued a more 'romantic' approach, maintained Saintsbury, by which we are to understand the more purely emotive and elegiac strain as opposed to anything that could be

called polemical discourse. However, by separating the 'subject' from its 'expression' he found he could commend it for 'the thing that is *not* the subject . . . which makes for poetry,' making the poem the epitome of 'Poetry, *sans phrase*.' In spite of fervent objections to content, therefore, its aesthetic properties rescued Arnold's poetry from the wilderness for Saintsbury and made it far preferable to the 'pages of jocularly about Bottles and the Rev. Esau Hittall.'²⁶

Despite any fundamental differences he may have had, Saintsbury was chiefly interested in Arnold as a literary critic. The position that he, as a literary historian, ascribed Arnold in the historical development of English criticism gives some indication of his awareness of the influence of Arnold on his own method.²⁷ Although he could not agree wholeheartedly with all of the basic presuppositions expressed in *Essays in Criticism*, he saw Arnold's chief value as an expedient influence, the father of an English critical renaissance, not far short of a messianic man of letters. In literal terms, Saintsbury's Arnold was the vessel by which the 'new criticism' had passed from its origins on the European continent -- generally France and specifically Sainte-Beuve -- to the parched soil of English letters. English criticism, according to Saintsbury, had been in demise since the first quarter of the century and Arnold, with the *Essays in Criticism*, had single-handedly provided the vehicle with which the reformation of romantic criticism was to take place.

Saintsbury was the first to make much of the connection between Arnold and his French predecessor. This is hardly surprising, since, as R.H. Super has recognized, as chief adviser on French literature to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Saintsbury had himself probably commissioned Arnold to write his article on Sainte-Beuve.²⁸ Tracing all that was worthwhile in Arnoldian criticism back to the French critic, Saintsbury, by implication, placed himself in that lineage:

'No Sainte-Beuve -- no Arnold,' would be excessive and unjust, if it were taken to imply any undue subordination or want of originality in the younger critic But it has a great deal more to say for itself than most such trenchancies in literature.

Arnold had, of course, made plain his own admiration for Sainte-Beuve years before, partly based on his respect for the French critic's cosmopolitanism. For Saintsbury, though, whose own interpretation of the nineteenth century was founded on its identity as 'the period of the Romantic Triumph,' the most valuable lesson to be derived from these two exemplars was predictable: 'Like Sainte-Beuve also,' he argued, 'Mr Arnold always retained a very much larger leaven of Romanticism than might appear from his general principles.'²⁹ It was on this romantic side of Arnoldian criticism that Saintsbury chose to dwell, his adherence to which being largely responsible for his dismissal of many of Arnold's claims for the objective status of criticism.

In Saintsbury's mind there was not the conflict between fixity and flux, persuasion and flexibility, that haunted Arnold's literary criticism. As a more thoroughgoing romantic, he chose to come down on the side of personal appreciation, almost demanding total abstinence from the judicial. Confident in the belief that all criticism should be immune from the unequivocal, Saintsbury warned against the dangers of literary closure in no uncertain terms:

The idea of criticism as something positive and positively attainable and ascertainable, once for all -- like the quotient of a sum, the conclusion of a syllogism, or the cast of a death-mask -- is a mere delusion. *Criticism is the result of the processes of one mind on the products of another.*³⁰

Holding such a subjective view, Saintsbury naturally rejected the Arnoldian emphasis on the judicial function of the man of letters and need for high standards. While Arnold's own formal definition of criticism might have been conveniently ambiguous enough for many others, Saintsbury, the literary epicurian, chose to modify it to 'the endeavour to find, to know, to love, to recommend, not only the best, but all the good, that has been known and thought and written in the world.'³¹ By expanding the aesthetic domain to include 'all the good,' and by suppressing the judicial element in favour of a kind of pure appreciation, Saintsbury had already significantly revised Arnold's perception of criticism and its function. Similarly, that part of Arnoldian criticism that recognized 'wholesome and

regulative laws' held no place for Saintsbury who believed that 'the Rule in Criticism brings Hell and Death.'³²

Whatever strong views he may have held in politics and theology, Saintsbury was advocating a wholly non-partisan criticism, free from the taint of polemics and seated wholly in subjective perception. 'There can be nothing better for us,' Saintsbury asserted in his essay on Baudelaire, 'than that a critic should simply tell us . . . the effect produced on his own mind.'³³ It was as the spokesman for the 'free play of mind,' the *ondoyans et divers* criticism, positivist in its disregard for philosophic judgment, that Arnold was of value to Saintsbury who had long advocated a highly personal approach to literature. In effect, all this means that he could only agree with half of Arnold's idea of criticism: while he would agree that the critic must remove himself from practical life, he could not comply with another side of Arnoldian criticism which recognized a certain moral responsibility. Much of *Essays in Criticism* had been taken up with the role that criticism had to play in English society and it is the absence of this moral aspect that made *On Translating Homer*, apart from its tone, so attractive to Saintsbury and which, in part, made his initial response to the *Essays* 'lukewarm.' While *Essays in Criticism* was 'epoch-making,' it still contained, for Saintsbury, a 'contraband element,' something that was not present in the work of Pater, through whom the new criticism had passed and whose method was to be 'pursued . . . by all modern critics.' While *On Translating Homer* represented a 'germinal influence,' the seminal influence in English criticism lay with Pater who, said Saintsbury, was 'the most important critic of the last generation of the nineteenth century,' his position resembling that of Arnold earlier in the age.³⁴ Arnold's chief value, therefore, was not as the exemplar but merely as the promoter of a revolution in criticism:

It would of course be uncritical in the last degree to take the change in English criticism which followed as wholly and directly Mr Arnold's work. He was not even the voice crying in the wilderness: only one of many voices in the land ready at least to be eared and pathed. But he was the earliest of such voices, the clearest, most original, most potent; and a great deal of what followed was directly due to him.³⁵

The employment of New Testament language here suggests that Arnold, as the forerunner of another who was to have an even greater influence, had played John the Baptist to Pater's Christ, at least in Saintsbury's mind.

Not only did Saintsbury's commitment to the Paterian aesthetic effect his approach to Arnold's place in literary history, but it also brought him into direct conflict with several of the most basic of Arnold's critical dictates, resulting in a subversion of Arnoldian language similar to that employed by Pater himself. In 1895, Saintsbury had spoken of Arnold's tendency to 'damnable iteration' and 'misleading and snip-snap phrases about "criticism of life," "lucidity," "grand style," and what-not.'³⁶ If Saintsbury had such a different basic view of the function of criticism, it is hardly surprising that he was subsequently to find problems throughout Arnold's critical vocabulary, particularly since, as I have attempted to illustrate in my first chapter, that vocabulary so often represented a crucial element in its author's attempt to create a rapprochement between art and morality.

That Saintsbury was himself aware of the strategic importance of attacking Arnold on the basis of his critical language is more than clear from a comment made in one of a series of essays on 'The Grand Style,' in which he not only challenged the Arnoldian usage of the phrase, but sought to redefine it by bringing it into line with his own more expansive view of critical judgment:

It has often been said . . . that all dispute turns upon difference of definition -- and that, if people were only clear-witted enough and even-tempered enough, the arrival at a definition would be the conclusion of the whole matter.

For Arnold, 'the grand style arises when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject.' This emphasis on the subject went against all that Saintsbury, in true Paterian style, held regarding the mutual exclusivity of form from content, and the subordination of matter to manner. 'The "seriousness" of the subject,' he remarked, 'made the critic a little excessive in insisting on it as a necessary condition of . . . the grand style.' Saintsbury's alternative 'grand style' signified merely the 'perfection of expression in every direction and kind,' a process which 'transmutes the subject and

transports the hearer or reader.³⁷ This same belief in the separation of form from content also caused him to turn the 1853 Preface and its claim that 'all depends on the subject' on its head: 'All depends on the treatment,' said Saintsbury, and Arnold's insistence on the importance of the poetic subject was 'a rotten reed.'³⁸ In opposition to the innate formality that such a doctrine implies, Saintsbury placed 'the Doctrine of the Poetic Moment,' presupposing an instant of romantic enlightenment characterized by 'sudden transcendence and transfiguration.'³⁹ Not surprisingly, Richardson has traced this tendency back to his affinity with the aesthetes who also saw the poetic moment as a means of upholding 'the purely literary against the subject-worshippers and ethical critics.'⁴⁰

Another Arnoldian axiom that ran counter to Saintsbury's 'art for art's sake' leanings was the definition of poetry as 'a criticism of life' which he called 'unlucky and maimed.' In 1899, Saintsbury's stated objection was that as a definition it was tautological: 'It merely takes us round in a circle, telling us that poetry is poetical and the archdeacon performs archidiaconal functions.'⁴¹ Under the surface, however, his real objection was not one of mere logistics but one that betrayed the essential difference that he had with Arnold's view of the function of art. By attempting to combine art and life, Arnold had offended one whose belief in their mutual exclusivity caused him, in 1922, when looking back at his own defence of writers like Baudelaire, to remember how 'we rejoiced in them because they had followed art for art's sake . . . at the same time, because they had followed life for life's sake *as well*.' The whole motivation for Saintsbury's involvement in the aesthetic movement was encapsulated in this idea:

What we fought against when we carried the banner was the meddling and muddling of the two . . . unless you train yourself to value the art and the form and the literature apart from . . . the matter and the life, you are likely to fall . . . into 'wretchedness of the most unclean living.'⁴²

Therefore, while many of Saintsbury's arguments against Arnoldian doctrines appear straightforward if read in isolation, they were clearly motivated by the particular critical

creed to which he subscribed and apart from which his qualification of Arnoldian criticism cannot be fully understood.

In dealing with *Essays in Criticism* and *On the Study of Celtic Literature* Saintsbury had found the extra-literary content hard to bear. *Essays in Criticism* had, he claimed, been marred by 'the somewhat unfortunate twist towards the mission of reforming his countrymen.' Had Arnold restricted himself to reforming the realm of literature 'where he was excellently qualified for the apostolate,' said Saintsbury, his criticism would have been more valuable. *A French Eton* marked, for him, the transitional point in Arnold's development, the point at which he began to integrate pure literature with other concerns; by the time he delivered the *Essays*, said Saintsbury, his prose had already become slightly tainted by its extra-literary proclamations. Since it was this aspect which Saintsbury wished to divorce from their true value as criticism, it was perhaps predictable that when he came to discuss Arnold's later prose he would hardly be sympathetic. Consequently, he dedicated a chapter entitled 'In the Wilderness' to tracing Arnold's 'unfortunate twist towards the mission of reforming his countrymen,' beginning with *Culture and Anarchy* and ending with *Literature and Dogma*. Arnold the social critic and theologian he portrayed as the 'Chesterfield-Socrates' who has strayed 'into quarters where he had no vocation.' Here, Saintsbury suggested that his constant brawl with the dissenters 'affected his brains.' *Culture and Anarchy*, Saintsbury admitted, did contain some of Arnold's best prose but also his worst sense and *Literature and Dogma*, which 'the multitude applauded,' was nevertheless his 'worst book.' To Saintsbury, *Friendship's Garland* was simply 'not in good taste,' and although he apologized at the end of this tirade for 'anything that may appear too polemical in this chapter,' at the same time he justified it on the precedent that Arnold had himself set.⁴³

Sainbury's dissection of Arnold was hardly appreciated by the major reviews. Richard Garnett found the book 'most admirable' only in its dealings with 'pure literature;' otherwise, 'every word of disparagement which Mr Saintsbury directs against Mr Arnold

appears . . . to recoil upon himself.' Comparing *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma* favourably with *Tracts for the Times* and *Ecce Homo*, Garnett said that it was not possible to dismiss works that had appealed so directly to their contemporaries. Although Saintsbury had only considered their worth as temporal, Arnold's prose, said Garnett, would have a more tacit influence 'and go on operating like a hidden force of nature.'⁴⁴ Garnett's response, while more moderate than Saintsbury's, was not completely out of sympathy with him since he, too, clearly valued Arnold the poet-critic above the socio-theologian. Saintsbury's assault on Arnold's polemics, claimed Garnett, only served to show that his poetry ranked before the prose that had been visionary on only three occasions, all of them 'literary' in slant: the 1853 preface, *On Translating Homer*, and *On Celtic Literature*. Garnett, like Saintsbury, was a literary man who had also been at Oxford at the apex of Arnold's literary critical career. Although he appeared more generous, it was hardly surprising that he would share a similar view of the Arnold canon. On the other hand, a blistering review in the *Academy*, perhaps written by Lionel Johnson, entitled 'The Pigeon-Holing of Matthew Arnold,' delivered an extremely personal attack on Saintsbury's whole method saying that, while his may be 'the sort of mind that gets on in the world,' it was not capable of successfully dealing with Matthew Arnold. Completely out of sympathy with all of Arnold's 'subtle comparisons, relations and siftings,' Saintsbury's treatment was, claimed the *Academy*, 'as plain and as bald as a geometric axiom, and leads to conclusions as unprofitable as they hit wide of the mark.' Arnold was, they said, never in the wilderness but had been put there by Saintsbury whose own religion was 'as grotesque as it is exasperating.'⁴⁵

Dealing with the poetry and literary criticism, Saintsbury had not been drawn into any detailed discussion of extra-literary ideas, except when identifying the 'pessimism and water' that he felt underlay much of the poetry. The prose works of the seventies, however, that challenged his religious orthodoxy and political conservatism, Saintsbury simply attacked as inadequate or, worse, valueless. If there had been no *Letters* or

published bibliography, it might have been possible for those who found Arnold's theology and politics distasteful to virtually ignore them as Saintsbury had in 1895 and was even to do in his later essays. In writing a monograph entitled *Matthew Arnold*, however, it was impossible for him to ignore the books that had, in reality, made Arnold famous. It is plain that there was still a dichotomy between the critic and the general reading public: the specialist who saw Arnold as a man of letters exclusively (the minority who had the power of the high brow publishing industry behind them) and the actual readership itself which had sent *Literature and Dogma* into multiple editions.

It is his role as both advocate and adversary that makes it difficult at times to apply the term 'Arnoldian' to Saintsbury. He was Arnoldian in aesthetic terms only, and as such was the epitome of the pre-1895 divided approach to Arnold, a continuation of the position that had been commonly taken by literary men in Arnold's lifetime, that small band of cultivated individuals who deemed *On Translating Homer* among Arnold's greatest works and who, regardless of the number of editions the poetry attained, still insisted that it was for the 'few.' This also made Saintsbury the spokesman for a growing band of critics who abstracted Arnold's literary ideals from their specific context, giving them permanence, while firmly grounding the writings of the seventies in their socio-historic context, thus seeking to explain away and neutralize their abstract potential *as ideas*.

A year later, Saintsbury was to publish his *History of Criticism*. Not only did its Arnold section reinforce the 1899 view of a divided canon, but the volume concluded with a chapter called, appropriately, 'The Present State of Criticism,' which proposed an anthology of 'the best critical results of the last fifty years.' Such a collection would, of course, include Sainte-Beuve and 'the whole critical production of Matthew Arnold' with a view to inaugurating a 'new dispensation of criticism.' In reply to the charge that this new age of aesthetic criticism would be too romantic, Saintsbury suggested that mere subjectivity could be avoided by 'a comprehensive and catholic possession of literature . . . from Aristotle to La Harpe -- even to one of the two Matthew Arnolds.'⁴⁶ With works like

the *History of Criticism*, Saintsbury, in his attempt to propagate this new dispensation, was to pass on his one-sided Arnold to students of literature for decades to come. While Saintsbury saw fit to challenge certain specifics, like the indictment of the English and his affection for the French Academy, as superfluous to Arnold's critical method, he could not deny the benefit of his overall influence on English letters:⁴⁷

What we go to Mr Matthew Arnold for is not fact, it is not argument, it is not even learning. It is phrase, attitude, style It is the new critical attitude, the appreciation of literary beauty in and for itself.

Despite its many foibles, then, what qualified *Essays in Criticism* as 'epoch-making' was its place as the 'detailed manifesto and exemplar of the new critical method.' As a book, it had been 'classed and placed' and no amount of praise or deprecation could change its historic importance. Arnold may have been guilty of his own 'will-worship' but the *Essays* had earned him from Saintsbury the '*maxima palma* . . . of criticism . . . in that he first fought for this literary orthodoxy, and first exemplified . . . the carrying out of the cult.'⁴⁸

It is significant that the zenith of Saintsbury's popularity corresponded with the movement towards the foundation of English literature as a subject for independent academic study; consequently, his influence on men who were to take the newly-founded discipline into the twentieth century was immense. It is also significant that Saintsbury was the occupant of a chair of English literature and eventually found himself a propagandist for criticism. By embodying the connection between Arnold and this professional academic discipline, he was to be the champion of an Arnoldism that was as intent upon separating Arnold from his beliefs as it was upon separating criticism from ideology.

Notes

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- ¹Dorothy Richardson, 'George Saintsbury and Art For Art's Sake in England,' *PMLA*, 59 (1944), 259; Christopher Morley, Preface to *Bartlett's Famous Quotations*, (London, 1937), xi.
- ²Walter Leuba, *George Saintsbury*, (New York, 1967), 103.
- ³George Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions: Essays on Victorian Writers* (London, 1895), 138.
- ⁴Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions*, 147.
- ⁵Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions*, 139-40.
- ⁶The essay entitled 'Oxford Sixty Years Since' contains Saintsbury's own portrayal of his student years. In it, Saintsbury tells of his inclination to withdraw from college society as 'a badger' rather than 'a boon companion' and even recounts an episode in which he and an exclusive band of friends, the 'Merton Popes,' were ridiculed by other students for refraining from dining in Hall during Lent. [George Saintsbury, *A Second Scrap Book* (London, 1923), 17, 25].
- ⁷George Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, (London, 1923), II: 221; elsewhere, Saintsbury called himself 'an Old Swinburnian.' [George Saintsbury, *Last Scrap Book* (London, 1924), 136].
- ⁸Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions*, 141.
- ⁹George Saintsbury, *History of English Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1912), 490.
- ¹⁰George Saintsbury, 'Walter Pater,' reprinted from the *Bookman* (1906), *Prefaces and Essays* (London, 1933), 346, 347, 355, 359. Commenting on his own admiration of Baudelaire in 1875, Saintsbury had condemned the use of *Fleurs du Mal* 'to point any number cheap morals, forged by people who most likely never opened a page of his writing.' [Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, IV: 3].
- ¹¹George Saintsbury, *Scrap Book*, (London, 1922), 114; Richardson, 'Saintsbury and Art for Art's Sake,' 243; Saintsbury himself claimed that his strong adherence to 'Art's for Art's Sake' values was, in part, responsible for having lost him a fellowship at Oxford. [see Saintsbury, *A Scrap Book*, 114].
- ¹²The only apparent exception was a brief mention of Arnold in 'From Modern English Prose,' *Fortnightly Review*, 19 (February, 1876), 243-259. It is quite possible that he contributed other anonymous pieces to the *Academy*, which had been particularly active in its posthumous estimates of Arnold, but this is unlikely since none appear to carry Saintsbury's distinctive style.
- ¹³Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions*, 140, 141-142.
- ¹⁴George Saintsbury, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature 1780-1895* (London, 1896), 388.
- ¹⁵Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, II: 275n.
- ¹⁶George Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold* (Edinburgh, 1899), v-vi, 1, 2; later, we read, 'it is fortunate for the biographer that this earliest part of Mr Arnold's life is so fertile in poetry, for otherwise, in the dearth of information, it would be a terribly barren subject. The thirty years of life yield hardly twenty pages of letters.' [45].
- ¹⁷George Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, I: 433.
- ¹⁸Anonymous review of Saintsbury's *Matthew Arnold*, *Academy*, 57 (September 30, 1899), 330.
- ¹⁹David Daiches, *Critical Approaches to Literature* (London, 1981), 285.
- ²⁰Richardson argues that they are not unrelated, since aestheticism often relies on political conservatism for its survival among a decadent elite. That, like many Oxford Paterians, Saintsbury himself associated religious ritualism with aestheticism is made plain by his comment that the readings of Swinburne in which he engaged were often conducted 'in a room full of "trptychs and madonnas.'" [Saintsbury, *Second Scrap Book*, 59]. For Saintsbury on his own Tory sympathies, see, in particular, *A Scrap Book*, 44ff.; attacks on Liberalism and the Labour movement abound in the same book [94ff.] and in the *Second Scrap Book*, 148, 230, 239]. For further comments on his early involvement with High Church Orthodoxy, see *Scrap Book*, 282-283.
- ²¹Arthur Quiller-Couch called Saintsbury's treatment of the 'wilderness' years 'contemporary criticism, born late and out of time.' [Arthur Quiller-Couch, [review of Saintsbury's *Matthew Arnold*], *Speaker*, 7 (October 11, 1902), 48].
- ²²Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 21-22, 43.
- ²³Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, 274.

- ²⁴Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 41.
- ²⁵Saintsbury, *Second Scrap Book*, 62.
- ²⁶Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 16, 112-113, 114, 115-116; earlier Saintsbury had made a similar statement: '*Dover Beach*, though I do not in the least agree with it . . . has a majestic music.' [Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, II: 275].
- ²⁷Showing that he was indeed capable of appreciating the positive effect of Arnold while still differing with him on many specifics, Saintsbury said, 'perhaps he is not least, though he may be more discriminatingly, admired by those who are very much out of sympathy with him on not a few points of subject, but who are with him in the Humanities -- in the sense and in the love of the great things in literature. [Saintsbury, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature*, 286-287].
- ²⁸Super, XI: 412.
- ²⁹George Saintsbury, *The Later Nineteenth Century* (London, 1907), 132, 462, 162.
- ³⁰Saintsbury, *A Scrap Book*, 27.
- ³¹Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, III: 611. Saintsbury had earlier complained that he was 'quite unable to reconcile that doctrine of confining ourselves to "the best," which it seems rules out the "Chanson de Roland," and makes Shelley more remarkable as a letter writer than as a poet, with the attention paid to S nancour and the Gu rins.' [Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions*, 146].
- ³²Saintsbury, *A Scrap Book*, 280.
- ³³Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, IV: 8.
- ³⁴Saintsbury, *A History of English Criticism*, 480,497.
- ³⁵Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 71-72.
- ³⁶Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions*, 144.
- ³⁷Saintsbury, *Collected Essays and Papers*, III: 198, 152.
- ³⁸Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 222. That Saintsbury's separation of form and content, while influenced by Pater's idea of 'style,' was even more radical than that of Pater himself is apparent from a comment in the latter's review of Saintsbury's *Specimens of English Prose*: 'If there be a weakness in Mr Saintsbury's view, it is perhaps in a tendency to regard style a little too independently of matter.' [Walter Pater, *Essays from The Guardian* (London, 1910), 15].
- ³⁹Saintsbury, *History of English Criticism*, 485-87.
- ⁴⁰Richardson, 'Saintsbury and Art for Art's Sake,' 257.
- ⁴¹Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 26, 190. Curiously, Saintsbury used the phrase in his own definition of fiction, but was careful to distinguish from its use as a definition for poetry: 'The novel is while the poem is not, mainly and firstly a criticism of life.' [George Saintsbury, *Miscellaneous Essays* (London, 1892), 417]. Even regarding fiction, however, he continued to maintain the preferred autonomy of aesthetics from 'Religious, Scientific, [and] Political . . . purpose,' which, he asserted, 'is apt to mummify story.' [George Saintsbury, *History of the French Novel* (London, 1917), I: 8n].
- ⁴²Saintsbury, *Scrap Book*, 116-7.
- ⁴³Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 78, 79, 122, 127, 130, 132, 137, 150, 157-158.
- ⁴⁴Richard Garnett, Review of Saintsbury's *Matthew Arnold*, *Bookman*, (July 16, 1899), 102.
- ⁴⁵Anonymous review of Saintsbury's *Matthew Arnold*, *Academy*, 57 (September 30, 1899), 329.
- ⁴⁶Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, III: 607-9.
- ⁴⁷Saintsbury made the mistake of many of his predecessors in assuming that Arnold had proposed the setting up of an actual English Academy. In response, he said, 'It is a very strong argument, an argument stronger than any of Mr Arnold's, that the institutions of a nation . . . must be in accordance with the spirit of a nation,' and therefore such an institution would be 'ridiculous in England.' [Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 89] Arnold's point exactly!
- ⁴⁸Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, 83, 95, 88.

CHAPTER FOUR

George Russell and Social Arnoldism

'As a poet and as a prose-writer,' claimed Edmund Gosse in 1897, 'Matthew Arnold really addressed two different generations.'¹ Perhaps Gosse might have divided Arnold differently but his recognition of 'two generations' was perceptive. Because of the eight years that divided George Russell and George Saintsbury, their experiences of Arnold were dramatically different, owing much to the transformation that had taken place between the sixties and seventies in Arnold's own outlook. Russell had, after all, been born in the year of the 1853 preface and had no personal contact with Arnold until after the latter had all but given up, at least temporarily, literary criticism.

It was as a fifteen year old pupil at Harrow school, in 1868 (the year of Saintsbury's departure from Oxford) that Russell first met the man who would influence him more than any other. 'At Harrow,' recalled Russell, 'he lived for five years, on terms of affectionate intimacy with the Head Master and the Staff.'² Arnold had already built quite a reputation as a literary figure, Park Honan notes, and 'at Harrow, a small community of sports, religion, and Latin, he was welcomed as if he were Lord Byron.'³ There, the Arnolds were friendly with the Russells who, like themselves, had an invalid child studying at Harrow. 'Arnold's son,' Russell much later recalled, 'soon became a great friend of mine . . . and introduced me to his family.'⁴ Later, Russell was to remember the death of young Thomas Arnold, two years his senior, in that same year: 'I was with the bereaved father on the morning after the boy's death, and the author with whom he was consoling himself was Marcus Aurelius.' The intensity of that experience, together with the boyhood admiration that surrounded Arnold at Harrow, was to connect Arnold with the Roman senator in Russell's mind for the rest of his life.⁵ Accompanying Russell's selection of the *Letters* from the year 1868 he inserted verbatim the speech given by his headmaster, Dr Butler, on the occasion of his fellow pupil's death. When he came

to dedicate the *Letters of Matthew Arnold* it was to his old headmaster, 'with grateful recollections of friendships formed at Harrow.' It is no exaggeration to say that, to Russell, Harrow was Matthew Arnold in the same way that, for some members of the previous generation, Dr Arnold had been inseparable from Rugby. It was to this period that he traced a significant phase in his intellectual development and the origins of his admiration for Arnold: 'Fifteen is a receptive age, and it is not very curious that this early introduction to the chief of critics should have made a permanent dint on a schoolboy's mind.' Consequently, he remarked, 'Arnold first taught me to think.'⁶ In his autobiography, Russell recalled how his 'sixteenth and seventeenth years [1869-70] brought me a real and conscious growth in things of the mind.' To one Harrow teacher, in particular, he owed gratitude for having introduced him to Arnold's work, 'a real event in one's mental life.'⁷ Russell's account of the dynamic involved in juvenile reading experience goes some way towards explaining how this early exposure fuelled his own lifelong enthusiasm for Arnold:

Some one great book first seizes on the boy's virgin intelligence . . . he loves it, devours it, assimilates it . . . in turn it re-acts upon him; it takes possession of him, and masters him; and remains, from boyhood on to the very close, the core of his heart, and the colouring principle of his intellectual life.

In the face of other influences, Russell went on, 'the grown man . . . in the fulness of his intelligence and culture reserves his fondest and profoundest homage for the great man who first awoke him to intellectual energy.'⁸ Indeed, the influence of Arnold is everywhere apparent in the mature Russell's occasional essays. As we shall see later, when he came to write a column in the *Manchester Guardian*, based on a diary that he had kept since age twelve, he was frequently to invoke the spirit and wisdom of Arnold to give credence to his own opinions.

Soon Russell was to find that Arnoldism was not restricted to Harrow school. On going up to Oxford in 1872, his discovery of others who shared admiration for Arnold

only served to heighten his own devotion. Although not tangible, Arnold's influence, said Russell:

Was written on the fleshly tables of the heart. To Oxford men he seemed like an elder brother, brilliant, lovable, playful, yet profoundly wise; teaching us what to think, to admire, to avoid. His influence fell upon a thirsty and receptive soil. We drank it with delight; and it co-operated with all the best traditions of the place in making us lifelong lovers of romance, and truth, and beauty. One of the keenest minds produced by Oxford between 1870 and 1880 thus summarized his effect on us: 'I think he was almost the only man who did not disappoint one.'⁹

Russell was to remain, for many years, a close friend and admirer. After leaving Oxford, he took up residence in London and a career in journalism:

Though I had admired and liked him in a reverent sort of way, when I was a Harrow boy and he was a man, I found him even more fascinating when I met him on the more even terms of social life in London In those days I used to say that, if one could fashion oneself, I should wish to be like Matthew Arnold; and the lapse of years has not altered my desire.¹⁰

This friendship was to last until Arnold's death when it was Russell who, appropriately, was most responsible for erecting the commemorative bust in Westminster Abbey.¹¹

While Russell could attest, like Saintsbury, to the prevalence of Arnold worship at Oxford, he had matured in a different time and at a different stage in Arnold's personal development. While at Harrow, he had seen the publication of *Culture and Anarchy*, *Saint Paul and Protestantism*, and *Friendship's Garland*. While at University College, he saw Arnold reach the peak of his popularity with *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible*, making Russell's Arnold quite a different one to that of Saintsbury's youth. Russell's, with the emphasis on *Culture and Anarchy*, was to draw attention away from the poetry and *Essays in Criticism* and was therefore antipathetic to Saintsbury's emphasis on the aesthetic. In addition, Russell's involvement with Christian Socialism, a movement extremely political and to a certain extent anti-decadent, was to play no small part in the development of his own brand of Arnoldism.

Ever the diplomat, however, Russell shied away from open conflict with Saintsbury in the preface to his 1904 biography of Arnold. 'All that literary criticism can do for the honour of his prose and verse has been done already,' said Russell,

'conscientiously by Mr Saintsbury.' In preparing his book, he went on, he had 'been careful not to re-read what more accomplished pens than mine had written; for I wished my judgment to be as far as possible, unbiassed by previous verdicts.' That, we may surely imagine, was a subtle way of saying that 'conscientious' or not, Saintsbury was hardly in sympathy with Arnold and that 'literary criticism' alone was not capable of showing Arnold as he really was, clearly a reference to Saintsbury's preference for the 'critical' over the 'biographical.' While he was obviously trying to avoid any unpleasantness that he feared outright disagreement might bring, Russell's *Matthew Arnold* is best understood as an intended corrective. He clearly saw himself, unlike Saintsbury, not as a judicial critic but as an advocate, a true disciple and friend seeking to vindicate his mentor's memory. As a result, his own approach was to be a wholehearted departure from the first Arnold biography of five years before. Not all he had to say about Arnold was positive but Russell's main objective, clearly stated in the introduction, was to emphasize aspects of Arnold hitherto neglected by less responsible and perceptive critics. In justification for 'the production of yet another book about Matthew Arnold,' Russell claimed that 'apology is to be found in the fact that nothing has yet been written which covers exactly the ground assigned to me in the present volume.'¹² Russell's emphasis on Arnold as the 'prophet of culture' was nothing new, but it served to counter the growing image of Arnold as the professional man of letters and amateur politician that Saintsbury had no small part in projecting.

In 1895, Russell had hoped that his edition of the *Letters* would suffice to reveal the real Arnold to the world; in retrospect, the result was, he believed, 'a curious obscuration of some of Arnold's most characteristic traits.'¹³ Nevertheless, even with their faults, the *Letters* were, to Russell, still the nearest existing image of their writer to date. They so perfectly presented his conversational tone, he claimed, that 'to read them is like listening to him through a phonograph.'¹⁴ If there was any obscuration, then, it was not due, in any

way, to the *Letters* themselves, but rather subsequent interpretations of them. Although he disclaimed having re-read Saintsbury before writing his book, his was probably one misreading that played a major part in motivating Russell to write. Saintsbury's method had required an overt isolation of the Arnoldian works from their original contexts, primarily regarding the text as it presented itself to the reader. Russell, on the other hand, was concerned, as far as possible, with recreating the personality of Arnold for his reader. Whereas Saintsbury's impressionism had yielded an almost iconoclastic reading of Arnold, Russell was more committed to a respect for what he regarded as authorial intention. The fundamental difference between these respective approaches is most apparent if we compare Saintsbury's belief in 'the processes of one mind on the products of another' with Russell's recommendation of a more passive method of reading:

That close, sympathetic, penetrating, study of a book which brings us into personal relation with the man who wrote it; which fills us with his mind and spirit till they become part, and the best part, of ourselves; which gives us . . . fellowship with the immortals.¹⁵

Whereas Saintsbury's book had been written in a somewhat dry, academically clinical style, Russell's strikes the reader as an eminently more personal tribute. Not only do expressions of grateful appreciation abound throughout; the book is actually dedicated 'to Matthew Arnold's children' and contains a series of photographs of biographical and personal significance: Fox How, Pains Hill Cottage, Arnold's rooms at Oriel, and even the grave at Laleham. In calling Arnold 'Master' Russell had immediately placed himself. It is much easier for us to call him 'Arnoldian' than any other of his contemporaries because his personal debt, he believed, was so large. He unashamedly admitted to being 'a loyal and grateful disciple,' a member of 'a band of disciples' that Arnold had 'won to his side.'¹⁶

Russell clearly stated his overall object in the introduction: 'I do not aim at a criticism of the verbal medium through which a great Master uttered his heart and mind; but rather a survey of the effect which he produced on the thought and action of the current

age.' The rhetorically strong opening sentence shows the extent to which his intended purpose was diametrically opposed to Saintsbury's high regard for manner over matter: 'This book is intended to deal with substance rather than form.' Russell was patently aware that his approach to Arnold was very different to Saintsbury's, since his point of departure was positively articulated by a statement in which he set himself up as antagonist to the aesthetic position:

It happens . . . that his earliest and latest criticisms were criticisms of Institutions, and a great part of his critical writing deals with similar topics That effect will perhaps be found to have been more considerable than his contemporaries could have imagined; for, though it became a convention to praise his literary performances and judgments, it was no less a convention to dismiss as visionary and absurd whatever he wrote about the State and Community.¹⁷

The titles of Russell's chapters alone are enough to show how radically he was at variance with Saintsbury's view of Arnold. Following a first chapter on 'Method' are sections on 'Education,' 'Society,' 'Conduct,' and 'Theology,' while Russell's introductory pages are taken up with the errors that he saw inherent in current aesthetic notions about the Arnold canon. Although he agreed with many that the poetry was too little appreciated, there was, he said, an 'urgent need for moderation and self control' when evaluating 'his place among the poets.' In a curious inversion of the elitist quality that some Oxford aesthetes admired in the poetry, Russell claimed that Arnold could never be regarded as a 'great' poet since he wrote for and therefore only appealed to 'a chosen few.' Although the 'teachings about humanity' had done less 'to endear him to many of his disciples' than had 'his feelings for nature,' in Russell's view, the idea that Arnold was a poet first was superficial since the poetry had its origins in a 'critical' attitude borne out in his famous 'criticism of life' dictum; later Russell was to suggest that 'true to his own doctrine [he had] used literature as a medium for criticizing the life and conduct of his fellow-men.' Contrary to those who were attracted to the poetry for its withdrawal from rationalism and philosophical theory, Russell discerned in it a systematic ethical message,

'a sustained doctrine of self-mastery, duty, and pursuit of truth, which is essentially ethical, and, in its forms, as nearly "scientific" and systematic as the nature of poetry permits.' There was therefore no essential conflict between philosophical engagement and poetic withdrawal for Russell who saw in the poetry only the consistent adumbration of a perfectly cohesive moral message of 'Duty' founded on 'Truth -- Work -- Love.'¹⁸

Russell's commitment to such a clearly discernable 'criticism of life' made for an eccentric canon, at once elevating the stylistically inferior poems which carried forward his own didactic view while imposing upon others suspect readings that tended to suppress the fundamental conflicts which underlay them. Arnold's doctrine was never 'so exquisitely expressed,' claimed Russell, than in 'The Good Shepherd With the Kid,' a piece which seems hardly to have impressed itself on other commentators before or since. 'The Forsaken Merman,' far from presenting the tension between two worlds forever separated, represented to Russell a simple 'tale of contemptuous unkindness and its enduring poison.' About really problematic poems like 'Obermann,' 'Empedocles,' and 'The Strayed Reveller,' he had nothing to say. And those that contained expressions of anxiety over a divided cosmogony in which man is forever separated from his environment -- 'Dover Beach' and 'Quiet Work,' for example -- were explained away by the facile claim that 'Nature . . . is called on to teach us the secret of successful labour.' Similarly, the underlying uncertainty that characterized Arnold's aesthetic phase Russell glossed over with the simple notion that, even in an era of personal and public disruption, 'he clings to his fixed idea of love as duty.' Such a one-sided reading of the early Arnold must have surely stemmed from its perspective. Reading retrospectively, and in the light of the optimism of *Culture and Anarchy*, Russell was able to reduce all of Arnold's literary work to the combination of 'Light with Sweetness.'¹⁹ Regarding all of the pre-1867 Arnold as preparatory for the more relevant work to come, the poetry Russell disposed of in ten pages, the literary criticism in even less.

If he had reservations over the poetry, Russell believed that 'when we come to consider him as a prose writer, cautions and qualifications are much less necessary.' Nevertheless, he took issue with those who saw the value of Arnold's prose in 'style alone,' especially those, like Saintsbury, who valued the style of his literary criticism above the subject matter. Again attacking the elitist Arnoldism that had earned him a reputation as a master of fine aesthetic taste, Russell said that, despite their enthusiasm for *Essays in Criticism*, 'those who care for literature are few,' whereas *Culture and Anarchy* was a book that appealed to politicians and to 'that class of ordinary citizens which aims at cultivation.' Although Russell admitted that, as a critic of books, Arnold's taste, temper, and judgment were 'pretty nearly infallible,' it was regrettable that 'his criticism in other fields has hardly been appreciated at its proper value.' Only in 'his criticism of national life,' he continued, was 'the hand of the master felt,' thus giving works like *Friendship's Garland*, *Culture and Anarchy*, and even *Essays in Criticism* 'an interest and value quite independent of their literary merit,' and making them even more relevant twenty years after their author's death than when they had originally appeared. Clearly, Russell's view of Arnold was not so negative as Saintsbury's; it involved laying stress on certain areas of his work rather than dismissing others as worthless. Because he believed that the inordinate attention received by the aesthetic aspect of Arnold's writing was the result of a misreading of his whole programme, Russell was still willing to admit that Arnold had aesthetic value but did not see it as his major contribution to the contemporary scene. Russell argued, then, not for the suppression of certain Arnoldian works, but the necessity of reversing precedents that had caused these works, 'so hostile to the current cant of the moment,' to be 'endlessly misinterpreted and misunderstood.'²⁰

The chief value that Russell saw in the *Essays in Criticism* was in an objective critical method that could be applied to every area of life, seeing 'the object as it really is.' Despite his somewhat 'fantastic' politics, Arnold was credited with an almost superhuman

detachment, as one who could not in any way be deemed a 'partisan of any cause, creed, party, society or system.' Repeatedly alluding to Arnold's nonadherence to anything that could be called a party platform, Russell portrayed him as the disinterested critic above the arena of mere polemics, truly classless and politically impartial. Apart from being an advocate of such abstract values as sweetness and light, humanity, sanity, beauty, and truth, Russell's Arnold proceeds with 'lucidity,' 'courage' and 'serenity.' Thus, by suppressing the tension between the flexible critic and his right to moralize and the incongruities between Arnold's critical ideal and his practice, Russell was able to attribute to him those qualities that Arnold himself had prescribed for disinterested criticism. Russell painted the picture of a humane teacher who 'taught exclusively with the pen,' and whose proclamations in every area of intellectual activity, because of his objectivity, had current relevance and universal validity.²¹ Since some of these areas had been neglected of late, particularly those dealt with after 1867, Russell saw it as his duty to spend the rest of his book explicating Arnold's views on those very topics.

Rather than tracing the origins of *Culture and Anarchy* to the Hellenism of Arnold's youthful poetry, it was perhaps predictable that Russell would dwell on the more practical aspects of the early life. Consequently, he was one of the first to treat at length the writings on education, an area that had been largely ignored by previous critics:

We, who are his disciples, habitually think of him as a poet, or a critic, or an instructor in national righteousness and intelligence We do not think of him as, in the narrow and technical sense, an Educator.

Whereas Saintsbury had regarded the education reports as too specialized to deserve any significant treatment, they were germane to Russell's whole claim for Arnold's being a qualified spokesman for culture. By treating the products of this more socially active side of Arnold's work as an intrinsic part of his literary canon, Russell was going against the most common image of Arnold at the time -- the young poet and critic who, forced by marriage into a life of banal duty and drudgery, sacrificed his natural talent on the altar of

government bureaucracy. By way of breaking down this fundamental distinction between the literary and social Arnold, Russell said that the *Reports on Elementary Education* 'belong as essentially to literature as his Essays and his Lectures.' Arnold had spent most of his life and energy on education and was, after all, 'the greatest Inspector of Schools that we have ever possessed,' said Russell, and 'a man who gives his life to a profession must be in a great measure judged by what he accomplished in and through that profession.' Although it had to be admitted that Arnold's influence on English education was not very tangible -- 'it was not the kind of effect which can be expressed in figures or reported in Blue Books,' said Russell, but rather a tacit influence -- his visionary view had largely come to pass. Russell's catalogue of fundamental changes brought about since Arnold had first proposed them is indeed impressive reading. From his call for the appointment of an education minister who would oversee the nation's state elementary and secondary schools to the establishment of university settlements in large population centres, Arnold's vision proved to Russell that he had anticipated the spirit of social reform that had become popular since he first wrote the educational reports:

It would be impossible . . . to say how far the system now in existence owes any of its features to the influence of Matthew Arnold. It is the lot of great thoughts to fall upon very different kinds of soil . . . yet sometimes to find a congenial lodgment, and after long years to spring into life and manifest themselves in very unexpected quarters. So it may well have been with Arnold's educational themes.²²

The fact that most of the proposals he had put forward for the reform of schools in England had come about with the 1902 Education Bill and other rearrangements in state administration only reinforced Russell's belief that Arnold had been, in fact, a prophet of the democratic ideal in education. The one point on which Russell suspected that Arnold may have betrayed that ideal -- his opposition to compulsory education -- was mitigated by evidence that he found in the *Letters* of Arnold's eventual acceptance of the wording of Forster's Bill in 1869.

It was, indeed, the image of Arnold as social reformer that Russell wanted to communicate to his readers, but the kind of reform he had in mind was not simply materialist. He therefore continued, 'we must now enquire what sort of knowledge he would have endeavoured, by his co-ordinated system, to impart.' Culture was to be the means by which self knowledge and knowledge of the world could be promoted. Despite his commitment to the necessity of a scientific education, 'he deliberately held the opinion that Literature . . . was the chief agent of culture.' Here again, Russell was breaking down the aesthetic-social dichotomy not by dismissing Arnold's literary interests but incorporating them into his larger cultural vision. Neither 'man of letters' nor 'social reformer' was alone adequate to express what Arnold represented to Russell. 'In a word, he was, and glorified in being, a Humanist.' After quoting Arnold's rebuff of Lord Salisbury's Oxford speech on the cultural pre-eminence of the physical sciences, Russell emphasized by repeating, and italicizing, '*the immense work which it is for literature to accomplish*. This work,' he continued, 'lying between the work of Religion and the work of Science, was, in his view, nothing less than the culture of Humanity.' Even in educational matters, said Russell, Arnold 'proceeded rather by criticism than by dogma,' and although 'no one had a wider, a more familiar, a more discriminating knowledge of English literature,' it was to be used only as a means to an end, criticism serving the purposes of humane culture.²³ Nothing could be further from art for art's sake, for it implied a social and moral function for criticism setting it in a political and ideological context that reached beyond mere aesthetic principles.

As a Liberal M.P. and later Undersecretary of State, it was only natural that Russell would be interested in Arnold's teaching on culture and its ability to reform the sensibilities of the masses. His chapter on 'Society' opens with the following quotation:

'Culture seeks to do away with classes and sects; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, and it uses them itself, freely; nourished,

and not bound, by them. This is *the social idea*; and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality.'

Here, again, is Arnold the democrat, the 'apostle of equality' who works for the intellectual and political emancipation of *all men* by propagating a classless and truly disinterested society. This quotation was, of course, from *Culture and Anarchy*, the work that Russell claimed to be 'Arnold's most important work in prose.' Far from seeing *Culture and Anarchy* as the first futile steps in the wilderness, he saw all that had gone before it as preparatory for this 'great social event,' so great, it seemed, that he was to devote seventy pages, over a quarter of the book, to summarizing and expounding its content, 'partly because it was to men who were young in 1869 a landmark in their mental life, and partly because it gives the whole body of Arnold's political and social teaching.' Not only was *Culture and Anarchy* at the centre of Arnold's canon, a microcosm of his whole career, but it had historic importance, not least for Russell himself, who remembered the effect that the book had on young Liberals when it first appeared. It had been published, he recalled, at a time when Gladstone's party was just coming into its own. Young Liberals at that time -- 'the writer was then a schoolboy at Harrow, where Arnold lived from 1868 to 1873,' Russell reminded his readers -- were euphoric with optimism about the coming new age of democracy and peace. The Irish problem was to be solved on its own terms, working men were to be given the Ballot, University Tests would be abolished, and 'some of us were beginning to feel our way to more extensive changes still: to hanker after universal suffrage In fine, Reformers were in a triumphant and sanguine mood.' Then into this context came Matthew Arnold:

Here was a man whose very name breathed Liberalism; for whom speculation had no fears; who had harassed the most hoary conventions with obstinate questionings; who had accepted Democracy as the evolution of natural law; who had poked delicious fun at the most highly-placed impostures, the most solemn plausibilities. In such a one we might surely have expected to find a friend, an ally, a comforter, a fellow-worker; a preacher of the smooth things which we loved to hear, an encourager of day-dreams which we had learned from *Locksley Hall* He thought scorn of our pleasant land, and gave no credence unto our word. He belittled our heroes; he pooh-poohed out achievements; he cast doubt on our prophecies; he caricatured our aspirations. He told us that we were victims of a profound delusion. He warned us that the great Democracy on which we relied as our unchangeable foundation would give way under our feet. He pointed out that

Labour had no more reason to expect its salvation from Liberalism than from Toryism. He insisted that all our political reform was mere machinery; that the end and object of politics was Social Reform; and that the promise of the future was for those who should help us to be better, wiser, and happier -- for those who concerned themselves rather with the product of the machine than with the machine itself; who were not satisfied by eternally taking it to pieces and putting it together again, but who wanted to know what sort of stuff it was, when perfected, to turn out.

In short, said Russell, 'he recalled our attention to certain objects of reverence which we . . . had forgotten.' While Liberalism had been caught up in political reform for its own sake, Arnold had reminded its practitioners that 'the true value of a nation was to be found in its culture.' The mistaken premise on which Gladstone's government had framed its platform, as far as he was concerned, was that the machinery of the political system was treated as an end in itself, or at least that political reform alone could bring universal happiness and personal fulfillment. Like others, Russell differed with some of Arnold's ideas on specific legislative policy, but thought that the overall effect of *Culture and Anarchy* was not only beneficial but necessary. It was now possible to be a social reformer without neglecting the cultivation of the individual, working for personal perfection as well as a humane society. 'Above all -- and this was to some of our Party the unkindest cut -- he asserted for Religion the chief place among the elements of our national well-being.'²⁴

Like J.D. Coleridge and other personal friends of Arnold, Russell trod carefully when it came to the religious writing. As lay-reader in the Anglican Church, Russell was staunchly orthodox in his Christian faith.²⁵ Divided between his own beliefs and loyalty to his friend and mentor, Russell set about diluting Arnold's religious ideas into something more palatable for not only himself, but also those late Victorians who still detected in *Literature and Dogma* the seeds of modern heresy. By focusing on Arnold's 'religious' and 'humane' personality rather than dwelling on specific theological concepts Russell was able to cover a multitude of sins; although he clearly differed with many of Arnold's religious points, Russell's concluding chapter showed a compromise stemming from his desire to comply with what he regarded as the 'spirit' of Arnoldian theology. The way he dealt with *Literature and Dogma* and *St. Paul and Protestantism* is itself a lesson in diplomatic

manoeuvre. He was largely in sympathy with the Arnoldian emphasis on 'conduct as three-fourths of life,' meriting its speaker as one who practised what he preached. Although he clearly disagreed with Arnold's views on the Resurrection, miracles, and the concept of God as impersonal 'stream of tendency,' Russell did not doubt this wholesome character's claim to Christianity. While he had given some offence, granted Russell, Arnold had not really undermined anyone's faith -- Robert Elsmere had been, after all, only a fictional character, and Russell was confident he had no replica in real life. He concluded by saying that all this is 'a matter of little moment for, indeed, his nature was essentially religious.'²⁶

The reviews were divided over Russell's purpose, but all were congenial in tone. The *Contemporary*, while regretting that Russell had not paid much attention to the poetry, nevertheless saw that Arnold's social observations were as pertinent as ever in a country where 'the children of Mr Bottles . . . gather round the Liberal Imperialism of Mr Barrington Bounderby.'²⁷ Taking a similar line, G.K. Chesterton noted in the *Bookman* how 'the radical England of Arnold's day was vain of its civilization [while] the Tory England of to-day is vain of its barbarism,' and how 'the new Mr. Bottles looks forth at the iron-clads he has built and the provinces he has annexed.' If anything, Russell's book showed that Arnold had, indeed, been a 'real prophet,' said Chesterton, and not the 'misanthropic old bear' that some had made him out to be.²⁸ The *Athenaeum*, too, defended Russell's work against those 'lovers of Matthew Arnold's poetry' who had failed to see the importance of Arnold's 'major contributions . . . to the problems of the day.' The writer went on to put himself clearly on the side of social Arnoldism by citing the damage that he felt approaches like Saintsbury's had done to Arnold's reputation. Russell had, he said, brought out points neglected by 'the literary critic who has a soul above politics and the partisan who cannot away with the detachment of Arnold.' It was the latter, he continued, 'which prevents him from getting his due alike as a political and a

religious teacher.' Arnold's politics and theology, concluded the article, had been truly progressive and, like Chesterton, the writer saw Russell's study as a worthwhile attempt to vindicate an important social prophet who had been unjustly 'misconceived.'²⁹

Other reviews were less complimentary, two in particular taking the old aesthetic line. The *Academy* regretted that Russell had not produced a critical biography; an adequate version of which had not, in its opinion, been supplied by previous efforts. Russell's book had, it admitted, been a 'fair exposition of Arnold's teaching in the social sphere' but 'it is precisely in the sphere of social philosophy and theological criticism that Arnold will be least attractive to posterity.'³⁰ Arnold's lasting reputation, it concluded, would rest on his poetry and the ideals that he imparted to literary criticism. The *Literary World* also accused Russell of being 'hardly sympathetic enough' with the poetry but hoped that the book would serve to pass on a knowledge of Arnold to 'the younger generation . . . to whom he is hardly more than a name.'³¹ The aesthetic-social division was certainly not restricted to the respective monographs of Saintsbury and Russell; as the reviews of the two books showed, this disparity was widespread among Arnold's readership at the time.

In 1904, yet another book was to appear, whose similarity in perspective to Russell's confirms that the claim for 'a band of disciples' was not unfounded, and that an Arnoldism based on the message of *Culture and Anarchy* was, in fact, more widely spread than the exclusively literary set was willing to admit. The American, William Harbutt Dawson, with his claim for an Arnoldian 'cult' was to take such an astonishingly similar line to Russell that it is hard to believe that the books were composed in isolation. Dawson was more militant in tone, however, and, unlike Russell, made plain from the start his strong belief in the tension that separated critics on Arnold:

There is to-day a cult of Matthew Arnold; it is growing, it must grow. It will grow because many tendencies of the age are in its favour, still more because many influences are opposed to it, and because the healthiest instincts of human nature and the deepest

interests of civilization require that it shall combat these opposing influences, and overcome them.

This Arnoldian movement, like the aesthetic one, was to draw vigour from its exclusivity, harking back to the idea in *Discourses in America* of the children of sweetness and light as the 'remnant.' Turning Saintsbury's allusion on its head, Dawson remarked that 'the Voice still cries, and it cries in the wilderness,' both instilling the message of the post-1867 years with a prophetic quality and hailing its messenger as a misunderstood teacher.³²

Dawson's *Matthew Arnold and His Relation to the Thought of Our Time* was divided into 'Culture,' 'Religion,' and 'Politics' and restricted its treatment of Arnold beginning in 1858 'when at last he touched the fringe of politics.' This study, too, centred on *Culture and Anarchy*. 'Of no other of his books did he so confidently affirm its truthfulness and necessity, and judging it after an interval of thirty years,' claimed Dawson, 'he would be a bold critic who disputed the writer's claim.' Arnold was never more 'stimulating,' said Dawson, than when he dealt with 'culture.' Dawson also put more emphasis on the prose than the poetry on the grounds that the former was a more reliable source of information than the less direct nature of the verse would allow. He also stressed that Arnold, as an adherent to culture, had a truly classless and apolitical nature, affirming his own claim to being 'a Liberal of the future rather than of the present.' Arnold's culture, claimed Dawson, had countered mediocrity in three spheres: politics, religion, and art. Since that time, politics had become an 'ignoble exploitation of public interests for party end,' religion had produced a 'huge system of sectarianism,' and modern aesthetics offered nothing but 'unwholesome eccentricity and unbridled license.'³³ A revival of Arnold's view of culture was, said Dawson, what was necessary to counter the unhealthy direction that these three pursuits had taken even since *Culture and Anarchy* was written.

Like Russell, Dawson had reservations about Arnold's theological work which he could treat with only 'mitigated sympathy,' believing it to be the 'least serviceable part of his literary work.' Uncomfortable with Arnold's treatment of Nonconformists, Dawson

called it his 'one personal prejudice,' yet, like Russell, could see beyond these individual quirks since even in his treatment of religious issues, 'Arnold's master-key is culture.' In all his work, we are told, Arnold's 'criticism aims simply at discovering how culture will view [such] problems.'³⁴ Contrary, then, to the import that Saintsbury had put on criticism itself, Dawson viewed it as a hand-maid, merely a tool by which the workings of culture could be discovered. This distinction is not one that Arnold had himself articulated, yet, had he been alive, the author of *Culture and Anarchy* may very well have dismissed the widespread process-oriented advocacy of comparative criticism as being a love of 'mere machinery.'

Although it found its most fervent articulation in them, the message of social Arnoldism was not restricted to these two 1904 books. In 1887, Russell had begun writing a column for the *Manchester Guardian*. Arnold's ^{nephew,} who was then the newspaper's drama critic, had been directly responsible for Russell's appointment.³⁵ Perhaps even young Arnold's uncle, who was frequently in London at the time, had something indirectly to do with helping his friend in this arrangement since, as Russell himself freely admitted, 'I was rather at a loose end as regards regular work.'³⁶ If so, then Russell certainly repaid the favour, for, in those articles, he was to carry on Arnold's social criticism for over twenty five years.

In the year after Arnold's death, an article on 'The New Liberalism' appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*. Its author, a young Liberal M.P. called Llewellyn Atherley-Jones, argued that the official position of English Liberalism had become outdated in comparison to the new radicalism of the Liberal 'rank and file.' Since the presentation of the aborted Reform Bill in 1866, argued Atherley-Jones, there had been such a gradual exodus of the middle class to the Conservative party that by 1889 middle class Liberalism had all but disappeared -- its ambitions having been realized with the introduction of Free Trade. 'Now . . . for the first time in the history of English politics, we find Liberalism almost

exclusively identified with the particular interests of the working class.' Rather than addressing the calls for further reforms at home, Gladstone and his cabinet, still obsessed with the Home Rule question, in the opinion of Atherley-Jones, had fallen 'completely out of touch with the aspirations and aims of modern Liberal thought.'³⁷ The mechanic and labourer, after all, had 'so far at least as his vision extends -- no personal interest in Home Rule.' Considering, then, that Liberalism was becoming more and more a working man's polity, it seemed only reasonable to Atherley-Jones that the party would never again rise to power until its leadership recognized 'the transformation of the old into the new Liberalism, and adapt their policy to the requirements of the people.' Only by changing with the times, refusing to become entrenched in middle class values, and working for the emancipation of the working man could the old Liberalism become the Liberal party of the future. Atherley-Jones concluded:

The masses of this country It is true they are as yet inarticulate; but with the statesman rests the responsibility to devise and formulate those reforms by which . . . there may be compassed for our people a wider diffusion of physical comfort, and thus a loftier standard of national morality. This is the new Liberalism.³⁸

Until this time Russell's journalism had dealt with only high-society gossip but in 1889, in an enthusiastic response to Atherley-Jones in the next issue of the *Nineteenth Century*, he was to make his first public advocacy of the new Liberalism, inaugurating an involvement in a journalism decidedly more political in content. Although he regarded himself as no expert in radical politics, not having been himself involved in day-to-day battles on behalf of the working classes, but rather 'what Mr. Matthew Arnold called "a feeble unit" of the party,' it was with 'agreeable surprise' that Russell had found, in Atherley-Jones, another 'active member of the Liberal party whose opinions agreed so nearly with my own.'³⁹ Nearly, that was, with one main exception. To Atherley-Jones's vision of bringing material relief and higher moral standards to the working classes, Russell's new Liberalism would attach a definite religious element:

The poor, the ignorant, the weak, the hungry, the overworked, all call for aid and in ministering to their wants the adherent of the New Liberalism knows that he is fulfilling the best function of the character which he professes, and helping to enlarge the boundaries of the kingdom of God.

Besides his colleague's commendable desire for 'a wider diffusion of physical comfort' and 'a loftier standard of national morality,' Russell proclaimed that 'it is also, in my judgment, a noble and definite form of Christian effort.'⁴⁰ For Russell, this was to be the first of many public statements on behalf of a brand of new Liberalism which, based as it was on democracy, social service, and Christian piety, was synonymous with the Christian Socialist movement and which stood him as far apart from official Liberalism as Arnold had stood in the seventies.

Judging by his essays from this period, there is little doubt that Russell connected the new Liberalism with the ideals of the Christian Socialist movement. It is also certain that he connected his view of Arnold with that same movement. It was only a short step from advocating what he saw as the main themes of *Culture and Anarchy* -- social reform, Christianity, and the pursuit of personal perfection -- to the ideals of the Christian Social League. 'In brief,' he wrote, 'Arnold's idea of the State was exactly that which in later years one of his disciples -- Henry Scott Holland -- conceived, when defending Christian Socialism.'⁴¹

In the 1890s Russell had, like Atherley-Jones, become disillusioned with the Liberal party and in his *Guardian* column was frequently to comment on the direction in which he saw English society moving. That Arnold's influence on his 'ways of thought and speech' is everywhere evident in these pieces was something he freely admitted:

Critics have sometimes commented on the frequency with which, in my writings, I refer to Matthew Arnold. They tell me that I am saturated with his diction, that my style is modelled on his prose, and that I quote his phrases with undue iteration.⁴²

Many of Russell's criticisms of social types employed the *Friendship's Garland* type of caricature. When that thorn in his mentor's side, the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill, finally became law in 1907, Russell entered the fray with a piece called 'Hannah and the Church.'

Reminding his readers that Hannah had been the unmarried sister of the flower of *Friendship's Garland*, Sarah Bottles, Russell cajoled:

Thirty-eight years have rolled their course since that memorable visit to Laburnam House; and, so slow is the victory of right reason over prejudice and obscurantism, that only one step in the direction of emancipation has yet been gained, and that with difficulty, in the last hours of the Session just concluded.⁴³

Russell began another series of sketches by invoking the spirit of Arnold, saying 'could Arminius, that vigorous and unsparing critic of our national weaknesses, rise again . . . he would probably say that the ["Thyestean banquet of claptrap"] had not altered much in the course of thirty-six years.'⁴⁴ Soon it became apparent that the responsibility of stamping out that claptrap lay almost as heavily on Russell as it had on his predecessor.

Although Russell spent several years in attendance at that banquet in the House of Commons, the *Guardian* articles gave him an important opportunity to express the many grievances he had with parliamentary officialdom. 'Nature implanted in me an independent spirit,' he recalled:

Like Mr. Gladstone, I regard my mental freedom as my most precious possession; and nowhere, as far as I know, can a contributor find so much scope for individuality as in the *Manchester Guardian* . . . Perhaps I may have been at one time too little of a Home Ruler; at another, too little of a Disestablisher. Here the cloven foot of Socialism may peep out from under the decorous garments of official Liberalism . . . To be disinterested seems to me the highest virtue of journalism.⁴⁵

Here, he sounds very much like Arnold on the impartiality of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. It is hardly surprising that in order to promote Arnoldism in his own time Russell would have felt that he had to seek out the same type of apolitical organ that his mentor had commended. Only by having the absolute freedom to approach polemical issues disinterestedly, could Russell express his unofficial Liberalism -- showing 'the cloven foot of Socialism' -- without compromising his position.

The work for which Russell became best known and in which he most clearly placed himself politically and ideologically was a collection of articles republished as two volumes of *Collections and Recollections*, the second volume of which was a series of meditations on Gladstone's speech on the occasion of Victoria's 1887 Jubilee.⁴⁶ As

newly elected Prime Minister, Gladstone had invited Russell to stand for Parliament in 1892 and although he always considered himself loyal to the Liberal leader -- one of the few points of contention between himself and Arnold -- Russell's allegiance to the radical ideals of Christian Socialism were evidently much stronger.⁴⁷

In 'The Failures of Democracy' Russell looked back at the history of English politics since *Culture and Anarchy*. For him, the period immediately after the Reform Bill of 1867 represented 'the golden hours' of the Liberal party. Echoing Atherley-Jones's point of several years before, he noted how 'whole classes . . . who were then among the most enthusiastic adherents of Progress have transferred their allegiance to the standard of Privilege.'⁴⁸ The cause of 1871 seemed all but lost to Russell when he wrote these words in 1901. In effect, it was not Democracy that had failed, but the majority that had deserted it. Nevertheless, Russell took solace in the idea that the Liberals who were still faithful to the cause, while in the minority, would still prevail. In a companion piece, 'The Hope for Democracy,' he anticipated the persistence and eventual triumph of collectivism thanks to a small band who still believed in social reform. After all, he said, 'there is a world-wide difference between the "Majority" and the "Remnant" -- and the ten righteous men may yet save the guilty city.'⁴⁹

It was Russell who had been entrusted with the knowledge that Arnold wished to be remembered for the *Discourses in America*, with their controversial socio-political theories on 'the majority and the remnant.'⁵⁰ In the discourse called 'Numbers,' taking Plato's Athenian democracy and Isaiah's Israel as illustrations, Arnold had spoken of the importance of a 'remnant' class of enlightened individuals to the moral and social redemption of their nation.⁵¹ That this idea was crucial to Russell's vision of the Christian Socialist and his mission was evident throughout *Collections and Recollections* in which he referred to what he deemed as positive evidence of this religious democratic remnant. When he contrasted the metropolitan missions set up by Harrow and Oxbridge students to

service the physical and spiritual needs of those less fortunate in the East End of London 'with the selfishness . . . which disgraced the past, even the gloomiest pessimist,' said Russell,¹ 'must admit that England is moving in the right direction.' This was, of course, nothing new. Paternalistic charity, calculated to bring relief to 'the weak and helpless,' is philanthropy in the Shaftesbury mould. And yet, these young Athenians who brought the gospel of social service and culture to the doors of the masses were also to be the epitome of the new Socialism, precursors of an organized class of individuals who would usher in a whole new political order:

The new Socialism . . . regarding the State, with Burke . . . saw in it the one sovereign agent for all moral, material, and social reforms. The State is omnipotent where the individual is powerless; and in the view of the new Socialists it was bound to concern itself with the health and housing, the food and raiment, the culture, and even the amusements of those who were least able to help themselves.⁵²

Judging from his biography, Russell saw this ethic as an important part of his own development, from the early humanitarian teachings at Harrow to the visits he had paid to workhouses with oranges and books as an Oxford student. Although he knew that 'the individual is powerless' to make significant social changes, Russell eventually realized that 'a quiet but momentous revolution' had been occurring in which others like him had seen the necessity of 'the nobler conception of corporate endeavour.' Indeed, when he came to review the major events in his own political career, he saw them as a series of attempts to co-ordinate this reforming remnant. He and others had seen their election to Parliament in 1880 as an opportunity 'to make the lives of our fellow men healthier, sweeter, brighter, and more humane.' With the eventual demise and ideological retrenchment of Liberalism, however, Russell found he had to look elsewhere to find a platform for his Christian Socialist work. Consequently, in 1889, he ran as a Progressive candidate for a seat on the newly founded London County Council and was elected Alderman, a post he held for six years. The Council, a relatively small body of elected officials having considerable influence over the affairs of the city provided an ideal setting for the practical exercise of a

socially conscientious remnant. As a result, Russell reported with satisfaction, 'it had proved in practice what a right-minded Municipality can do towards brightening and sweetening human life.'⁵³ Not surprisingly, this language was taken almost directly from *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold's strongest and most comprehensive statement on the role of a cultured remnant whose responsibility was to bring 'sweetness and light' to the English classes.

Notes

- ¹Edmund Gosse, 'The Literature of the Victorian Era,' *English Illustrated Magazine*, 17 (July, 1897), 490.
- ²George Russell, *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1904), 65-66.
- ³Park Honan, *Matthew Arnold: A Life* (London, 1978), 355. This attitude towards Arnold was verified by Russell himself who quoted letters from Harrow 'to show the sort of man who swam into our ken when I was a boy of fifteen. Ignorant as schoolboys proverbially are, we yet knew the name of Arnold, and some of us, a little more alert than others, knew that Dr Arnold's son, Matthew, was renowned as a poet and a critic -- in short, a "swell.'" [George Russell, *Selected Essays On Literary Subjects* (London, 1914), 53].
- ⁴Russell, *Selected Essays*, 53.
- ⁵In describing Aurelius, said Russell, Arnold 'half-unconsciously described himself.' [George Russell, ed., *Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1888* (London, 1895), I: xi].
- ⁶Russell, *Selected Essays*, 53-54.
- ⁷George Russell, *One Look Back*, (London, 1911), 295.
- ⁸George Russell, *George Eliot: Her Genius and Writings* (London, 1882), 8.
- ⁹Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 64.
- ¹⁰Russell, *One Look Back*, 301.
- ¹¹See the author's 'In Memory of Matthew Arnold: The Proceedings of the Westminster Memorial Committee,' *Arnoldian*, 14:2 (Summer, 1987), 17-21.
- ¹²Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, ix.
- ¹³Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, viii.
- ¹⁴George Russell, 'Matthew Arnold in His Letters,' *Phonographic Quarterly Review* (February, 1897), 85.
- ¹⁵Russell, *George Eliot*, 8.
- ¹⁶Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 1, 21. Elsewhere Russell called Arnold 'my beloved and honoured master.' [George Russell, *The Varying Year* (London, 1908), 1].
- ¹⁷Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, ix, 1, 21.
- ¹⁸Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 2, 8, 7, 22, 182, 26.
- ¹⁹Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 29, 28.
- ²⁰Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 9, 10, 215, 10, 11, 12, 32.
- ²¹Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 18, 1.
- ²²Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 52, 57, 55, 52, 82.
- ²³Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 91, 92, 93, 75, 94.
- ²⁴Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 112, 137, 126, 171, 139, 141-142, 144.
- ²⁵This was more than obvious from a number of religious books and tracts that he wrote, the most explicit of which were *The Household of Faith: Portraits and Essays* (London, 1902), *Mr Gladstone's Religious Development* (London, 1899); and *A Short History of the Evangelical Movement* (London, 1915).
- ²⁶Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 267, 240, 268.
- ²⁷Unsigned review, *Contemporary Review* 85 (June, 1904), 904.
- ²⁸G.K. Chesterton, 'The Atmosphere of Matthew Arnold,' *Bookman*, 26 (April, 1904), 17.
- ²⁹Unsigned review, *Athenaeum*, 1 (April 16, 1904), 496-497.
- ³⁰Unsigned review, *Academy*, 66 (March 19, 1904), 296.
- ³¹Unsigned Review, *Literary World*, 69 (April 15, 1904), 360.
- ³²William Harbutt Dawson, *Matthew Arnold and His Relation to the Thought of Our Time* (New York, 1904), iii, v.
- ³³Dawson, *Matthew Arnold*, 35, 158, 62, 65, 70.
- ³⁴Dawson, *Matthew Arnold*, 155, 301, 173.

³⁵In an article called 'Silver Wedding,' Russell looked back on his twenty five years with the *Guardian*, crediting his connection with the newspaper to his old Harrow friend, William Arnold: 'specially must I thank the honoured memory of a high-minded publicist and most accomplished writer, through whose good offices I was first introduced to the *Manchester Guardian* -- the late William Thomas Arnold . . . Mr Arnold and I had been brother-scholars at Oxford; but when we had taken our degrees, our paths diverged; and I had not seen him for a good many years, when, in the summer of 1887, we encountered one another at a dinner-party in London. Before the evening ended, he had suggested that I should become an occasional contributor to the paper, and I gladly accepted the suggestion.' [George Russell, *Half-Lengths* (London, 1913), 149-150].

³⁶Russell, *Half-Lengths*, 351.

³⁷L.A. Atherley-Jones, 'The New Liberalism,' *Nineteenth Century*, 26 (August, 1889), 188-189.

³⁸Atherley-Jones, 'The New Liberalism,' 191-192.

³⁹George Russell, 'The New Liberalism: A Reply,' *Nineteenth Century*, 26 (September, 1889), 492.

⁴⁰Russell, 'The New Liberalism,' 499.

⁴¹Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 172.

⁴²Russell, *Selected Essays*, 56, 51.

⁴³George Russell, *Sketches and Snapshots* (London, 1910), 242.

⁴⁴George Russell, *A Pocketful of Sixpences* (London, 1907), 1-2. One example of Russell's use of the Arnoldian caricature occurs in a piece called 'Bottles on Bounders,' clearly based on characters from Letter VII of *Friendship's Garland*, and in which Russell took up Arnold's ridicule of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. [Russell, *Half-Lengths*, 92]. Other examples occur in a collection published by Arnold's own London publisher, George Smith, appropriately called *Social Silhouettes*, (London, 1906). In his autobiography, Russell compared his Oxford days favourably with those of Lord Lumpington and Rev Esau Hittall. [Russell, *One Look Back*, 88]. In 1908, Russell remarked that 'I no longer have a seat at the "Thyestean Banquet," and my interest in it is only that of the benevolent onlooker.' [Russell, *Some Threepenny Bits* (London, 1908), 45]. That benevolence seems to have eventually given way to nostalgia when, in 1912, he said, 'I do not share the opinion of that rather overbearing Prussian. In fact, I rather enjoy the "Thyestean Banquet."' [Russell, *After Thoughts*, (London, 1912), 173].

⁴⁵Russell, *Half-Lengths*, 353-354.

⁴⁶In response to Gladstone's enthusiasm over the glories of empire, Russell said that 'the amelioration of the social conditions of the workers . . . has made Queen Victoria's reign glorious.' [George Russell, *Collections and Recollections, Second Series* (London, 1909), 35].

⁴⁷In an essay dedicated to expounding the virtues of the 'new socialism,' Russell cited an episode in which Gladstone had disapprovingly asked him whether 'it was true that Socialistic notions were spreading among younger Liberals.' [Russell, *Collections and Recollections, Second Series*, 70-71].

⁴⁸Russell, *Collections and Recollections, Second Series*, 77.

⁴⁹George Russell, *Seeing and Hearing* (London, 1907), 395. The point of the caricatures of *Social Silhouettes* was, claimed Russell, to imply the 'Ideal Character' who 'leavens the world in which his lot is cast . . . and elevates an entire generation.' [Russell, *Social Silhouettes*, 328].

⁵⁰*Discourses in America* 'he told the present writer, was the book by which, of all his prose-writing, he most desired to be remembered. It was a curious and memorable choice.' [Russell, *Matthew Arnold*, 12].

⁵¹'Let us do homage . . . to [Plato's] indestructable conviction that States are saved by their righteous remnant.' Elaborating on the nature of this righteous influence, Arnold called on the text of Phillipians iv.8: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are elevated, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise; have these in your mind, let your thoughts run upon these.' [Super X: 151, 152-3]. Significantly, Russell referred to this same Bible text when he spoke of the spread of inner city missions: 'Religious people are ready to let the world know what they believe, and are active in the pursuit of the things which are pure and lovely and of good report.' [George Russell, *For Better? For Worse? Notes On Social Changes* (London, 1902), 184-5].

⁵²Russell, *Collections and Recollections, Second Series*, 362, 69.

⁵³Russell, *One Look Back*, 317.

CHAPTER FIVE

Culture and the Condition of England

Holbrook Jackson, describing the changing climate in the world of letters at the end of 1890s, remarked:

Art for art's sake had come to its logical conclusion in decadence, and Bernard Shaw joined issue with the ascendant spirit of the times, whose more recent devotees have adopted the expressive phrase: art for life's sake. It is probable that the decadents meant much the same thing, but they saw life as intensive and individual, whereas the later view is universal in scope. It roams extensively over humanity, realising the collective soul.¹

Jackson attributed the decline of aestheticism, in part, to the downfall of Oscar Wilde in 1895. Indeed, even Wilde himself underwent something of a conversion after the infamous trial, the confessional *De Profundis* symbolizing perhaps more than any other work of that time the transformation of men of letters from decadent aesthetes. So considerable was the shift from aesthetics towards social theory that it was to have a great effect on the way that Arnold was regarded by a whole new generation of critics and artists. Saintsbury may have gone on promoting his brand of aesthetic Arnoldism well into the twenties but with the decline of the art for art's sake movement as a whole it was the social aspect of Arnoldian criticism that was to receive most attention at the beginning of the new century. Regarding this ascendant preoccupation with social matters, Lesley Johnson says that 'writers such as Shaw and Wells . . . rejected Arnold's type of argument which held art to have special powers to make men better, to lead them on to nobler things and adopted the view that art was a direct means of promulgating ideas, of persuasion.'² That criticism and art became for these and other writers a utilitarian vehicle for the promotion of a new social order cannot be denied, and so a general hostility to both the aesthetic side of Arnold's writing and his emphasis on individual development was only to be expected. In some instances, however, these same writers found it possible to recruit Arnoldian social criticism in support of their various points of view and, while undoubtedly at variance with the message of, say, 'The Study of Poetry,' they were, at the same time, responsible for a continuation of many of the aspects of social Arnoldism as it had been embodied by George Russell. Others, however, not so exclusively political in persuasion, were more intent upon defining a new aesthetic that accommodated for, or was accommodated in, a wider

social view. It is in these writers, seeking to create this rapprochement between culture and society outside the mainstream of socialist reform, that the true Arnoldian synthesis of aesthetics and ethics was to be found.

While Russell and his colleagues were proclaiming the rapid growth of Christian Socialism and the continued success of Toynbee Hall, the democratic ideal had been finding other quite different voices. 1884 had seen the foundation of the Fabian Society and in 1893 the Independent Labour Party was founded in order to mobilize Trades Unions into defending the rights and improving the lives of England's working classes. From this time on there was to be a proliferation of books, tracts, journals, and extension lectures, all vehicles for promoting a new age of democracy and discussing the ways in which it could best be implemented. 'Scores of books, letters and essays on socialism, liberalism, Marxism, trades-unionism and feminism appeared between 1880 and 1920,' says one commentator:

In choosing to explore such socio-economic subject matter, transitional writers continued centuries-old traditions of English prose, especially those developed by major Victorian essayists like Arnold, Ruskin, Carlyle and Mill, all of whom devoted substantial portions of their work to the dissection of society's problems.³

Indeed, many of the themes that had been dealt with by these earlier Victorians -- or, more appropriately, anti-Victorians -- were to come into fruition and find a popular forum in this vast array of early twentieth century social criticism. Although most writers were more anxious to trace their origins to Mill or Morris, there were others who approached the new democracy from a distinctly Arnoldian point of view. And although Arnold's name may not appear as frequently as, say, Ruskin's in indexes from this period, his presence, while not so overt, was nevertheless considerable.

In 1908, Robert Hunter spoke of the association between writers like Arnold and later English socialists. 'Nearly all the great minds in art and literature,' claimed Hunter, specifically naming Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, 'were expressing . . . the widespread discontent with the existing social order.' Citing Arnold's condemnation of inequality as an example of this common unrest, Hunter said that these men were 'yet incapable of discerning or of adequately expressing the new idealism coming to birth.' Unable to

foresee the outcome of their 'Titanic labours,' Arnold and his enlightened contemporaries 'were the prophets, rather than the teachers, of the new time of which they saw but the dawn.' Interestingly, Hunter also mentioned Heine as one of these prophets, quoting his claim to being 'a soldier in the Liberation War of Humanity' from the passage that Arnold had first introduced to the English public in 1865. A new day had come, according to Hunter, and the Liberation War that his predecessors had tried to articulate found a clear voice in the new generation of social critics:

It was hardly to be expected that the older men would fully understand the new movement, and it was but natural that in the main it was the younger men in literature and art who gave it expression . . . nothing could be more remarkable than the rapid change following the seventies. After the vague democratic yearnings . . . of the older generation, succeeded a gospel that dominated men of widely different talents . . . Whether we take the words of the forerunners of modern socialism, or that of the present exponents, we find the same methods used to interpret the social spirit.⁴

Hunter was certainly not alone in claiming Arnold as a prophet of the social changes that occurred at the opening of the new century. Harry Laidler, in his study of *The History of Socialist Thought*, remarked on the impact of Arnold on social awareness in the nineteenth century, saying that while he may not have been a socialist in the modern sense of the word he had done much 'to . . . arouse in many a desire for social changes.'⁵ Indeed, Arnold was often quoted by socialists in defence of particular points they were trying to drive home. 'Matthew Arnold tells you to choose equality,' Bernard Shaw told his 'Intelligent Women,' while Niles Carpenter, in his polemic for Guild Socialism, noted how Arnold had 'expressed an aversion . . . to the motives of those directing [the English factory system] . . . and its exaltation of machinery.'⁶ That he was frequently thus cited with such authority shows how much credence Arnold still had in such camps. So confident were the Fabian executive in the soundness of Arnold's social insights that they recommended, on two separate occasions, his writing to be read by their membership.⁷ One of the early Fabians, William Clarke, clearly identified the aspirations of the society with those of his formative Victorian influences. Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, said Clarke, were 'all penetrated with the new organic conception of society.'⁸ H.G. Wells, in *New Worlds For Old*, while insisting that incredible social change was imminent, also recognized the prophetic capabilities of certain members of the previous generation:

There was indeed Fabianism before the Fabian Society; it would be ingratitude to some of the most fruitful social work of the middle Victorian period to ignore the way in which it has contributed in suggestion and justification to the socialist synthesis But the movement was without formulae and correlation until the Fabians came.⁹

The reason that writers like Wells could give credit to Arnold and certain of his contemporaries for having prefigured the movement embodied by the Fabian Society was that the Fabian view of history was based primarily on a belief in social evolution with Fabianism itself as the witness to this historic progression. According to Alexander Gray, 'the Fabians regarded themselves as High Priests of the zeitgeist, whose function it was to interpret the spirit and justify the tendencies of the times.'¹⁰ Arnold may not have been so enthusiastic about the certainty of social progress, but the observations which he, as an earlier High Priest of the zeitgeist, had made were at times similar. Wells, like Hunter, looked back to the mid-Victorian democratic movement and noted how all its major prophets exhibited one common notion, 'a constant conflict . . . with the individualistic commercialism of the aggressively trading and manufacturing class.'¹¹ It should not be surprising that early twentieth century socialists should have expressed their gratitude to those who had been first to express discontent with the the middle-class capitalist ideal as it had then existed, especially Arnold, who, unlike Carlyle and Ruskin, was committed to social equality. As S.T. Glass states, while these other two Victorians were mentors of twentieth century socialism 'in industrial matters, it did not extend to their anti-democratic stand on questions of social and political organization.'¹² Arnold had, after all, disparaged upper-class rule, whereas Carlyle and Ruskin both expressed confidence in a revitalized aristocratic feudalism. Consequently, Benjamin Lippincott was to claim that of the major Victorian social critics, it was Arnold who 'anticipated the Fabians by two decades.'¹³

To suggest that Fabianism would have been seen by Arnold himself as the fulfillment of his social theory would be to ignore some fundamental discrepancies within the society itself, namely divisions over the importance of the individual in the political scheme and the related debate over the material versus the humane basis for socialism. The American Arnoldian, Stuart Sherman, pointing out what he saw as the major difference between Arnold and H.G. Wells said that unlike Arnold 'Wells . . . insists that salvation's

a collective thing, to be accomplished somewhere in the social environment, beyond the borders of the individual soul.¹⁴ Sherman quite rightly points to the fundamental conflict in which Arnold engaged with the utilitarians of his own day. Positivists like Frederic Harrison, so intent upon diagnosing material deficiencies had, according to Arnold, neglected the spiritual question and had all but lost sight of the individual soul in the scheme of things. Arnold had, after all, claimed for culture a two-fold function: both the perfection of society and the perfection of the self. Despite his overwhelming faith in State authority, Arnold had taken care to provide for personal development. In *Culture and Anarchy* the ideal State was to be made up of a collection of 'best selves.' The individual in Arnold's system was not moulded exclusively by the political regime under which he lived but made a significant contribution to its very nature. Whereas an overabundance of personal freedom would certainly bring about anarchy, Arnold believed that the enlightenment of citizens through culture would eventually lead to the transformation of society, thereby making for a truly democratic state of best selves. In this way, the State and its constitutive members were not to represent separate entities but to work together to bring about their respective perfection. Such a new social order, based largely on the harmonious development of one's own personality, was considered by some leading Fabians as too romantic and totally impractical. At one point, Shaw poignantly exclaimed that the most urgent need was not for better morals, spiritual redemption, or even culture, 'but simply for enough money.'¹⁵

Among those who shared and were largely responsible for promoting this overtly materialist approach to socialism was Sidney Webb whose position was never put more directly than in his contribution to *Fabian Essays in Socialism*. In Webb's 'The Historic Basis of Socialism' the animating force for the new order was to be science. In Webb's world, where the individual was to be subordinated to the social structure, there was little or no room for either Arnoldian culture or a spiritual remnant. Society, he maintained, 'is something more than the aggregate of so many individual units.' The life of the community, said Webb, 'transcends that of any of its members.' Structuring his argument around evolutionary theory, Webb tried to show that the primitive impulse towards survival

of the fittest had, in Athenian civilization, been replaced by 'brain culture;' however, the evolution of new competitive races based on 'social organization' had, observed Webb, always inevitably overturned such cultured democracies. The only way of breaking this constant cycle of events was accordingly to 'take even more care to improve the social organism of which we form a part, than to perfect our own individual developments.'¹⁶

This approach would certainly have found no favour with Arnold. Not only was Athenian culture to be superseded by a new, hyper-efficient social mechanism but individual perfection was of little use to Webb who said that 'the perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality, but the fitting, in the best possible way, of his own humble function in the social machine.' The only way to prevent anarchy, Webb concluded, was not culture since this was only a higher manifestation of the competitive impulse, but 'this new scientific conception of the Social Organism.'¹⁷ Webb's clinical approach would be too much 'mere machinery' for the author of *Culture and Anarchy* and it was probably this materialist element that has caused Lesley Johnson to remark:

The Fabian rejection of the idea of the perfection of the individual as the basis of the development of a nobler society constituted a significant break with one of the major tenets of Victorian thought. Arnold had advocated this principle as central to his notion of culture, just as others had regarded it as the only possibility for social change.¹⁸

Johnson's statement is misleading, however, since not all Fabians were as committed to Webb's type of scientific collectivism. While many may have shared his perspective, there were some who considered the concept of the reformed individual not only important but necessary to successful social reform.¹⁹

If Sidney Webb was descended from Frederic Harrison, Sydney Olivier took his socialist mandate directly from Arnold. Juxtaposed to Webb's article in the *Fabian Essays* was Olivier's offering called 'The Moral Basis of Socialism.' Olivier, an old Oxonian and civil servant, proposed an alternative to Webb's collectivism by suggesting that:

Socialism appears as the offspring of Individualism, as the outcome of individualist struggle, and as the necessary condition for the approach to the Individualist ideal. The opposition commonly assumed in contrasting is no accident of the now habitual confusion between personality and personalty Socialism is merely Individualism rationalised, organised, clothed, and in its right mind.²⁰

It is plain from his approach that Olivier was thinking of Webb when he composed the essay. He even turned Webb's use of evolutionary theory back upon him by saying that whereas, yes, primitive society was governed by 'the efficiency of man as a feeding and a fighting animal,' the competitive spirit had not been replaced by organizational skills but by a capacity 'to imagine and attain a thousand varieties of more refined satisfaction.' In other words, the intermediate aesthetic phase in Webb's scheme of human development, 'brain culture,' was exalted by Olivier to the ideal of personal and social achievement. The means by which Olivier proposed to implement this cultural phase had a curiously Arnoldian ring to it. 'The actual expenditure on public education,' he said, 'must . . . be considerably increased.' Olivier had literary education particularly in mind, giving each individual the capacity for knowing the best that has been known and thought: 'as soon as the mind has been trained to appreciate the inexhaustible interest and beauty of the world, the remainder of the education, granted leisure, is a comparatively inexpensive matter.' Only with the growth of cheap literature and the availability of museums, art galleries, and theatres (an area of particular interest to Arnold), would 'the reproach of proletarian coarseness be done away.'²¹ While Webb and, to some extent, Shaw may have wanted to suppress the spiritual and ethical basis that many of their Fabian colleagues gave for socialism, Ian Britain, connecting the appeal of Arnold to the idealistic faction of the society with his aesthetic emphasis, says that:

This was the special significance of artistic and literary sources . . . perhaps because they were not simply or predominantly political or economic in orientation, helped to crystallize discontents with the *status quo* that transcend materialist or pragmatic consideration.²²

The place of culture in a reforming vision was to be a major source of conflict among Fabians who were often divided on the respective roles apportioned to literature and science in the new democracy. Some associated the arts with the bourgeois society that had given them credence and support. Others, however, often artists themselves, continued to argue for the socially beneficial effect of such pursuits, consequently trying to justify them in terms of political expedience. Many prominent Fabians were first of all men of letters and although the fact that they chose to engage their creative gifts in the propagation of

political ideals often meant a redefinition of art itself to accommodate a more utilitarian aesthetic, it did not, in their views, disqualify them from being artists.²³

It is perhaps understandable that aesthetics were not of primary interest to many socialist leaders at the turn of the century. They were, after all, living in the wake of what they regarded as a hedonistic and decadent aesthetic which, rooted in romanticism, was committed to an individualistic over a collective politic. As such, they probably held decadence responsible, at least in part, for postponing the progress of socialist principles among the cultured few. It was, consequently, not unusual for reformers to define themselves in opposition to overt aestheticism. How different, for instance, was Beatrice Webb's response to Arnold from Oscar Wilde's. Wilde had lamented that Arnold's poetic gift had been supplanted by his sense of duty. After having received a copy of Arnold's poems from Sidney, Beatrice replied that although he was one of her favourite poets, he was 'full of reformed philosophical feeling but wanting in robust determination to make things better.'²⁴ To their zeal for social action, the arts often took second place. More than anything else, it was their fundamental subordination of what Arnold had called 'culture,' with all of its personal and aesthetic implications, that separated many modern social critics from the spirit of *Culture and Anarchy*.

Masterman and *The Condition of England*

The most obvious manifestation of social Arnoldism devoid of the Culture ideal was to be found in *The Condition of England* by another member of the Webb set, although not an official Fabian, C.F.G. Masterman.²⁵ In fact, Masterman was never to regard himself as a socialist but, like George Russell, was an M.P. who subscribed to the 'New Liberalism,' a phrase that gave him the title for one of his later books. Masterman was best known, though, for a series of essays which appeared in the *Nation* in 1908 and were published in book form the following year. So great was the success of *The Condition of England* that six editions were called for within two years, the first four achieving 4,500 copies, no small feat for a piece of social criticism, by far exceeding the initial sales of *Culture and Anarchy*.

After an introductory chapter on 'The Spirit of the People' in which he characterized the English race, as Arnold had half a century before, as honest but having a 'stiffness and lack of sympathy and inability to learn,' Masterman laid out his plan:

It may be helpful to break this composite figure of an 'Englishman' into the various economic divisions of the present time, to examine what changes are fermenting among the rich, the middle stratum of comfort, and the multitudinous ranks of the toilers, the dim hordes of the disinherited.²⁶

Throughout his book, Masterman's analysis was based on Arnold's division of classes into Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace. In 1909 they were assigned different names -- Conquerors, Suburbans, and Multitude, with the addition of Prisoners -- but they represented approximately the same social types that Arnold had characterized fifty years previously. Take Masterman's aristocracy, for example:

It maintains large country houses which offer a lavish hospitality; but it sees rural England crumbling into ruins just outside their boundaries, and has either no power or no inclination to arrest so tragic a decay. It fills vast hotels scattered around the coasts of England and ever multiplying in the capital It has annexed whole regions abroad, Biarritz and the Riviera coast . . . Austrian and German watering places, whither it journeys for the recovery of its lost health, and for distractions which will forbid the pain of thinking.

The descriptive language and style are Arnold's made contemporary. The upper classes may have found more sophisticated ways of exhibiting their complacency, but Barbarism was still rife. Masterman's Conquerors were the 'Bounders' of the twentieth century who had merely replaced their confidence in the efficiency of the railways with the availability of the motor car. Having inherited the hopeless materialism of their predecessors, modern aristocrats, like Arnold's Barbarians, had forfeited their right to rule since they no longer served any useful social function. 'It seems to be increasingly questioned,' Masterman observed, 'whether the landed classes of this country . . . can justify the trust and high calling which has been placed in their keeping.'²⁷

Masterman's description of the Suburbans was equally reminiscent of the Philistines that Arnold had caricatured at tea parties and chapel services:

Its male population is engaged in all its working hours in small, crowded offices, under artificial light, doing immense sums, adding up other men's accounts, writing other men's letters It finds itself towards evening in its own territory in the miles and miles of little red houses in little silent streets, in number defying imagination. Each boasts its pleasant drawing-room, its bow-window, its little front garden, its high-sounding title -- 'Acacia Villa' or 'Camperdown Lodge' There are many interests beyond the working hours: here a greenhouse filled with chrysanthemums, there a tiny grass patch with bordered flowers; a chicken-house, a bicycle shed, a tennis lawn.

Since Arnold had written *Culture and Anarchy* the middle classes, as he had predicted, had continued to grow and there had been an explosion of such suburban neighbourhoods to accommodate them. Although the merchant, mill owner, and factory manager had made way for a whole new army of secretaries, bankers, and clerks, the sentiment still remained the same. In all its Philistinism, the middle class still had an inordinate respect for free trade, fearing, more than ever, the encroachment of working class emancipation at the expense of its own individualism. Nevertheless, Masterman, like Arnold, saw that the ultimate hope, if any, for the future of England lay with the sheer numbers in a middle class 'becoming conscious, for the first time, that it possesses elements to contribute to the stream of national life which can be provided neither by the rich nor by the poor.' Arnold had prescribed the gradual engagement of these future leaders in municipal government, a phenomenon which Masterman regarded as having largely come to pass. 'They appear,' he said with satisfaction, 'as the mainstay of the political machine in suburban districts, serving upon municipal bodies.'²⁸

On the underside of Masterman's 1909 England, about 80% by his estimate, lived the Multitude. Susceptible to mob rule and rioting, they harked back to Arnold's Populace:

There is a note of menace in it, in the mixed clamour which rises from its humours and angers, like the voice of the sea in gathering storm. There is evidence of possibilities of violence in its waywardness, its caprice, its always incalculable mettle and temper Satisfied, curious, eager only for laughter and emotion, it will cheer the police which is scattering it like chaff and spray, mock openly at those who have come with set purposes, idle and sprawl on a summer afternoon at Hyde Park or an autumn evening at Parliament Square. But one feels that the smile might turn suddenly into fierce snarl or savagery, and panic and wild fury are concealed in its recesses immediately the mass of separate persons has become welded into the aggregate Humanity has become the Mob, pitifully ineffective before the organized resistance of police and military, and almost indecently naked of discipline or volition in comparison; gaping, open-mouthed, jeering at devotions which it cannot understand, like some uncouth monster which can be cajoled and flattered into imprisonment or ignoble action.²⁹

Like Arnold, Masterman feared the potential anarchy that was latent in the working class. While his language was not so strong, there was, in his reliance on 'police and military,' an echo of the Tarpeian Rock cure. Below this multitude Masterman distinguished another class, the Prisoners whose lives were yet more squalid. While he had made a similar distinction, Arnold afforded no separate category for such individuals probably because the new sociological methods available to Masterman were not possible in the 1860s. Also,

with the gradual amelioration of the lower classes since Arnold's time, certain material advances had been made to necessitate the distinction.

In his preface Masterman not only credited Arnold with having devised this system of class division, but also argued for a similar, disinterested pursuit of the social question. He would, he said, do his best to employ the Arnoldian virtue of 'sincerity' in order to see things which 'are what they are.' This sounds suspiciously like Arnold's aim 'to see the object as in itself it really is,' yet Masterman's object was clearly not the same. For all its similarities with *Culture and Anarchy*, *The Condition of England* arrived at a very different conclusion.

In effect, Masterman's book could be called *Culture and Anarchy* without Culture. Apart from a few optimistic comments about the wider distribution of literature, his general attitude towards aesthetic values was negative. Neither aesthetes nor social realists provided an adequate interpretation of the condition of England as it presented itself to Masterman, the first merely escaped reality while the second just accepted conditions as given, doing very little to affect a change. Not even contemporary socialist literature appealed to Masterman since, he thought, in its utopian vision it tended only to find refuge in the fantasy and unreal dreams of a transformed humanity. The great literature of the past, on the other hand, was too exclusive to have any real effect on the mass of Englishmen:

Literature -- at its highest estimate -- is, however, only the luxury of the few. It influences a strictly limited class. It is produced by a still more limited class. It is so little operative upon the general life of the nation that its very claim to be considered in a survey of the 'Condition of England' is doubtful.³⁰

Masterman saw no hope for the reuniting of literature and society. Whereas Arnold had seen the existence of a cultured few as evidence that such a hope was possible, Masterman saw it as proof that such a reconciliation was impossible. Not even science, as some utopians had imagined, promised a solution for Masterman, but merely multiplied the difficulties of modern life.

The *Saturday Review* said that, although Masterman appeared to have begun to construct an argument in favour of socialism, he had ended by leading his readers 'to the

brink of the . . . abyss.³¹ Masterman's conclusions were, indeed, bleak and, apart from a vague desire for religious revival among the middle classes, he ended on a desperately pessimistic note:

The future of progress is doubtful and precarious. Humanity -- at best -- appears but as a shipwrecked crew which has taken refuge on a narrow ledge of the rock, beaten by wind and wave; which cannot tell how many, if any at all, will survive when the long night gives place to the morning. The wise man will go softly all his days; working always for greater economic equality on the one hand, for understanding between estranged peoples on the other; apprehending always how slight an effort of stupidity or violence could strike a death-blow to twentieth-century civilization, and elevate the forces of destruction triumphant over the ruins of the world.³²

Surrounded by unknown forces of conflict, Masterman is left on Dover Beach, a location that Arnold had put behind him in order to construct the relatively optimistic *Culture and Anarchy*. Although his description of society bore more of the stamp of social Arnoldism than any other book from the period, there was, for Masterman, no Arnoldian solution. Whereas Arnold could prescribe Culture as the panacea for guiding society towards the future, Masterman's response showed how such an ethical force was becoming less and less conceivable to many Liberals in the new century.

Yet, Johnson's claim that between 1890 and 1920 'no spokesman in the humanist tradition of Arnold was forthcoming' and that his 'concept of culture . . . seemed to hold no sway in this period,' is misleading. It was fitting that the main thrust of Arnold's influence should be felt in the work of two writers who actively chose to separate themselves from mainstream social reform in order to bring Arnoldian ideas into the debate on society and the arts. The most potent manifestations of this grafting process are to be found in the work of Alfred Orage, critic and editor of *The New Age*, an aesthetico-political journal launched in 1907, and in the essays and fiction of E.M. Forster, in particular *Howards End* (1910). Far from rejecting the Arnoldian belief that aesthetic experience as a vital part of the harmonious development of the individual could aid in the movement towards a better society, both Orage and Forster regarded the arts, and literature in particular, as a crucial factor in their projected social ideals. Not surprisingly, it was to the Arnoldian concept of Culture that they eventually turned in order to explore the possibility of this socio-aesthetic synthesis.

Orage and *The New Age*

In 1907, shortly after Holbrook Jackson and Alfred Orage, two young art critics from Leeds, became members of the Fabian Society, they proposed the foundation of a club in order to encourage the discussion and promotion of artistic culture and its relation to politics within the society.³³ A year before the conception of the Fabian Arts Group, Orage wrote to Wells -- who was himself, by this time, disenchanted with Webbian socialism -- telling him of the Guild Restoration League, newly founded 'to bring about a union between . . . economic . . . and aesthetic aims.' Until that time, remarked the frustrated Orage, Fabianism had tended to concern itself only with combating 'economic poverty' while what was required was 'not only to make economic but also aesthetic poverty impossible.' For his part, Orage believed that Webb and his colleagues were too hidebound in their materialistic collectivism 'to make such a hope practicable.'³⁴ In an earlier letter, Orage had declared that under the Webbs the Society had become so utilitarian that it had now 'ceased to be the medium of free discussion' and was 'so dogmatic as to make its future as an intelligent organ of discussion . . . very doubtful.'³⁵ Philip Mairet explains the division between the old Fabians and the Orage-Jackson Guild contingent in more detailed terms:

The new-comers from Leeds . . . had their quarrel with Fabian principles, upon aesthetic and philosophical grounds. They saw its inevitable tendency to an all-powerful bureaucracy instead of a new aristocracy, and they regarded the ideal of a centralized state, suspended from a single apex of government however intellectual, as a menace to the survival of a human race with any creative individuality . . . Fabians included many artists and cultured people, but when they came to the test of practice their standards proved as grossly utilitarian as Jeremy Bentham's.³⁶

Soon it became apparent that the division between the Fabians and the breakaway contingent suggested a dualism of tendencies similar to those Arnold had identified as 'Hebrew' and 'Hellene,' one with its emphasis on a fixed mode of action, the other with a restless intellectual curiosity. The Guild Socialism of which Orage spoke represented a significant departure from Fabian policy in three major ways, all of which suggest an attack on a perceived Philistinism within the organization. First, with the eventual domination of the Webbs, Fabianism had come to stand more and more for bureaucratic centralized state socialism and, as a result, some ex-Fabians came to see Guild representation as a legitimate

alternative to a political mechanism. Second, in opposition to what they diagnosed as a lack of cultural literacy among the Fabian rank and file, Guildsmen were committed to examining the place of literature and the arts in society. Third, in the face of Webb's complete preoccupation with the 'social organism' over personality, they were to restate the relevance of individuality.

The main apologist for Guild Socialism at this time was Arthur J. Penty who, like Orage and Jackson, had broken away from the Webb dominated Fabian Society, similarly charging the old guard with Philistinism.³⁷ Consequently, it was he who was partly responsible for reawakening a less tacit interest in Arnold among the breakaway contingent. In the preface to the 1906 book that was to become the manifesto of the Guild Socialist movement, *The Restoration of the Gild System*, Penty expressed his debt to Arnold. 'Two other books which have an important bearing on the subject,' he said, and which 'might be read with advantage, are Carlyle's *Past and Present* and Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*.'³⁸ Given his antipathy for machinery -- legislative and otherwise -- and his sympathy for artistic culture, Arnold was a logical choice for Penty to claim as an intellectual precursor; the influence of *Culture and Anarchy* is evident from the Socratic 'trust thyself' motto with which Penty's book begins to his central message that social problems are not evidence of material inefficiency, but symptoms of a much deeper spiritual inadequacy. Later, Penty was to expound on the two forces that Arnold had first recognized in his countrymen as Philistinism and Geist: 'financial men . . . are undoubtedly the least imaginative section of the community,' said Penty, whereas 'the man with broader and more humane sympathies naturally shirks from the narrow and sordid life which the control of machinery . . . involves.'³⁹ By putting their faith in materialism both the Fabian and the industrialist suffered from what Penty called 'capitalistic myopia;' echoing Arnold's plea that culture 'is at variance with the mechanical and material civilisation in esteem with us,' Penty firmly stated that 'machinery is ever the enemy of culture.'⁴⁰

Although he argued against barbaric aristocratic rule, Penty feared its replacement by anarchistic mob rule. Economic collectivism was not, therefore, seen to be a viable solution since it would only replace the current tyrannical plutocracy with 'the demoralizing

tyranny of an unrestricted majority.⁴¹ Years later, when he was certain that a working-class revolution was imminent, he repeated Arnold's warning that if the nation was not spiritually prepared it would 'drift into anarchy.'⁴² Then, as in Arnold's day, Penty felt that the path to social regeneration lay not with mere material reforms but in an harmonious development of the individual, making his socialism, at heart, almost a restatement of Olivier. But for a lack of spirituality, he claimed, the social evolutionary process would not have yielded its current collective materialism but would have brought about 'that finer individualism upon which the Socialism of the future must be founded.'⁴³

If Arnold had his running debate with scientific propagandists like Huxley, Penty and his contemporary guardians of culture were similarly to set themselves against the technocratic utopianism of H.G. Wells. With Arnold, Penty shared a mistrust of the popular notion of a benevolent modernity, saying that 'it is the popular superstition exalting the present age at the expense of the past which . . . separates ignorant from cultured people.' Whereas Arnold had looked to fifth century Athens as the ideal upon which society should be modelled, Penty and other Guild Socialists took their inspiration from Renaissance Italy; the general principle still applied however. 'The Failure of modern society to realize itself,' said Penty, would cause will cause people 'to connect the Golden Age with the past again rather than with the future.'⁴⁴

The main attraction of these early civilizations to writers was their association with artistic culture. Both Arnold and Penty shared a common concern with what they saw as the modern decline of the arts. In its insincerity and lack of restraint, Penty felt that 'modern life is an exact counterpart of modern art.' Like Arnold, therefore, he traced modern Philistinism to ethnological causes, claiming that modern art, with all of its shortcomings, 'corresponds to some trait in the national character.' By this connection of aesthetic values to broader social issues Penty was to pass on another key Arnoldian concept. All art, for Guild Socialists, was to be first and foremost a 'criticism of life' and the separation of material and ethical concerns they deemed as evidence of the neglect of this very principle. In Penty's words, 'we may see how the growth of this external material problem coincides at every point with an internal spiritual decline, which

separating religion, art and philosophy from life, has plunged Society into the throes of materialism.' Whereas decadence was regarded as 'a superficial thing,' Penty taught Guildsmen that they could recognize aesthetics as a 'stepping stone to higher attainments,' entreating them to realize that 'no man in the long run can study aesthetics apart from the realities they symbolize.'⁴⁵

In some obvious ways, then, Arnoldism was, through the teachings of Penty, present at the core of the Guild Socialist movement. Theirs was not, however, the social Arnoldism of George Russell or the more liberal Fabians, nor was it the aesthetic Arnoldism that had been embodied by George Saintsbury. It may be fair to say that, by giving equal attention to the political and aesthetic and making the concept of 'culture' central to their criticism, Penty and his colleagues steered a middle and therefore more authentically Arnoldian path between these two extremes.

Although they may have disappeared from the Fabian calendar in 1908, Orage and Jackson did not then end their campaign to combine individual development, social theorizing, and aesthetics. Through the editorship of the *New Age* newspaper, a forum for the discussion of the relation between aesthetic and social issues, Orage was to continue the critical work of Arnold probably more than anyone else of his generation. Although the paper was, from the beginning, predominantly political in thrust, the *New Age* always devoted a significant portion of space to literary and artistic criticism and it was in both his book reviews and social editorials that Orage was able to apply an Arnoldian style of criticism to the contemporary situation. Its objectives were laid out in the first issue: subtitled 'an independent socialist review of politics, literature, and art,' the *New Age* was to act as a disinterested observer of politics and the arts -- a gauge of the zeitgeist.⁴⁶ By 'socialist' Orage meant something approximating Arnold's view of 'culture.' In an introductory essay called 'The Future of the *New Age*,' socialism was defined 'in its largest sense no less than the will of Society to perfect itself,' the final aim of this general perfection being 'to transform the man in the street into an intelligent citizen.'⁴⁷ Orage's mission, as his later work was to show, did not stem from a desire merely to inject a dose

of art into Philistia, but was a practical outworking of the way that he and others viewed the relationship between politics and art.

The lack of comprehensive and coherent programme in either Orage or the *New Age* creates many practical difficulties when we come to measure or determine the exact ways in which they may be said to qualify as 'Arnoldian.' Often Orage's editorial policy resulted in the publication of views radically opposed to his own which (and this adds to the problem) was far from consistent or unified. Orage's writing is diffuse at the best of times and his critical vocabulary is often difficult; to formulate it into a cohesive body of doctrine is impossible. It is possible, however, to establish Arnoldian strains in his thought through a set of recurrent themes and ideas; despite the most prominent effort to explore correspondences between aesthetics and social engagement, Orage used the *New Age* to promote the Arnoldian virtues of 'culture' and 'criticism.' Scattered statements attest to Orage's identification with what he perceived to be Arnold's own intentions, the most overt of which was the claim that the *New Age* was meant for 'Matthew Arnold's fourth class, the class, namely, that lies outside the weltering masses, and is composed of individuals who have overcome their class prejudices.'⁴⁸ This Arnoldian remnant concept was tacitly implied throughout Orage's editorial career. Eventually, though, he came to spell out exactly what he meant by 'Matthew Arnold's fourth class:'

The custodians of culture (meaning by this the disinterested pursuit of human perfection) are the adults of the race of which civilization is the children's school; and, unfortunately or fortunately, in these democratic days, their function is largely under the control of their pupils There are two kinds of judgment which is essential for civilization to acquire: judgment of men and judgment of things. Things, it is true, are of primary importance, but so are persons For instance, culture itself is a 'thing' in the philosophic sense; that is to say, it is a reality in the world of ideas; but of equal importance in our mixed world of ideas and individuals (the abstract and the concrete) are the actual persons and personalities claiming to embody and direct culture. Hence the transcendent importance of criticism next to creation in both spheres: criticism of personalities and criticism of 'works' I am afraid that few critics realize the magnitude and responsibility of their function, or the degree to which personal disinterestedness is indispensable to its fulfilment. Holding the office of inspectors of the munitions of culture, they are often guilty of 'passing' contraband upon the public.⁴⁹

Wallace Martin claims that in his 'custodians of culture' theory Orage 'transformed the nineteenth century conception of a cultural aristocracy so as to make it compatible with democracy and to dissociate it from any identifiable class.'⁵⁰ What Martin fails to mention, however, is that these same conditions, that men of culture should be classless

and in sympathy with the march of democracy, were exactly the qualifications that set Arnold's élite apart from those of Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin, and later Wells.⁵¹

Orage's 'custodian of culture' had a responsibility, on the one hand, to look disinterestedly at 'objects of civilization,' namely social phenomena, while, on the other, applying a similar standard to 'objects of culture,' works of literature and art. Literary criticism was therefore seen to be of primary importance to the future of society for Orage, like Arnold, believed that the literature to which a person is exposed effects his intellectual development. Like his predecessor, too, he had been aware of the general incompatibility of social equality with personal excellence. The chief danger with which the coming democracy threatened humanity was the lowering of critical standards, especially literary. While culture seeks 'to make the best that has been known and thought current everywhere,' popular literature, Arnold had seen, tries 'to teach down to the level of the inferior classes.'⁵² Orage elaborated on this tension between democracy and aesthetic values throughout the pages of the *New Age*, making war on the mass-oriented literature of his own day and suggesting that, rather than having seen Arnold's desire for the wide dissemination of sweetness and light:

All we have done in education is to spread out, very thin, over many the culture that before was concentrated in a few. Everybody now has a scraping of culture, but there is no cultured class. This is what I complain of. Writers have watered down their art to the thickness of the veneer of culture in the largest class.⁵³

Rather than having set a standard that might have rescued the middle classes from their Philistinism, as Arnold had advised, the producers of literature and criticism had merely sought to gain popularity. In so doing, they had not only lowered the quality of literary production but by catering to an uncultured public had compromised the true mission of letters.

Between 1910 and 1916 there appeared a regular column in the *New Age*, unsigned but probably by Orage, whose title alone was reminiscent of Arnold's famous 'Function of Criticism at the Present Time.' Through 'Present-Day Criticism' the *New Age* was to align itself with Arnoldian critical aims perhaps more than any periodical of its era. The series was even inaugurated with a defence of Arnoldian literary values. In reply to 'some wild

ass of our desert [who] lately opined that "of course, no-one would read [Arnold] nowadays," the writer welcomed the reprinting of notable literary critical works in the light of flagging standards among such modern reviewers. Attacking Arnold's old enemy, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *New Age* announced that 'other papers of good standing have equally debased the function of criticism by employing reviewers ignorant of the true standards of literature.' Not only were such abuses of cultural values unpleasant, but they indicated a deeper problem since 'anarchy of taste in literature is at least as deplorable as anarchy in any other direction.' Yet the appearance of critical reprints gave cause for optimism since it suggested that 'this kind of indiscriminate criticism is clearly not going to have any weight in a reading public which has begun to make reprints of . . . Hazlitt, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, and Sainte-Beuve, a playing speculation.' After all, a public that had read Sainte-Beuve would hardly 'remain contented with the sort of criticism to be found in the majority of present-day review columns.' Throughout its life, therefore, 'Present-Day Criticism' was to assume the place of custodian of contemporary criticism, measuring it by the standards of a tradition of which Arnold was a vital part. Underlying its method was the Arnoldian assumption that modern literature, with its tendency to caprice, should justify itself by ancient standards, hence the observation that 'there is probably a connection between the growing distrust of modern criticism and the revival of classical works.'⁵⁴

For the next six years Orage was to use 'Present-Day Criticism' to attack the cultural mediocrity of his contemporaries whilst heralding a new era in the legislative function of criticism as taught by Arnold. Among those that the *New Age* took on the responsibility of reproof were the *Athenaeum*, *Rhythm*, *Poetry Review*, *English Review* and the Everyman's collection of reprints. Throughout the series a dislike of the modern was always evident, as was a strong desire for the future promised land, when England should once again have a critic after the order of Arnold who would make the atmosphere ripe for the creation of poetic genius. In 'The Function of Criticism' Arnold had proposed that an age of criticism must precede the production of great works of art. Such a function provided the primary basis of 'Present-Day Criticism,' at least to its author who deemed himself living in an age in which the critical, and therefore creative, faculty had suffered

neglect. The purpose of *New Age* literary criticism was then two-fold: it was, by combining aesthetic and social issues, to enable the 'application of ideas to life' and to 'inform the "current of ideas" amidst which artists must work.' At moments in history 'when criticism is struggling to maintain the standard of the best ideas,' it speculated, citing Arnold himself as a prime example, 'the artist himself often turns critic.'⁵⁵ Working on Arnold's assumption that ages could be characterized as either critical or creative, the writer was anticipating imminent entry into the futuristic critical epoch that in 1865 Arnold had called 'that promised land which it is not ours to enter.' And the *New Age*, it was assumed, would do its part to lead the way.

One particularly aggressive 'Present-Day Criticism' took the form of an attack on G.K. Chesterton who had declared that 'the English people were too ignorant of the activities of the Aryan civilization to be able to touch Arnold's position, the central position, the position of truth.' True as Arnold's position was and slow as the English response to him had been, the *New Age* replied, Chesterton really knew 'quite well, that Arnold's influence has already begun to lead this generation.' They even went so far as to imply that Arnoldism had so permeated the English mind that the 'self-restraint of the modern workman on strike is due to the fact that so many of the educated artisans avoid the smoker and employ the little leisure they have between leaving the works and entering their crowded homes in reading Matthew Arnold.' Thus was the influence of Arnold put at the centre of the *New Age's* programme for the spread of culture among the working classes. After a lengthy quotation from 'The Function of Criticism' the writer once again looked optimistically to the future, a time when Arnold's hopes for criticism and culture might yet be fulfilled. And yet, he asked, 'What if there had only been a second great critic to follow Arnold What if we had thirty years of literary criticism and discipline since Arnold, instead of thirty years of anarchy?' The answer is one of regret, but one that identified his own critical mission with that of his admired predecessor: 'We believe that we ourselves might have done some work not destined to die. Instead . . . we find ourselves forced to take up the battle for the genius of the next generation.'⁵⁶

Despite his high regard for aesthetic experience, Orage was no aesthete but was, according to Martin, 'more concerned with the relationship of literature to culture in general than with its progress as an autonomous discipline.'⁵⁷ In his review of Holbrook Jackson's *The Eighteen Nineties* (from which the opening quotation in this chapter is taken) Orage, recalling the tension between their aims, disagreed with Jackson's statement that socialists and aesthetes 'meant about the same thing.' As he recalled:

Having been myself both a student of Pater and an early member of the ILP I happen to remember the 'feel' of the period under review very well; for a long time with others I was more truly its embodiment than any of the more prominent writers of these days. Melancholy, I can most truly say was not at the outset the badge of our tribe, nor was the passion for 'social life.'

Placing himself at the centre of the aesthetic-social conflict of the nineties, Orage recalled how 'our social reformatory zeal was not allowed to interfere with our pursuit of personal "moments" of choice sensation, nor, on the other hand, did we imagine that the latter would interfere with the former.' Inevitably, though, a choice had to be made, especially when he realized that mutual interference was unavoidable. 'There were those . . . who in the choice between personal and social idealism chose the former,' but, for his part, Orage was 'thankful' that he had chosen the 'social ideal.'⁵⁸ The alternative to political engagement he eventually came to characterize as 'quietism.' With 'the will to retire into oneself,' the man of culture would 'cease to "act" by means of words,' warned Orage, and thus 'degenerate' into a useless kind of 'sterility.'⁵⁹

Having chosen against aestheticism, Orage soon set out to wage journalistic war on its proponents.⁶⁰ For attending only to individual perception, he continually accused aesthetes of 'substituting the part for the whole.' Not only did decadence show an 'absence of a mission, of a purpose, of a co-ordinating of powers,' but as an intellectual movement it was merely 'a cul-de-sac in literary history . . . a back-water or a side stream.'⁶¹ This early aversion to aesthetic withdrawal set Orage on the path to polemical writing, causing him to identify more with the post-1867 Arnold, who had begun as a poet, remarked Orage, 'but preferred the more public-spirited office of scapegoat censor. Let nobody blame him -- except that he left so many dragons still alive.'⁶² Whereas Saintsbury

and others had deemed Arnold's polemical phase a mistake, Orage not only welcomed it but, through the *New Age*, was to continue fighting the same dragons.

The general cultivation of inward perfection through the development of the critical faculty, in contrast to the Fabian preoccupation with outward reform, was therefore of primary importance to the *New Age* programme. What was lacking, said Orage, was not systematic political prescription, but 'free intelligence.' The Hellenic *poro unum* that Arnold had proposed to counteract an overzealous Liberalism become complacent in its own moral superiority appeared even more necessary to Orage whose definition of 'pure intelligence' attests to its own Arnoldian origins:

A disinterested interest in things; in things, that is to say, of no personal advantage, but only of general or public importance It reveals itself, while it is still active, as a love of knowledge for its own sake.⁶³

Like Arnold, Orage perceived the dangers inherent in such a view, that an overriding belief in the free play of the mind could, quite easily, result in personal and social chaos. Only through 'harmonious expansion' had Arnold seen a way out of 'the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality.'⁶⁴ The way out of organizational politics that Orage seemed again and again to affirm was something not unlike the Arnoldian strategy of the 'best self,' used by both writers to break the tautological reliance between individual and state. Appropriately, the authority Orage proposed to prevent the lapse into either romantic egotism or political authoritarianism was an abstraction he called 'common sense,' an approximate equivalent to Arnold's culture.

The closest he ever came to defining culture shows the extent to which Orage perceived its dependence on the inward condition:

Culture is interior development, while civilization is external development. Culture is thus, if I may elaborate, civilization turned inwards; civilization, on the other hand, is culture turned outwards. All that exists without or is created by the art of man has for its *value*, and hence for its criterion, the results it enables the soul to produce within. But this inner development has, in its turn, to submit to the criterion of the outer values, since natures are not finely tuned save to fine issues.⁶⁵

Here was a restatement, in much plainer terms, of Arnold's interdependence of 'best self' and 'state.' The 'inward nature' of culture was lifted almost directly from Arnold, in contrast to the external definition given to it by the new scientific disciplines of

anthropology and political economy. In this context, the aim of art, and of culture in general, required some movement towards the perfection of the individual, while, at the same time, submitting to an external authority which, in Arnoldian terminology, might be called the 'state,' the nation in its corporate and collective character. Orage no more than Arnold was to provide any indication of how he thought this link between cultivated individuals and the ideal state was to be achieved and, while this formula might not altogether avoid circularity, it provided a theoretical escape hatch from both the tyranny of authoritarian government on the one hand and rampant individualism on the other.

By not only importing Arnold's language and thought into his work, but also identifying with his mentor's need for a balance struck between individualism and authority, not to mention aesthetics and morality, Orage saw himself as a corrective influence in a nation that was, in intellectual terms, well behind its continental neighbours.⁶⁶ 'Matthew Arnold announced it,' Orage claimed, 'and we have seen his forecast fulfilled.'⁶⁷ England, Orage claimed, was 'rapidly succumbing to barbarism under our very eyes,' a nation in which 'Philistines' treated art 'with contumely.'⁶⁸ Through his articles and reviews Orage was to attempt to bring cultural values back to English society in much the same way that his predecessor had half a century before.

E.M. Forster and *Howards End*

Another writer, like Orage, whose exploration of the relationship between art and society led him to advocate an Arnoldian response to the Edwardian condition of England debate was E.M. Forster. 'Matthew Arnold is of all Victorians most to my taste,' wrote Forster, 'a great poet, a civilized citizen, and a prophet who has managed to project himself into our present troubles, so that when we read him now he seems to be in the room.'⁶⁹ It would be difficult to top that for a statement of Arnold's continuing relevance in the twentieth century.

The influence of Arnold, and *Culture and Anarchy* in particular, on Forster was never more apparent than in *Howards End*. As an enquiry into the status of Arnoldian ideas in the early twentieth century, the novel becomes a working illustration of the

assertion that as a prophet of culture Arnold had indeed managed 'to project himself into our present troubles.' According to Wilfred Stone, 'this book can be read as the most explicit test of Arnold's culture in our literature.'⁷⁰ In many ways, *Howards End* stands, in its relation to Arnold, as the fictive equivalent of the *New Age*, so similar are its themes. As the work of an artist who, faced with the possibility of cultural disintegration, it seeks to explore the social responsibilities of men and women with aesthetic sensibilities. Forster, too, found in the Arnoldian concept of culture a solvent for the Philistinism that he saw around him and in the idea of a humane remnant the organizational principle with which to counter the impinging impersonality of the machine age. According to Frederick McDowell, Arnold helped Forster 'define himself, to work out for himself a set of humanistic as opposed to sectarian religious values, and then to express them through the medium of literary art.'⁷¹ Consequently, the liberal humanism that Forster attempted to construct in the place of an already withdrawn sea of faith owed much to *Culture and Anarchy*, especially since, in its formulation of the Hebrew and Hellene dualism, it not only allowed him to place individual characters and temperaments, but also helped in the movement towards this new humanistic synthesis.⁷²

The Wilcox-Schlegel opposition relies, as does much of Arnold's criticism, on the interrogation of a provincial British type with continental or 'cosmopolitan' values. The Schlegels, whose father had left his homeland on intellectual grounds, represent a dynamic pre-imperialist European tradition that Arnold had associated with Goethe and Heine. Helen, as her name suggests, stands for the Hellenic 'spontaneity of consciousness' and sensitivity to the 'inner life' that Arnold had claimed was lacking in Britain, while Henry Wilcox, on the other hand, has little regard for the finer points of personal development and is committed to 'the outer life of telegrams and anger.' This dichotomy between the inward and outward was one with which Arnold had characterized the Barbarians who had 'exterior culture mainly' and within whom 'lay a whole range of powers of thought and feeling' to which they had no access.⁷³ Forster had seen in his countrymen a similar susceptibility to unrealized inward potential rendering 'the English character . . . incomplete We have to look for some qualities in one part of the world and others in another.'⁷⁴

Like his predecessor, Forster turned to the Continent in search of those characteristics that would help to bring wholeness. Thus Margaret Schlegel echoes a common Arnoldian sentiment when she says:

England is unique . . . the Continent, for good or for evil, is interested in ideas. Its literature and art have what one might call the kink of the unseen about them, and this persists even through decadence and affectation. There is more liberty of action in England, but for liberty of thought we go to bureaucratic Prussia.⁷⁵

Arnold, who had often stated the importance of 'intelligence' to other countries, was similarly dismayed with the way in which the English had made freedom of action an end in itself. 'Doing as one likes' is the economic principle on which the Wilcox fortune is founded, Arnold's attacks on *laissez-faire* economics having heightened significance in Edwardian England where, in the name of Empire, businessmen had extended free trade beyond national boundaries; while Arnold's 'symbolical Truss Manufactory' is replaced by the 'Imperial and West Africa Rubber Company,' as an edifice to English will-worship the principle remains the same.

In several obvious ways, then, the Wilcox ethos is a working model of the middle class mentality as it had been defined by Arnold. Like Arnold's Philistine, Henry is the product of Nonconformist stock and therefore suffers from an 'incomplete asceticism' that finds justification in 'a sneaking belief that bodily passion is bad,' a misnomer in which his 'religion had confirmed him.'⁷⁶ A modern type of Bottles, Henry is a self-made businessman who believes firmly in the same materialism that Arnold had claimed was fatal to the commercial mind. It is his materialist bent that causes Margaret Schlegel to speak out against Henry and 'thousands of men like him -- a protest against the inner darkness in high places that comes with the commercial age.'⁷⁷ Henry's diatribe on Margaret's misplaced concern for the poor exposes a similar belief in progress and inequality that Arnold had criticized in the free traders of his own day.⁷⁸

Incapable of extended thought and feeling, the Wilcox men are creatures of habit who dispose of their duties 'item by item.' Their lack of regard for the finer points of personal development cause them to ridicule Helen's capacity for aesthetic experience and renders them incapable of any spiritual realization beyond the mechanistic 'outer life of

telegrams and anger.' Such a bent towards Hebraism and its perverse preoccupation with machinery was, to Arnold, nothing other than a 'contravention of the natural order' causing England to fall behind 'the main stream of man's advance' which, at that time, he attributed to its lack of Hellenic 'spontaneity of conscience.'⁷⁹ The introduction of the character of Helen as a foil to Henry therefore allowed Forster to test, as it were, Arnold's dualism in very specific terms.

Henry and Helen are antagonistic extremes. The dangers inherent within the Wilcox view are apparent to both sisters, yet only Margaret is capable of seeing that the search for complete inwardness as an alternative carries its own problems. By refusing to advocate the implementation of one tendency over the other, she avoids the one-sided Hellenic attack on Hebraism in which the decadent artist had engaged since Pater and against which Arnold had strictly warned.⁸⁰ Helen, for all her spontaneity of vision, lacks the necessary wholeness that will enable her to sympathize with the practical work of Hebraism. She may see life steadily but hers is a cautionary tale for the Paterian aesthete who, although finding inward unity, is incapable of making the vital connection between ideas and life. Subject to what Arnold called 'negative Hellenism, a state of moral indifference without intellectual ardour,' Helen is unable to carry many of the Schlegel ideas in the presence of the Wilcox men and even enjoys having her suppositions destroyed:

The energy of the Wilcoxes had fascinated her, had created new images of beauty in her responsive mind. To be all day with them in the open air, to sleep at night under their roof, had seemed the supreme joy of life, and had led to that abandonment of personality that is a possible prelude to love. She had liked giving in to Mr Wilcox . . . she had liked being told that her notions of life were sheltered or academic; that Equality was nonsense, Votes for Women nonsense, Socialism nonsense, Art and Literature, except when conducive to strengthening of character, nonsense. When Mr Wilcox said that one sound man of business did more good to the world than a dozen of your social reformers, she had swallowed the curious assertion without a gasp, and had leant back luxuriously among the cushions of the motor-car.⁸¹

Helen's response to the car is very different from that of Henry. Whereas for the Wilcoxes it is a symbol of power and machine efficiency, her attitude is that of the groundless aesthete confronted by material splendour. Consequently, the superficiality of her response

to the Wilcox way of life causes its charm soon to wear off, leaving her more antagonistic than ever.

Helen's capacity for sensual experience is affirmed by Margaret who admits to the attraction of such an existence when she sees that 'it was the touch of selfishness, which was not enough to mar Helen's character, and even added to her beauty.'⁸² Yet this over-emphasis on self causes Helen to be ruled by her passions, rendering her imbalanced and incapable of real sympathy. There are only two types of people, she tells Leonard, 'our kind, who live straight from the middle of their heads, and the other kind who can't, because their heads have no middle.'⁸³ Helen's subsequent inability to recognize the practical value of the outer life causes Margaret to charge her with being 'too relentless' and warn that 'one can't deal in her high-minded manner with the world.'⁸⁴ In effect, Helen is as unable to achieve wholeness as her more Philistine counterpart, Henry.

So far had his countrymen strayed from the many-sidedness upon which a whole view of life was contingent that Arnold felt compelled to warn:

Everywhere we see the beginnings of confusion, and we want a clue to some sound order and authority. This we can only get by going back upon the actual instincts and forces which rule our life, seeing them as they really are, connecting them with other instincts and forces, and enlarging our view of life.⁸⁵

This is a more complete statement of Forster's 'only connect' epigraph; only by going back upon their steady (but far from whole) views of life can either Helen or Henry hope to make the crucial connection of sympathy which will enable them to come to harmonious perfection. Both Arnold and Forster reject any idea of compromise in the attempt to unite the two tendencies. The sacrifice of steadiness for wholeness will only result in another kind of partiality. Arnold's solution to the dilemma posed by the need to accommodate such apparently contradictory forces brings him to suggest:

By alternations of Hebraism and Hellenism, of man's intellectual and moral impulses, of the effort to see things as they really are and the effort to win peace by self-conquest, the human spirit proceeds; and each of these two forces has its appointed hours of culmination and seasons of rule.⁸⁶

Margaret's recognition of the need for repeated forays into the exclusive worlds of her sister and husband in different situations, at their respectively 'appointed hours,' shows that she has realized this alternating mode. She knows, for instance, that Aunt Juley is

wrong to suggest that truth lies somewhere between the real world and the metaphysical realm, and that 'it was only to be found by continuous excursions into either realm.'⁸⁷ Like Arnold, Margaret seeks to legitimize both Hebrew and Hellene and thereby rescue the positive function of each as contributing elements in cultural equilibrium.

As the catalyst by which the movement towards perfection is wrought in both Helen and Henry, the cultivation of their 'best selves,' Margaret is a primary example of Arnold's classless alien, 'persons who are mainly led . . . by a general humane spirit,' and, at the same time, a key to Forster's humanism which, he admitted relied, for success, on 'an aristocracy of the sensitive' whose 'members are to be found in all nations and classes.'⁸⁸ Such individuals, claimed Forster, 'represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos.'⁸⁹ That she can see life whole sets Margaret apart from the partially-sighted individuals that surround her and exemplifies the Arnoldian 'idea of perfection as a *harmonious* expansion of human nature [which] is at variance with our want of flexibility, with our inaptitude for seeing more than one side of a thing.'⁹⁰ As well as the balance between Hebrew and Hellene, Margaret represents the centrality for which Arnold had striven throughout his own career, between life in the world and the life of art, a type of Sophocles:

Whose even-balanced soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;

Who saw life steadily and saw it whole.

If business had made Henry dull and unbridled passion made Helen capricious, then Forster's use of this last line to describe both his humanistic ideal and Margaret's character verifies her status as an Arnoldian child of culture. By setting the extremes of Hebraism and Hellenism in a contemporary context and, through Margaret, echoing the Arnoldian call for a spiritual remnant, Forster was clearly giving credence to the continuing relevance of *Culture and Anarchy*.

In many respects, the crisis that Arnold had seen ahead was even more apparent to Forster.⁹¹ Following closely in the steps of one who had attempted to seek a preventive for the potential anarchy (what Forster calls 'panic and emptiness') that threatened a

civilization withdrawn from traditional religious and cultural values, it is fitting that strains of 'Dover Beach' are introduced throughout the novel. The most obvious example is so similar in image and tone that it is almost a parody in prose of the Arnold poem:

And the conversation drifted away and away, and Helen's cigarette turned to a spot in the darkness, and the great flats opposite were sown with lighted windows, which vanished and were relit again, and vanished incessantly. Beyond them the thoroughfare roared gently -- a tide that could never be quiet, while in the east, invisible behind the smokes of Wapping, the moon was rising.⁹²

What may be taken as the crux of the poem -- 'Ah love, let us be true to one another' -- would suggest, in the light of Forster's strong belief in personal relationships, another reason why the choice is pertinent.

'Matthew Arnold, the poet, felt and knew much more than Matthew Arnold, the prose-writer, succeeded in saying,' said Forster, 'his poetry stands up in the middle of the nineteenth century as a beacon to the twentieth, it is both an armoury and an enchanted garden.'⁹³ At its more emotive level, therefore, Arnold's poetry appealed to Forster in ways that the prose did not allow. The mystery of life that is conveyed by the wych-elm is more reminiscent of the poet of 'The Scholar Gipsy' than the school inspector with a penchant for raillery. Yet both sides of Arnold appealed to Forster who was himself torn between art and morality.

If, as I have suggested in chapter one, the opposition of Hebrew and Hellene was one of several rhetorical devices by which Arnold was able to both articulate and appease an inner conflict between aesthetics and social responsibility, then *Howards End*, with its constant call for connection, provides a clue to a similar anxiety in Forster. Here again the logic of 'The Strayed Reveller' comes into play: Helen's capacity for the aesthetics of pure experience renders her incapable of functioning in the world of men, whereas Henry Wilcox, in his commitment to action, is portrayed as cold, lacking humanity, and hostile to artistic culture. All this provides a contemporaneous rendering of the conflict that had divided Arnold throughout his life: to what extent does (or can) the aesthetic life inform the practical outworkings of everyday life? In the light of a heightening social crisis, is the spiritual power of poetry a reasonable force?

The predicament of Leonard Bast is perhaps the greatest indictment of a culture rooted too much in literature and Forster's portrayal of Leonard may be read as a challenge to Arnold's claim that 'perfection of our humanity is an object not to be gained without books and reading.'⁹⁴ Taking this sentiment to heart, Leonard ascribes to his book an almost talismanic status, as though, by steeping himself in Ruskin, as an example of 'the best that has been thought and written,' he will necessarily come closer to perfection. 'I care a good deal about improving myself through Literature and Art,' he tells Jacky, 'and so getting a wider outlook.'⁹⁵ Against the background of the nineteenth century working men's college and board school, Leonard stands as a member of the populace who has been told, and believes, that book culture is good for him. Finally, he comes to the realization that 'not if he read for ten hours a day' would he inherit the luxurious life that the residents at Wickham Place enjoyed, while Margaret wonders whether culture really 'humanized the majority.'⁹⁶

To be fair, the literal link between literature and personal development was one that Arnold was careful to qualify. The type of belles-lettrism in which Leonard engages comes under sharp attack in *Culture and Anarchy* as 'the follies of the many bookmen who forget the end in the means, and use their books with no real aim at perfection.'⁹⁷ Forster's statement that works of literature should be taken 'for signposts' and not 'for the destination' would seem to put him on Arnold's side in this issue, yet it cannot be denied that the emphasis in 'The Study of Poetry' on literature as a vehicle for spiritual redemption would hardly have held any effective value for a Leonard Bast. In an examination of the belief that, in the face of personal hardship, comfort could be derived from reading works of literary merit, Forster remarked:

Help won't be given as directly, as crudely, as Matthew Arnold thought. An educationist as well as a poet, he believed one could 'turn' to writers -- to Homer, Epictetus, and Sophocles in his own case -- and by quoting their beauties and remembering their thoughts could steel oneself against injustice or cruelty. I don't think they are going to bring help that way.⁹⁸

Ironically, Forster's response to this belief in the propping power of poetry was no less crude than Arnold's but simply a restatement of the Arnoldian tension between art and life. 'Art is not enough,' he concluded, but 'Literature as retreat' has its place too.⁹⁹

At the close of *Howards End*, Forster may be accused of withdrawing from social confrontation. Although he glances from time to time over his shoulder towards the 'red rust' on the horizon, his conclusion suggests the benefits of withdrawal into the imagination. In the idyllic setting of the English countryside it is possible for him to envision an almost utopian classlessness, but one that depends for its existence on one's ability to escape the metropolis in the distance. Significantly, there is no place in such a Scholar Gipsy world for Leonard Bast. In many respects, the atmosphere at Howards End eventually becomes that of the coterie, where aesthetic pleasure is touched by the spontaneity of nature and social and personal harmony is to be found in the cultivation of a limited number of intense personal relationships. In order to maintain the sort of harmony that this society affords, the vast mass of humanity (here symbolized by London) must be virtually disregarded. If this is the realization of Arnold's 'cultured inactivity,' then it also portrays the social dilemma presented by a life in search of one's 'best self.' Consequently, Forster's conclusion is as ambiguous as Arnold's: the pursuit of culture can result in a temporal form of 'harmonious perfection' but rather than serving 'to make reason and the will of God prevail' must find itself threatened and eventually destroyed by the impinging life of the modern city.

Forty years and two World Wars later, Forster recognized that escapism and engagement both contributed to civilization and detracted from it:

We are troubled to-day because we can lead neither the private nor the public life with any decency. I cannot shut myself up in a Palace of Art or a Philosophic Tower and ignore the madness and the misery of the world. Yet I cannot throw myself into movements just because they are uncompromising, or merge myself in my own class, my own country, or in anyone else's class or country, as if that were the unique good. We are in a muddle.

Reliving Arnold's 'two desires' Forster had long since given up 'creation' for a life of polemical journalism when he wrote these words, and the conclusion of this same essay places him firmly as inheritor of the Arnoldian conflict to which it might make a fitting epigraph: 'We are here on earth not to save ourselves and not to save the community, but to try to save both.'¹⁰⁰

Notes

- ¹Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (London, 1913), 196. André Maurois similarly observed how, among the English writers who flourished between 1900 and 1914, the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' was not much in favour: 'In the face of the political crisis,' he said, writers like Kipling, Wells, Shaw, and Chesterton began to realize that 'the aestheticism of a Wilde was a weak bulwark Already the younger men were seeking new creeds.' [André Maurois, *Poets and Prophets*, translated by Hamish Miles (London, 1936), ix, xii].
- ²Lesley Johnson, *The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams* (London, 1979), 74.
- ³Edward S. Lauterbach and W. Eugene Davis, *The Transitional Age: British Literature 1880-1920* (New York, 1973), 66.
- ⁴Robert Hunter, *Socialists at Work* (New York, 1908), 259-264.
- ⁵Harry Laidler, *A History of Socialist Thought* (London, 1927), 122.
- ⁶Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* (London, 1928), 98; Niles Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: An Historical and Critical Analysis* (London, 1922), 31.
- ⁷Arnold's *Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882* was recommended in *What to Read on Social and Economic Subjects: An Interleaved Bibliography Compiled By the Fabian Society* (London, 1910), 14. *Culture and Anarchy* was similarly recommended in *What to Read: A List of Books for Social Reformers*, Fabian Tract 29 (London, 1896).
- ⁸William Clarke, *William Clarke: A Collection of His Writings*, edited by Herbert Burrows and J.A. Hobson (London, 1908), 250.
- ⁹H.G. Wells, *New Worlds For Old*, (London, 1908), 261-2.
- ¹⁰Alexander Gray, *The Socialist Tradition* (London, 1946), 396.
- ¹¹Wells, *New Worlds For Old*, 262-3.
- ¹²S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of English Guild Socialism* (London, 1966), 7.
- ¹³Benjamin Lippincott, *Victorian Critics of Democracy* (Minneapolis, 1938), 96.
- ¹⁴Stuart P. Sherman, 'H.G. Wells and the Victorians,' *Nation*, 100 (May 20, 1915), 559.
- ¹⁵Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara* (Harmondsworth, 1960), 22.
- ¹⁶Sidney Webb, 'The Historic Basis of Socialism,' *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, edited by Bernard Shaw (London, 1889), 56-57.
- ¹⁷Webb, 'The Historic Basis of Socialism,' 57-8.
- ¹⁸Lesley Johnson, *The Cultural Critics*, 78.
- ¹⁹The tension between the search for individual perfection and the need for social change had been a part of the society since its inception. Pease and others have traced the organization's origins to Thomas Davidson's Fellowship of New Life, to which several founders had belonged. Not only was the Fellowship committed to 'the cultivation of a perfect character in each and all,' but as its guiding principle it presupposed 'the subordination of material things to spiritual.' [Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (London, 1916), 32]. When certain members began to feel that Davidson's Fellowship was fast becoming too indulgent the Fabian Society was founded in order to make possible more practical change. Although this meant that reactionary Fabians tended to suppress the individual idealism that they felt had rendered New Lifers inactive, there still remained an idealistic undercurrent that left room for the pursuit of creative personal fulfillment.
- ²⁰Sydney Olivier, 'The Moral Basis of Socialism,' *Fabian Essays*, 102-128.
- ²¹Olivier, 'The Moral Basis of Socialism,' 126.
- ²²Ian Britain, *Fabianism and Culture: A Study of British Socialism and the Arts 1884-1918* (Cambridge, 1982), 48.
- ²³Although Britain attempts to dispel the common notion of a pervading hostility to culture among their ranks, it is certain that Fabian Philistinism was a pressing concern among artists at the time. While they were often themselves accused of propagandizing art, both Shaw and Wells saw themselves as anomalies in an organization that seemed to care more about gas lines, water pipes, and sewage drains than about their artistic crafts. Resorting to the word with which Arnold had addressed the lack of culture in his own generation, Shaw said, on more than one occasion, that the Fabians were in general 'Philistines.' [see F.G. Bettany, *Stewart Headlam* (London, 1926), 139]. In 1911, Wells, who had left the organization in a storm, characterized Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the group's long-standing leaders, in the fictional form of Oscar and Altiora Bailey, as the epitome of uncultured technocrats. [see *The New Machiavelli* (Harmondsworth, 1970), 164-5].

- 24 Letter from Beatrice to Sidney of 24 Dec 1891, *The Letters of Beatrice and Sidney Webb*, edited by Norman Mackenzie, volume 1: Apprenticeships 1873-1892 (Cambridge, 1978), 360.
- 25 Beatrice Webb told of how, when she wanted to get away from her research projects to discuss 'the relation of man's mind to the universe,' Masterman was numbered among her 'more intimate acquaintances.' [Beatrice Webb, *Our Partnership* (London, 1942), 292].
- 26 C.F.G. Masterman, *The Condition of England*, edited by J.T. Boulton (London, 1960), 17-18.
- 27 Masterman, *The Condition of England*, 26, 53.
- 28 Masterman, *The Condition of England*, 57-58, 68, 67.
- 29 Masterman, *The Condition of England*, 95-6.
- 30 Masterman, *The Condition of England*, 202.
- 31 Anonymous review, 'Mr Masterman's Pessimism,' *Saturday Review*, 107 (June 19, 1909), 786.
- 32 Masterman, *The Condition of England*, 233.
- 33 That the Fabian Arts Group met with some hostility from the Fabian 'Old Gang' is apparent from the curt nature of the short paragraph which Pease devoted to the group in his history: 'The Arts group included philosophy, and, to tell the truth, almost excluded Socialism. But all of us in our youth are anxiously concerned about philosophy and art, and many who are no longer young are in the same case. Moreover artists and philosophers are always attractive. Mr Holbrook Jackson and Mr A.R. Orage, at that time associated with the 'New Age,' founded the group early in 1907, and soon obtained lecturers as distinguished, and audiences scarcely less numerous than the Society itself. But in eighteen months 'Art and Philosophy in Relation to Socialism' seems to have been exhausted, and after the summer of 1908 the Group disappears from the calendar.' [Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, 188].
- In saying that the Arts Group 'almost excluded Socialism,' Pease was perhaps expressing the natural antipathy that he, as a man of action, had for such vain pursuits. In point of fact, the Arts Group seems to have represented such a challenge to the leadership that on occasion even the word 'heresy' was used. Pease's reaction was perhaps predictable since, in a real sense, the foundation of the Arts Group was an extremely provocative move.
- 34 Letter of 23 July 1906 from Orage to Wells, quoted by Britain, *Fabianism and Culture*, 11.
- 35 Letter of 9 June 1907 from Orage to Wells, quoted by Wallace Martin, *New Age Under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (Manchester, 1967), 33.
- 36 Philip Mairet, *A.R. Orage: A Memoir* (London, 1936), 35.
- 37 Penty's break with Fabianism apparently came after having learned that the main criterion in choosing the design for the new London School of Economics was the quantity of floor space that the winning candidate offered. [see Niles Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: An Historical and Critical Analysis* (London, 1922), 82-3].
- 38 Arthur J. Penty, *The Restoration of the Gild System* (London, 1906), viii.
- 39 Penty, 'The Machine Problem,' *New Age* (January 1, 1914), 262, 269.
- 40 Super V: 95; *New Age* (January 1, 1918), 269.
- 41 Penty, *Restoration*, 10.
- 42 Penty, *Guilds and the Social Crisis* (London, 1919), 6.
- 43 Penty, *Restoration*, 45.
- 44 Penty, *Restoration*, 91-2.
- 45 Penty, *Restoration*, 101, 44-45, 88.
- 46 'The brilliant common sense to which I have often referred as the ambition of the *New Age* is not, in my interpretation, the discovery of anything new: it is the rediscovery of what everybody knows but needs to be reminded that he knows. Its method may be difficult; the processes of rediscovery may be complex; but, in the end, its results are, as it were, foregone conclusions, conclusions to which, implicitly if not explicitly, the common mind had already come.' [Quoted in *Orage as Critic*, edited by Wallace Martin (London, 1974), 38.
- 47 Orage, 'The Future of the *New Age*,' *New Age*, 1:1 (May 2, 1907), 8, 4.
- 48 'You remember Matthew Arnold's trinity, Barbarians, Philistines, and the Populace. Well, we get none of them, except by accident: we shed them like flies in our first dozen or so numbers. A Philistine is sometimes induced by his friends to buy a copy of *The New Age*, but he always writes to tell us he had burned it.' [Orage, 'Unedited Opinions,' *New Age*, 4:14 (January 28, 1909), 280].
- 49 Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 28:22 (March 31, 1921), 259.
- 50 Martin, ed., *Orage as Critic*, 25.

⁵¹In 1914, Wells restated Arnold's distrust of the aristocracy and its right to continue to govern, proposing the replacement of upper class rule with an intellectual meritocracy. The aim of education, he said, was the 'crystallizing, as soon as possible, as many as possible of the right sort of individuals from the social miasma, and getting them into effective, conscious co-operation.' [H.G. Wells, *An Englishman Looks at the World* (London, 1914), 79]. In *A Modern Utopia* Wells called this elite 'the samurai.' The ruling remnant he proposed was far more literal than that of Arnold, whose had been characterized as a spiritual rather than material force. Unlike Wells, Arnold never intended his children of sweetness and light ever to become part of the government machine but to influence society from within while standing apart from any executive action. Wells's samurai, on the other hand, constituted a literal ruling class: 'Typically, the samurai are engaged in administrative work. Practically the whole of the responsible rule of the world is in their hands; all our head teachers and disciplinary heads of colleges, our judges, barristers, employers of labour beyond a certain limit, practising medical men, legislators, must be samurai, and all the executive committees, and so forth that play so large a part in our affairs are drawn from them.' [H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (London, 1905), 141].

T.H. Warren, noting how Arnold would have reacted to the Wellsian elite, says that the samurai 'are, as Matthew Arnold might have said . . . a race of President Roosevelts living the strenuous life, vowing themselves to public service, and bound by a 'Rule' with a capital 'R'.' [T.H. Warren, *Spectator* (October 1, 1905), 610-611]. Clearly Arnold's comment that the man of culture should keep out of the region of immediate practice set him apart from such a utilitarian view of the function of the social elite. As his son later revealed, Wells had been, in fact, opposed to Arnold's view of a cultured and spiritual remnant, preferring to recruit individual talent in the formal service of the State. So acute was Wells's antipathy to Arnoldian idealism that his son's account is worth quoting at length: 'One of his pet aversions was for Matthew Arnold, whose conceptions of the social responsibilities of the individual he was inclined to admire, but the generality of whose ideas he despised and detested. He took particular exception to Arnold's sustained efforts to make his contemporaries turn their backs on the sciences . . . The worst of Arnold's crimes in my father's eyes was his advocacy of the thesis that the truth of things had to be something grander and nobler than any set of qualities and attributes attached to material objects and observable phenomena. For him the really worthwhile research lay not in the exploration of the vast deserts of the tangible and the ascertainable, but in the cultivation of an inner life. My father had no use at all for Arnold's belief that the truth consisted of the sum of insights given to the very best people when they looked into their own hearts.'

'My mother was of Matthew Arnold's party . . . she had every sympathy with what she understood him to mean by [sweetness and light] -- a species of spiritual radiance generated by the culturally and intellectually privileged elite class of ideally layered society. This was, of course, one in which artists and poets were the unacknowledged legislators, and emotion and intuition the ultimate values. It was Arnold's stance that my mother attempted to adopt in the later stages of the correspondence, but my father wasn't having any. He told her it wasn't a bit good for her to come it over him as the complex of finer feelings known as the dedicated artist, or to bring up dear old Henry J's self-serving guff about the primacy and the singular beauty of the creative process.' [Anthony West, *H.G. Wells: Aspects of A Life* (Harmondsworth, 1984), 349-350].

⁵²Super V: 113.

⁵³Orage, 'Unedited Opinions,' *New Age*, 9:2 (May 11, 1911), 35.

⁵⁴Orage, 'Present Day Criticism,' *New Age*, 6:17 (February 24, 1910), 399.

⁵⁵Orage, 'Present Day Criticism,' *New Age*, 12:8 (December 26, 1912), 80.

⁵⁶Orage, 'Present Day Criticism,' *New Age*, 11:9 (June 27, 1912), 204-205.

⁵⁷Wallace Martin, *The New Age Under Orage*, 237.

⁵⁸Quoted in Martin, ed., *Orage As Critic*, 114.

⁵⁹Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 28:23 (April 7, 1921), 272.

⁶⁰Given his dislike for aestheticism in general, it was only fitting that Orage's specific kind of Arnoldian criticism represents a foil to that of Saintsbury. For instance, his overwhelming commitment to disinterestedness over individual perception caused Orage to advocate the possibility of critical closure. 'To abandon the aim of "finality" of judgment is to let in the jungle into the cultivated world of art.' This point was intensified by giving deference to the man of culture when he claimed that to deny the possibility of closure 'is to invite Tom, Dick and Harry to offer their opinions as of equal value with the opinions of the cultivated.' [Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 24:2 (November 14, 1918), 25]. Part of the reason that Orage could subscribe to a 'right' reading of literary works was that he shared Arnold's respect for objective critical standards. For Saintsbury, the literary rule had spelled

certain death to criticism; Orage, however, saw such an absence of 'respect for the established laws of literature' among contemporary critics as a certain sign of ignorance. [Orage, 'Notes of the Week,' *New Age*, 13:7 (January 12, 1913), 161].

This respect for tradition and the objectivity it implied led to perhaps the most specific point of contention between the two approaches. Arnold had, on several occasions, been reproved by Saintsbury for an almost fetishistic regard for the literary subject. Exhibiting a typically decadent preoccupation with style over subject matter Saintsbury had argued for the preeminence of expression over any kind of objective status that might be ascribed to superior subjects. Orage, however, was to come repeatedly to Arnold's defence on this issue and even saw the separation of style and subject as endemic of the wider modern split between art and ideology: 'What is the purpose of representation at all? Plainly representation in itself is not sufficient to create a work of art, since, ex hypothesi, some things are not "worth representing." What are the things worth representing and why are they worth it? This reduces itself to a question of values, and this, again, to a philosophy of life. Hence it follows that no novelist who is without a philosophy of life is or can be an artist.' [Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 15:3 (May 21, 1914), 62].

To Orage, Pater therefore represented the greatest example of stylistic failure. His was 'style . . . without any matter at all.' Once again implying the aimlessness of aestheticism he described Pater's writing as intricate wickerwork without the actual production of a basket. Recalling Arnold's definition of style as having something to say and saying it in the best possible way, Orage echoed with his own 'the arrangement of words best designed to convey the matter.' [Orage in 1915, quoted by Martin, ed., *Orage as Critic*, 179].

⁶¹Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 18:4 (November 25, 1915), 85; 23:25 (October 17, 1918), 398.

⁶²Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 16:8 (December 24, 1914), 197.

⁶³Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 23:27 (October 31, 1918), 429.

⁶⁴Super V: 65.

⁶⁵Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 18:11 (June 13, 1916), 253.

⁶⁶Orage was not often in the habit of citing his many intellectual sources, but the inspiration for his ideas on style was transparent, especially when he used such blatant Arnoldisms as 'the business of the stylist is to get himself out of the way' and 'we have lost the taste . . . for the grand style . . . of all the English writers it is Milton we need most to-day.' [Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 16:21 (March 25, 1915), 566]. In a piece on the contrasting rhetoric of the two writers Orage insisted that he was 'for Swift against de Quincey; for the simple against the ornate.' Like Arnold he took his mandate from the ancients. 'The Greeks understood,' he said, 'there are an infinite number of degrees of simplicity; ranging from the simple colloquial to the simple grand.' [Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 23:22 (September 26, 1918), 351-352].

⁶⁷Orage, 'Readers and Writers,' *New Age*, 17:16 (August 19, 1915), 382.

⁶⁸Orage in 1911, quoted by Martin, ed., *Orage as Critic*, 200.

⁶⁹E.M. Forster, *Two Cheers For Democracy* (Harmondsworth, 1965), 201.

⁷⁰Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Bear: A Study of E.M. Forster* (London, 1966), 239.

⁷¹Frederick McDowell, *E.M. Forster* (Boston, 1982), 4.

⁷²At least one critic has recently recognized the importance of Arnold's critique of Liberalism on Forster, especially regarding the importance of aesthetic experience to social cohesion. [see S.P. Rosenbaum, *Victorian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group* (London, 1987), 28].

⁷³Super V: 141.

⁷⁴E.M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest* (Harmondsworth, 1976), 25.

⁷⁵E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (London, 1973), 74.

⁷⁶Forster, *Howards End*, 183.

⁷⁷Forster, *Howards End*, 329.

⁷⁸Compare Henry's speech: 'There are just rich and poor, as there always have been and always will be. Point me out a time when men have been equal,' he says, 'in spite of all, the tendency of civilization has on the whole been upward with the following passage from *Culture and Anarchy*: 'It is fatal to them to be told by their flatterers, and to believe, without pauperism increasing more rapidly than our population, that they have performed a great, an heroic work, by occupying themselves . . . with their Liberal nostrums [free trade], and that the right and good course for them now is to go on occupying themselves with the like for the future.' [Forster, *Howards End*, 189; Super V: 253-4].

⁷⁹Super V: 174.

80When the two are confronted, as they very often are confronted, it is nearly always with what I may call a rhetorical purpose; the speaker's whole design is to exalt and enthrone one of the two, and he uses the other only as a foil and to enable him the better to give effect to his purpose.' [Super V, 164].

81Super V: 199; Forster, *Howards End*, 21-2.

82Forster, *Howards End*, 299.

83Forster, *Howards End*, 231.

84Forster, *Howards End*, 177.

85Super V: 175.

86Super V: 171-2.

87Forster, *Howards End*, 192.

88Super V: 146.

89Forster, *Two Cheers*, 81.

90Super V: 65.

91Forster was later to remark that 'Matthew Arnold's "bad days" are Halcyon when compared with our own . . . the collapse of civilization, so realistic for us, sounded in his ears like a distant and harmonious cataract, plunging from Alpine snows, into the eternal bosom of the Lake of Geneva.' [Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, 85].

92Forster, *Howards End*, 42.

93Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, 88-9.

94Super V: 191.

95Forster, *Howards End*, 51.

96Forster, *Howards End*, 113.

97 Super V: 191.

98Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, 85-86.

99Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, 87, 89.

100E.M. Forster, 'The Ivory Tower,' *Atlantic Monthly*, 163 (February, 1939), 53, 58.

CHAPTER SIX

Strachey, Kingsmill and the New Aestheticism

Reflecting on the nature of the intellectual shift that occurred in England during the second decade of the twentieth century, especially as it was manifested among his young Cambridge colleagues, Bertrand Russell remarked:

The tone of the generation some ten years junior to my own was set mainly by Lytton Strachey and Keynes. It is surprising how great a change in mental climate those ten years had brought. We were still Victorian; they were Edwardian. We believed in ordered progress by means of political and free discussion. The more self-confident among us may have hoped to be leaders of the multitude, but none of us wished to be divorced from it. The generation of Keynes and Lytton did not seek to preserve any kinship with the Philistine. They aimed rather at a life of retirement among fine shades and nice feelings, and conceived of the good as consisting in the passionate mutual admiration of a clique of the elite.¹

The wide-spread optimism that had been a common feature among many of Russell's older contemporaries at the turn of the nineteenth century, those who dared to hope and work for cultural regeneration on a social scale, was irreparably dashed by the events of 1914-18. André Maurois has noted how, against the background of such reformatory schemes as Fabianism, the War had intervened, shattering the doctrines and beliefs of the generation that had deemed certain social solutions possible. Maurois, too, pointed to Strachey as 'the master of this young generation' that, above all things, wished to define itself in opposition to its nineteenth century idealistic forefathers.² Richard Altick even suggests that the success of Strachey's debunking of prominent Victorians was, in fact, a consequence of the War and that 'it was . . . the Victorian mentality that bore the blame for the agony England had undergone since August, 1914.'³ Whether such a connection is justifiable, that *Eminent Victorians* would not have been so well-received apart from the War, would of course be impossible to prove. The book did, however, emerge from and primarily found acceptance with the generation that, owing to the War's influence, had undergone a certain coming of age and found it difficult to identify with the moral aspirations of its elders. In effect, Strachey's book represented a frontal attack on what he chose to regard as the gentil profession of nineteenth century biography, epitomized for him by the inevitable 'two fat volumes with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead . . .

They are as familiar as the *cortège* of the undertaker, and wear the same air of slow, funereal barbarism.⁴ George Russell had so produced Arnold's 'Life' and two volumes of letters, and while the result was certainly not as cloying as some, his obvious desire to dress Arnold in Sunday best before presenting him to the public would have certainly incriminated Russell on this count.

As a result of the apparent failure of Victorian Liberal values many of the Strachey generation considered the only alternative to utter despair, as Bertrand Russell observed, in 'a life of retirement among fine shades and nice feelings,' in other words, by proposing a return to the aestheticism which had separated the disciples of Walter Pater from the social reformers of their own day. More recently, S.P. Rosenbaum has seen in 'Bloomsbury's view of art as an autonomous activity . . . a modern extension of the *fin de siècle* aestheticism of Walter Pater.' Pater's attempt to rid Victorian aesthetics of its 'moral bias,' claims Rosenbaum, 'was continued by Bloomsbury.'⁵ Michael Holroyd, too, describes the intellectual atmosphere that surrounded Strachey and his Bloomsbury set as 'the culmination and ultimate refinement of the aesthetic movement.'⁶ With their emphasis on G.E. Moore's 'the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects' it is little wonder that Bertrand Russell, who had spent so many years addressing political issues, set himself apart from the young coterie who occupied themselves with aesthetics in spite of social problems.⁷

At the beginning of the century, as we have seen, writers like Forster and Orage saw themselves as heirs to all that they considered worthy in nineteenth century Liberalism, which meant, for them, implementing social values along Arnoldian lines. The Strachey generation, however, found it increasingly difficult to identify with this socio-cultural aspect of Arnold's overall vision. In fact, since they associated them with a Victorian morality which they found both unsatisfactory and slightly ridiculous, they consciously attempted to sever the ties that bound them to such traditions. Whereas some, like Orage, could regard Arnold the prophet of culture as a wholly anti-Victorian figure whose social criticism represented a departure from prevailing Philistine values, younger writers soon began to separate themselves so completely with the Victorian age that they came to regard

Arnold's extra-literary writing as just another manifestation of the nineteenth century's prevailing obsession with reform and moral regeneration. Whereas Wilde had imagined Arnold's aestheticism a healthy antidote to the morality of the age, Shaw had regarded Arnold's as a superior morality. Unlike ageing social commentators like Shaw and Wells, not to mention many of the older aesthetes, Strachey was unable to regard Arnold as this symbol of anti-Victorianism and saw in him only a representative of all that was bad about the old century: foppery, bureaucracy, superciliousness, hypocrisy, and even impotence. In short, Arnold represented to Strachey the height of the middle-class Philistinism that had surrounded his forbears. Rather than recognizing the previous (and probably more accurate) image of Arnold as the scourge of his middle class countrymen, some young writers regarded him, at worst, as the epitome of Victorianism itself; at best, he was portrayed as an individual with poetic sensibility who, in an age that had made a fetish of moral questions, compromised himself by engaging in unaesthetic quarrels about religion and politics. This, essentially, was the position of Lytton Strachey. In this chapter, I propose to trace the image of Arnold as portrayed by Strachey, through the later writing of Edmund Gosse, and finally as it emerged in Hugh Kingsmill's *Matthew Arnold* (1928). While Kingsmill's biography came chronologically much later than the work of either Strachey or Gosse, I will endeavour to illustrate how his understanding of the aesthetic-moral problem in Arnold and his projection of it was firmly rooted in the Stracheyan method.

The only piece in which Strachey dealt with Arnold directly was an essay which appeared, appropriately, in 1914, and whose title alone was enough to implicate Arnold in the faults of his age. In 'A Victorian Critic' Strachey began, not with an assault on Arnold but on the Victorian age itself as one singularly 'uncritical' and then went on to indict Arnold by association. The Victorian age was, claimed Strachey, 'unaesthetic to its marrow-bones,' and was therefore more disposed to produce 'men of science and . . . action' than artistic geniuses, the tendency of certain writers to make moral proclamations being merely a result of 'their ineradicable Victorian instinct for action and utility.'⁸ Thus Arnold was portrayed as an individual who, despite his natural ability for poetry and

literary appreciation, nevertheless fell prey to this prevalent instinct for reformation. In the words of Charles Sanders: 'Strachey found in Arnold a critic who, for all his brilliance and persuasiveness, could not separate aesthetic from moral values. Thus Arnold was a child of his age and manifested its chief weakness.' To Strachey, continues Sanders, 'Arnold played the role of a rather formidable adversary who must be destroyed, whatever the cost might be.'⁹

The chief danger Strachey perceived in the figure of Matthew Arnold was in his divided nature. Although he had, on occasion, made favourable remarks about Arnold's poetic ability, it was Arnold the critic that he singled out as the target for many negative comments regarding the generation of which he considered Arnold an integral part.¹⁰ Certain aspects of his work, it could not be denied, held an attraction for aesthetes, but these only served as a means of seducing such readers into listening to his moral dictates, the sweetener to help the digestion of a somewhat bitter Victorian pill. Ruskin had been more overt in his role as social critic -- *Unto This Last* lacks any of the aesthetic assumptions that underlie *Culture and Anarchy* -- but Arnold, Strachey claimed, because he went about his business 'with more subtlety,' was able to promote extra-literary ideas in the guise of literary criticism. 'To him,' said Strachey, 'literature was always an excuse for talking about something else.' In addition, Strachey felt that, by appearing to attack Philistinism and Barbarism on every side, Arnold had projected an image of refinement and 'fastidious taste,' claims that were unsubstantiated by his specific dictates.¹¹

The Arnoldian compromise between individual and standardized taste, so apparent throughout *Essays in Criticism*, provided another point of contention for Strachey, to whom true refinement and artistic taste lay with the cultivation of individual appreciation. To have been fair to Arnold, Strachey would have done well to cite his remark about Goethe putting 'the standard once and for all inside every man,' but this would have hardly supported his polemic against the Victorian necessity for objective standards. Consequently, when he came to the aspect of Arnold's literary criticism which sought to establish such objective values he accused him of 'trying to prop [his taste] up by artificial supports.' Although he gave no mention of Saintsbury's position on Arnold, his

objections were founded on similar ground. One such prop, also a concern of Saintsbury's, was, in Strachey's terms, the 'craving for Academies.' The fear, of course, was that such a judicial body would have little time for the 'original genius' to which aesthetes like Strachey and Saintsbury looked for creative ability.¹² Several years earlier, Strachey was to comment on Arnold's proposal for a national theatre. Even then, when the socialist programme for bringing culture to the masses was at its most powerful, Strachey had felt it necessary to attack the 'Utopian jeu d'esprit' for its detrimental effect on creative individuality and state the importance of the relative autonomy of art and politics. To this end, he cited the words of Milton: "'The State shall be my governors, but not my critics," wrote a greater than Matthew Arnold.' It was impossible for Strachey to believe that such a Philistine garrison as the political State could be in the least responsible for artistic taste. To him, all schemes for critical centres -- noting specifically the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the Royal Academy, and that hotbed of social reform, George Russell's London County Council -- represented little more than an outright assault on the individual sensibility, especially in England where 'neither our art nor our character has any natural inclination towards authority.'¹³ Arnold's essay on Academies was therefore regarded as merely an attempt to standardize critical principles at the expense of the individual sensibility. To Arnold's conclusion that no matter how desirable the prospect of a national centre of taste, the nation which produced Shakespeare was perhaps, after all, unsuited to such an institution, Strachey gave no regard. If he had, he would doubtless have cited it as further evidence of the subtlety with which Arnold oscillated between sound aesthetic doctrine and a misplaced desire for social reform, for this is exactly the way that he viewed Arnold's 'criticism of life' theory, which he, quite correctly, saw as a product of the attempt to unite the aesthetic and moral domains. Far from agreeing that such a fusion was possible, however, Strachey detected, in the phrase so central to Arnold's presupposition that society and the arts were inseparable, a ploy that would enable him 'to serve God and Mammon at the same time.' Previously it had been only through careful scrutiny that Arnold's reader could detect 'the tip of the Victorian ear peeping forth from under the hide of the aesthetic lion,' but, Strachey continued, after the statement that literature was a

criticism of life, the concealment was over and 'the whole head of the animal is out.'¹⁴

While Strachey never hesitated to make his Victorian subjects look ridiculous, his regard for Arnold was markedly different. 'No one,' he said, 'could suppose that he was a stupid man,' but rather had an above average intelligence and 'could write lucidly.'¹⁵ We must assume that it was Arnold's inability to be either hot or cold -- to burn with a 'hard gemlike flame,' in Pater's words, or to give himself over completely to the cold life of action -- that Strachey found so irritating.¹⁶ Arnold had certainly demonstrated that he was capable of aesthetic sensitivity, but Strachey felt sure that once he left 'the broad flat road of traditional appreciation' in order 'to wander on footpaths of his own' he was given over to as much moralizing as the next man.¹⁷ The ambivalence that Strachey felt over Arnold's divided sensibility is perhaps best summarized by Charles Sanders:

Strachey knew that . . . Matthew Arnold was not merely a critic; he was also a poet, with a well-developed sense of beauty. There had appeared in him, particularly in his younger days, something of the rebel and the romantic. Arnold was not altogether bad, even in Strachey's eyes, but Arnold's father was. As a matter of fact, all that was worst in Arnold himself could be traced back to his father.¹⁸

Although the ideas expressed in Strachey's caustic little essay predate *Eminent Victorians* by four years, given the belief that all erroneous in Arnold derived from the influence of Dr Arnold, it was appropriate that many of the sentiments to which he had given vent in 'A Victorian Critic' were to re-appear in Strachey's famous portrait of the elder Arnold. While there are only two direct references to Matthew Arnold in his father's biographical sketch, he stands in the background throughout, and those references, pregnant in suggestion, may be taken as something like suppositional statements regarding the older man's influence on the future man of letters. For example, the first and more oblique of these references focuses on the conscious sense of responsibility which Dr Arnold strove to shape in his son's mind:

'Rather than have physical science the principal thing in my son's mind,' he exclaimed in a letter to a friend, 'I would gladly have him think that the sun went round the earth, and that the stars were so many spangles set in the bright blue firmament. Surely the one thing needful for a Christian and an Englishman to study is Christian and moral and political philosophy.'

A Christian and an Englishman! After all, it was not in the class-room, nor in the boarding house, that the essential elements of instruction could be imparted which should qualify the youthful neophyte to deserve those names. The final, the fundamental lesson could only be taught in the school chapel; in the school chapel the centre of Dr Arnold's system of education was inevitably fixed.¹⁹

In the light of Sander's statement that 'all that was worst in Arnold could be traced back to his father,' at least in Strachey's opinion, Arnold's lifelong dislike for the physical sciences and his eventual engagement in religious and political issues was deemed to be a direct result of the older man's influence. To readers familiar with 'Rugby Chapel,' the poem in which Arnold had eulogized his father, the passage must have proved most evocative, especially for the Bloomsbury set who had had a longstanding biographical connection with the poem. 'Rugby Chapel' had originally been written in reply to certain remarks made by Virginia Woolf's uncle, Fitzjames Stephen, who like Strachey had portrayed Dr Arnold as a humourless fanatic.²⁰ With this in mind, Strachey's use of the chapel in order to drive home the image of Dr Arnold first portrayed by Stephen becomes all the more piquant, illustrating not only the shortcomings of his subject but also suggesting a certain misplaced faith on the part of Matthew Arnold towards his father. 'Rugby Chapel' was itself an appropriate choice given the context, since nowhere else in the poetry did Arnold show such confidence in Christian orthodoxy. Indeed, with its optimistic City of God imagery it is something of an anomaly in the work of the writer who had heralded the withdrawing sea of faith.²¹ Yet Strachey must certainly have had the poem in mind when he connected the son with the father, for the second, more direct, reference to Dr Arnold's eldest child also centred on the school chapel: 'Music he did not appreciate, though he occasionally desired his eldest boy, Matthew, to sing him the Confirmation Hymn of Dr Hinds, to which he had become endeared, owing to its use in Rugby chapel.'²² Here, once again, is an example of Strachey's favourite strategy, the careful choice of detail in order to evoke the most poignant of expositions. The recollection of this one little incident suggests not only that the headmaster possessed limited aesthetic taste but also the extent to which Matthew shared, or was made to share, both his Philistine values and his enthusiasm for formal religious piety.

A recurrent theme in Strachey is the Doctor's 'Hebraism,' a concept perhaps calculated to strike a note in readers familiar with *Culture and Anarchy*, and its call for an antidote to the overt moralism of the Victorian age. In a gesture that amounted to nothing less than turning the son's satirical guns on his own father, Strachey was here using

Arnoldian terminology to illustrate the extent to which the Arnolds themselves suffered from an almost genetic inflexibility. So extreme was the Arnolds' inbred moralism, Strachey was seeming to say, that it preempted any possibility of fully implementing the necessary *porro unum* of Hellenism that the son had prescribed. As Strachey may be regarded in many ways as a member of Pater's third generation, his many allusions to the Jewish prophetic tradition only served to show his underlying disregard for Thomas Arnold, whose very demeanour betrayed his preoccupation with the Hebraistic: 'As the Israelite of old knew that his almighty Lawgiver might at any moment thunder to him from the whirlwind . . . so the Rugby schoolboy walked in holy dread . . . of Dr Arnold.'²³ Continually Strachey reminded his readers of the outcome of the headmaster's reformist zeal and emphasis on the prophetic nature, a nature hardly suited to intellectual light, much less sweetness: 'It was only natural that to one of his temperament and education it should have been the moral rather than the intellectual side of the question which impressed itself upon his mind.' He quoted the Doctor's pride in the fact that, at Rugby, 'what we look for . . . is, first, religious and moral principle; secondly, gentlemanly conduct; thirdly, intellectual ability;' consequently, Strachey was able to conclude that 'taking very little interest in works of art . . . his principal preoccupation remained with the moral aspect of things.'²⁴ Those sympathetic with Matthew Arnold might readily gain from all this a hypothetical image of the father standing condemned as Philistine by his own son. Instead of seeing him as David the son of Goliath, though, Strachey clearly saw Matthew taking up arms on his father's behalf. But this remained largely unstated and we can only speculate on how Strachey would have dealt at length with the relationship between the Arnolds. It is simply as though he were creating a context into which he could eventually place the biography of Arnold himself, a sort of preliminary chapter in the life of Dr Arnold's most famous pupil. This, at least, was the view of Edmund Gosse who, writing in 1918, said that Strachey's Dr Arnold 'may be taken as a serious introduction to any sketch of his eldest son, since it is obvious that to comprehend Matthew aright it is necessary to observe the difficulties which beset the opening of his career.'²⁵

As the grand old man of English letters, Gosse was still an important figure to young critics in 1918. While he was undoubtedly a member of the older generation, as the author of *Father and Son*, he was often regarded as a forerunner of the Stracheyan revolution.²⁶ In that 1907 autobiography, 'the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences, and almost two epochs,' he projected a similar image of the conflict between the father given over to Puritanical values and the son who sought to establish his own individuality. Gosse, however, was a unique figure from the period as one of the few older biographers to so concern himself with the faults of the previous generation. It is probably owing to the thirty years that separated Gosse and Strachey that, despite their similarities, made Gosse more moderate in his approach to Arnold. He was, after all, a contemporary of George Russell and had known Arnold personally.²⁷ In 1896 he had even remarked that the closeness of his own proximity to Arnold prevented him from accurately evaluating the future fate of Arnold's prose.²⁸ At that time Gosse had shared sympathies with the Wilde-Beerbohm group and therefore not surprisingly believed that it was Arnold's poems that would most surely 'float him into immortality.' Although Gosse had recommended that 'to comprehend his place in the history of literature,' Arnold must be considered 'twice over -- firstly, as a poet mature in 1850, secondly as a prose-writer whose masterpieces date from 1865 to 1873' -- he saw a unity of purpose in Arnold's whole corpus, so that the Arnold of the prose was only 'superficially' a different writer from the poet.²⁹ Gosse never really changed his position on Arnold despite the renewed vogue that he enjoyed among young iconoclasts as a result of his 1907 autobiography; he was, however, to shift his focus as a result of his own involvement in the Strachey revolution.

In 1918, after reading Strachey's 'brilliant little portrait' of Dr Arnold, he too began to trace the stifling effect of the father's evangelizing on his son. Such was the headmaster's zeal, said Gosse, that he was 'apt to either completely alienate a youthful mind or to crush it into passivity.' Like the figure of Gosse himself in *Father and Son*, young Arnold was not completely damaged by the 'limited aesthetics of Thomas Arnold' which nevertheless 'hampered and even frustrated the development of Matthew.'

Essentially, Gosse saw an aesthetically sensitive young man whose better self 'collided against an intelligence and will' just as strong as his own and who eventually, therefore, came to accept 'along certain lines . . . the views of his father.' Ultimately, in Gosse's view, Arnold benefitted from 'the loyal struggle of his conscience against these parental forces' since they had the effect of giving his mind 'a muscular strength which it might otherwise have lacked.' Arnold was not, then, in all ways, his father's son. The appropriateness of Swinburne's remark about 'David the son of Goliath' lay, for Gosse, in the fact that 'this David had one smooth pebble in his pouch which Goliath could not match,' that being the delicious humour with which he could approach any subject, no matter how serious.³⁰ Strachey often remarked that the Victorian age was devoid of humour, a charge that, according to Gosse, could never be fairly visited on Matthew Arnold.

Rather than tracing the similarities between Arnold and his father, Gosse chose to dwell on the side of his nature that separated the son from both Dr Arnold and the prevailing tone of his age. Gosse's Arnold, in other words, was singularly anti-Victorian. With the exception of Swinburne, Arnold's poetry, for instance, had fallen prey to the cold reception of mid-Victorians who were so characteristically 'unappreciative of the stars as they rose on the horizon,' so that even the Arnold family, noted Gosse, 'thought his poems "silly."' Even while engaged in that most conventional of roles, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, Arnold 'began to form views of which a whisper would have made the hair of Thomas Arnold stand on end.' But then, said Gosse, 'we think of him not as a school inspector nor as an opponent of the Burials Bill, but as a writer exquisite alike in verse and prose.'³¹ Like Strachey, Gosse recognized the elements in Arnold that were at odds with his time, but his conclusions were essentially different. Rather than compromising his individuality to surrounding influences, Gosse's Arnold emerged as the superior stylist who was 'in the Baconian sense . . . a "full man,"' capable of successfully executing the combined roles of aesthete, controversialist, and philosopher.³² As a contemporary of George Russell, Gosse, while regretting the overtly moralistic influence of Thomas Arnold, could similarly appreciate the sheer scope of Arnold's interests. Much as he

identified with, and saw the need for, their iconoclasm he was dismayed that 'the new generation are hardly willing to distinguish what was good from what was bad in the time of their grandmothers.' Such liberties he felt were taken that 'our younger contemporaries are slipping into the habit of approving of nothing from the moment they are told it is Victorian.'³³ Gosse was aware that he himself stood between two ages; although he was lionized by young iconoclasts, the nineteenth century critic in him was never absent, even after *Father and Son*, and it was to this side of him that he owed his continuing respect for Arnold the moralist, an aspect with which certain younger critics found it impossible to sympathize.³⁴ Unlike Strachey, Gosse belonged to the Lang and Birrell generation that had assumed the propriety of the man of letters who ventured into other fields. He himself, as a writer with a catholicity of interests, had come from the old nineteenth century journalistic tradition, so that while commanding a great deal of respect from the Bloomsbury set, there was always an awareness that because of his age and background Gosse was essentially different. Virginia Woolf, shortly after Gosse's death, while commending *Father and Son* said that and other of Gosse's works 'suffer from his innate regard for caution,' the fault of which 'must be laid upon his age.' Gosse had not completely escaped the influence of his upbringing, Woolf claimed, one consequence of which was the ease with which he fitted into his role as a nineteenth century man of letters, which had become to its detriment 'a profession rather than a vocation, a married woman rather than a lady of easy virtue.' Had he 'given freer rein to his impulses, if only his pagan and sensual joy had not been dashed by perpetual caution,' mused Woolf, what potential could have been realized in Gosse, what artistic achievement.³⁵ But it was not to be, and like so many of their other elders Gosse was to prove a final disappointment to younger writers who could only wish that things had been somehow different.

Perhaps, also, Gosse's regard for Arnold was somewhat coloured by various past acts of generosity on the part of Arnold to himself.³⁶ For all his sympathy, however, Gosse did express regret that Arnold had forbidden a biography, a request that 'eminent men would be well advised to leave . . . open for posterity.'³⁷ Since they received no mention, the tacit assumption here was that the existing biographies by Saintsbury and

Russell, of which Gosse certainly must have known, were of little consequence. Then Russell's *Matthew Arnold* was a book that could hardly have been regarded as 'biographical' in the sense that Gosse defined the word. In 1901, Gosse had objected to the standard memorial biographies written by friends of the subject's family or, even worse, by the family itself so that it had become conventional to honour the dead with 'a pall, two volumes of biography, and a few wreaths of elegant white flowers.' In a real sense, Russell's monograph, with its attempt to portray the morally and religiously orthodox Arnold, had fallen into this category. Gosse had distinctly objected to the tendency, also apparent in Russell's book, of the biographer's penchant for polemic, and differentiated between what he called 'legitimate biography' and the study which, with its concern for the 'moral' and the 'religious,' became more like a philosophical treatise.³⁸ Perhaps Gosse, had he lived long enough, would have undertaken the task of correcting George Russell's version of Arnold's life himself. Indeed, even Strachey had intended to write just such a full-length biography of Arnold before he died, an ambition which, sadly, he was unable to realize.³⁹ After writing *Elizabeth and Essex* in 1928, the year of Gosse's death, Strachey, according to Holroyd, made 'idleness . . . the chief refuge of his fading intellect' despite the fact that 'there were plenty of improbable schemes in the air for a new *magnus opus*.'⁴⁰ It was perhaps fitting that, with the conspicuous absence of Strachey from the literary scene, one of his admirers, the young Hugh Kingsmill, was to take up the challenge of the first modern Arnold biography in that same year in a style that he had undoubtedly learned from Strachey himself.⁴¹ Their similarity of method has caused Richard Altick to remark that, through Kingsmill, 'the ill fortune Dr Arnold had suffered at Strachey's hands was visited upon his son,' a criticism anticipated by Kingsmill himself who thought critics might regard his book as 'simply a re-hash of the least successful of the four studies contained in Mr Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*.'⁴² It is to Kingsmill's biography that we now turn our attention, itself an extension of the revolution that *Father and Son* and *Eminent Victorians* had set in motion several years before. Indeed, internal evidence even suggests that the possible motivation for Kingsmill's writing of *Matthew Arnold* derived from Gosse's review of *Eminent Victorians* in which he had laid down the

necessity for a modern Arnold biography.⁴³

Academic scholars have been quick to dismiss Kingsmill's treatment Arnold, and perhaps inderstandably so, but often fail to grasp the underlying significance of the book that emerged from Kingsmill's own sojourn in Switzerland in 1927. While Holroyd's suggestion that 'the self-consciousness of the writing was increased by the lack of necessary reference books and personal information to be found in Thonon' may offer a practical solution for the means he employed, it must be added that such a method was only available to him because of the advent of the new biography and its emphasis away from scrupulous historic research.⁴⁴

Strachey had not been the first to employ the personal biographical method. Even Gosse had stated the importance of the 'psychology of the individual' over historical accuracy.⁴⁵ Although *Eminent Victorians* is often considered to be a revolutionary manifesto for the art of modern biography, David Novarr finds in Saintsbury and others 'bows in that direction.'⁴⁶ Certainly, with his call for impressionistic biography, Saintsbury had hinted at the method Strachey was later to advocate in the preface of *Eminent Victorians*, where we read:

It is not by the direct method of a scrupulous narration that the explorer of the past can hope to depict that singular epoch. If he is wise, he will adopt a subtler strategy. He will attack his subject in unexpected places; he will fall upon the flank, or the rear; he will shoot a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hitherto undivined. He will row out over that great ocean of material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from those far depths, to be examined with a careful curiosity.

Although he did not discount the importance of that vast ocean of historic data in the construction of a biography, this did not represent the most important factor in Strachey's writing process. The biographer, he argued, must above all things 'maintain his own freedom of spirit' since 'it is his business to lay bare the facts of the case, as he understands them.'⁴⁷ *As he understands them.* Strachey knew as well as Saintsbury that absolute disinterestedness was impossible in the writing of history, each individual bringing to his subject his own collection of concerns, presuppositions, and prejudices. What made Strachey's stance innovative was that, far from apologizing for the accommodation of this personal element, he stated with bold enthusiasm its superiority

over objective forms. In the intervening years, Freud had formulated many of the theories with which Strachey's contemporaries were to arm themselves against rationalist ideology, replacing it with new psychological determinants. The biographer could no longer be regarded as a pseudo-scientist but, as Strachey proudly stated, 'the first duty of a great historian is to be an artist.' After all, uninterpreted history was little better than buried gold and lacked any of 'the glamour of a personal revelation.' While he may have given deference to factual data and what Arnold would have called 'the object as in itself it is' when he proposed, in the preface, to 'lay bare the facts,' it was always assumed that such facts would undergo a transformation as they passed through the biographer's alembic. Thus Strachey could conclude that 'every history worth its name is . . . as personal as poetry, and its value ultimately depends on the force and the quality of the character behind it.'⁴⁸ By advocating in various ways this new personal approach to biography, Saintsbury, Gosse, and Strachey were preparing the way for Kingsmill's *Matthew Arnold* which may be said to have taken the process one step further, transforming biography into a kind of thinly veiled autobiography. As Kingsmill was later to admit:

To a biographer the chief value of any book is that when it has receded far enough into the distance it reveals the relation between himself and his subject, and so fully becomes a chart of his own faults by which he should be able to steer a smoother course when he sails on his next voyage.⁴⁹

Kingsmill too rowed out on Strachey's vast ocean, but dropped his bucket only at points where he detected an affinity with his own experience. This was never truer than in the Arnold biography. 'In dealing with Arnold's love for Marguerite, Kingsmill almost certainly had at the back of his mind his own recent love-affair in Switzerland,' claims Holroyd, 'and consequently he saw Dr Arnold's relationship to Matthew Arnold in the same light as Sir Henry Lunn's to himself.'⁵⁰ In this respect also -- the personalizing of biography to concentrate on the relationship between father and son, both his own and Arnold's, and treating it as a microcosm of the conflict between the Victorian and Edwardian generations -- Kingsmill was working from the examples of Strachey and Gosse.

Kingsmill showed that he was aware that his response to Victorian morality, especially in its preoccupation with the relationship between father and son, was largely born out of his own experiences when he prescribed in the introduction that 'every biography ought to be preceded by a sketch of the writer's own life.'⁵¹ This, he said, would go some way towards explaining why a biographer held certain views on parallel matter in his subject's life. Although Kingsmill refrained from acting upon his own suggestion, had he done so, the parallels would have been more than apparent, for there was a blatantly autobiographical element in his approach to Arnold that suggested it was, in fact, operating in Strachey's realm of 'personal history.'

Kingsmill's father, who had been born six years after George Russell, was an exemplar of the nineteenth century middle class tradition. The Victorian age had made him what he was -- a strict nonconformist who had given up his work as a missionary in India to become a successful self-made businessman.⁵² The Arnold biography may be seen, on one level, as Kingsmill's thinly veiled retaliation against his own father -- his friend Hesketh Pearson said that 'Matthew Arnold gets many of the brickbats meant for Sir Henry Lunn' -- but it was much more than just that.⁵³ Given his personal circumstances, few writers were as naturally disposed to embody the modern reaction against Victorian morality as Kingsmill was at this period, making his perception of the conflict certainly as potent as that of Gosse and Strachey. His personal rejection in the year that he wrote Matthew Arnold -- first, by the institution of home and family and, second, by the person for whom he had sacrificed all his worldly security -- had thrown him back so completely upon himself that he was given a heightened sense of the importance of individuality over community, aesthetics over politics, and personal emotion over rational systems. But on which side of the fence did Arnold fall? Certainly he had spoken out against the Philistinism and Puritanism of his own day, in essence, the middle class nonconformist values that the Lunn's held so dear, and he too had made one or two radical gestures in his own youth. But he was, after all, the son of Strachey's Hebraic Dr Arnold and, historically at least, was a child of Sir Henry's beloved Victorian age.

Kingsmill's *Matthew Arnold* is important not only as an example of the post-Stracheyan biography, but because it was to make such a significant contribution to the ongoing question of the Arnoldian conflict between aesthetic and moral concerns, a conflict which, as we have seen, lay at the heart of Arnold's development from isolated poet to engagé critic. From the beginning, Kingsmill made it plain on which side of the issue he belonged. His study, he said, was about 'the collapse of a poet into a prophet.' Russell and Saintsbury had exploited a divided Arnold in order to promote the side of his nature that best served their ideological interests; Kingsmill, rather than merely applying a set of first principles to isolated works, set about analyzing these same works as products of historical influence in their author's life. Both Saintsbury and Russell had played down the biographical nature of their studies; Kingsmill was to make it central to all he did. Granted, he too had just as structured a set of presuppositions as his two predecessors but, coming after the biographical revolution, it was only natural that he sought to give them a historic context. In his introduction, Kingsmill began by unashamedly aligning himself with the 'reaction towards Victorianism.' By 1928, he claimed, it had once again become 'unfashionable to attack the Victorians,' the headway gained by Strachey having been superseded by a new wave of hagiography. Nevertheless, he took comfort in the knowledge that 'since the war the legend that the great men of the Victorian age differed essentially from the great men of all other ages is beginning to crack.'⁵⁴ For his part, Kingsmill would do his best to overturn the bias propagated by a whole era that had clothed its heroes in 'respectability' by probing the inevitable chinks in the Victorian armour which meant, in this specific case, close scrutiny of the breastplate of righteousness in which George Russell had dressed Arnold. The title of Kingsmill's first chapter, 'The Sanctity of Private Life Under Queen Victoria,' was, in fact, a reference to Russell's report, in the preface to *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, that the writer had desired that 'he might not be made the subject of a Biography,' a request to which Kingsmill retorted that the Victorian writers either forbade biographies, as Arnold had, or 'got a son or a dependable friend to do the job,' as the Arnold family had done in the case of the correspondence. Years earlier, Strachey had openly ridiculed the standard Victorian biography as 'those two fat volumes,

with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead,' a criticism that Kingsmill was to directly apply to Russell's *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, the Arnold family's intended substitute for a standard biography.⁵⁵

'A George Russell inevitably begets his contrary,' said Kingsmill, and fully admitted that he was himself thus 'begotten by George Russell.' Given his personal position, it is hardly surprising that Kingsmill felt it necessary to pit himself against the lately deceased Russell. Russell belonged to another generation and in many ways his tribute to Arnold represented everything against which the new biographers were rebelling. He had been himself a Victorian, and much closer to Arnold's own time than the post-war era. Kingsmill was not yet born in the year of Arnold's death and his sense of personal removal from the events that surrounded his subject's life were intensified by an anecdote in which he recounted his childhood relationship to Russell. Russell had spoken with affectionate memories of the great poet's arrival during his student days at Harrow. Coincidentally, a generation later, Kingsmill had been a student at Harrow from 1903-1906, the exact time at which Russell had been working on his *Matthew Arnold* and he, in turn, recalled Russell's own arrival at Harrow as a distinguished old boy. Indeed, the elder statesman appeared to him as pompous as the age from which he came, so that Kingsmill's memory picture made him look like an escapee from Strachey's menagerie of eminents:

I remember George Russell in the school chapel at Harrow. He was always emotional over Harrow, his old school, and used frequently to come down from London to the Sunday evening service.

Like Tennyson's Arthur, he was tall and stout, with a white, flaccid face, but unlike Arthur he did not carry a beard.⁵⁶

The image of the Victorian statesman returning to his old school chapel is one that recalled the portrait of Dr Arnold in *Eminent Victorians*. Kingsmill, like Strachey, had a severe distaste for the public school and all that it represented, a distaste perhaps slightly fostered by Strachey's portrait of England's most famous headmaster.⁵⁷ To place George Russell in that very context and to say that he had an emotional attachment to the place was, then, a barbed comment and immediately indicted him as a party to one of the facets of the establishment against which Strachey and his contemporaries had revolted. Kingsmill was often in the habit of illustrating the foibles of real people by associating them with their

suitably fallible counterparts in literature. The parallel of Russell with Tennyson's Arthur was therefore not merely, or even primarily, founded on physical resemblance; to Kingsmill, Tennyson's hero represented, in his ridiculous abeyance to respectability and conduct, the epitome of the fault that lay at the heart of the Victorian age. In his own words, Kingsmill believed that the world of Arthur signified 'the ideal world towards which the Victorians strained,' and consequently regarded the Tennyson poem as an unwitting commentary on the age.⁵⁸ Russell's sense of public duty, especially evident in his involvement with Christian Socialism, which Kingsmill thought as ineffectual as throwing 'a bun to the proletarian bear,' ran counter to everything in which Kingsmill, as an individualist, believed. Throughout *Matthew Arnold* he was to return continually to the utopian strain in Arnold and certain of his followers that, he believed, had had the effect of usurping and deadening individual development.⁵⁹

Like Strachey, Kingsmill regarded the impulse towards social service as a general characteristic of the Victorian age and a specific weakness in the character of Dr Arnold. Throughout the 1928 biography, Dr Arnold remained his protagonist, Kingsmill's treatment being even more defamatory than that of Strachey. Turning to the subject of the Rugby headmaster, Kingsmill devoted no less than six chapters to his overbearing influence on the son's developing intellect, an influence from which he was never to recover. 'I used to think Matt must have regarded his father with strongly qualified admiration,' mused Kingsmill, but on a closer inspection of the letters he was led to conclude that 'such a revulsion against his father's view of life as he certainly felt for a year or two in his youth was succeeded by a renewed surrender, permanent this time though never quite complete, to his father's personality.'⁶⁰ Taken along with his stated thesis, 'the collapse of a poet into a prophet,' this represents the essential theme of the book, for in Kingsmill's mind both were inextricably linked: it was assumed that because of his father's influence Arnold undertook the role of social and religious prophet, a role for which he was being groomed throughout his early childhood and education. The poetry, especially the lyrical, constituted therefore a rebellion against all his formative teaching while the moralistic elements, especially evident in the later prose, exposed the latent influence of Dr

Arnold. In Kingsmill's scheme, it was only fitting that *Culture and Anarchy* should represent its author's final return to the Victorian fold, the underlying distinction between aesthetics and ethics being similar to that of Saintsbury who had divided the Arnold canon on similar grounds. Writing in 1899, Saintsbury had not identified this wayward moral strain as a characteristic of the age, of course, but certainly agreed that it was Arnold's moral impulse that had usurped his more natural poetic instinct. Though very different in their outlooks, as fellow aesthetes Saintsbury and Kingsmill agreed on this one fundamental: true artistic genius lay with the individual and any attempt to standardize or make public that talent would inevitably lead to its destruction.

Kingsmill's book is divided exactly in half, the first part tracing Matthew's continual struggle with Dr Arnold's moralism, the rest given over to describing Arnold the school inspector and public figure after a 'renewed surrender . . . to his father's personality.' Only between Rugby and his marriage, claimed Kingsmill, at an Oxford free from the close moral confines of Fox How, had Arnold 'absorbed life with any freedom.' This was the time in which his poetic imagination ripened and to which was attributed the Byronic side of his nature; thus, 'what is of value in his poetry is derived almost exclusively from his contact with life during this period.' There were several well-known events in the early life of Arnold that appeared to collaborate with this notion of an aesthetic rebellion and Kingsmill drew on them heavily. Arnold's attraction to Newman, for example, which was attributed to the minister's 'aloofness from life with poetic feeling;' the trek across Europe to catch glimpses of the actress Rachel; the journey to see George Sand. Each daring instance Kingsmill interpreted as an opportunity for full initiation into the life of the romantic imagination, a step that, when each opportunity arose, Arnold as his father's son was impotent to take. In the event that the French novelist had seduced the adoring youth as she had so many others -- a 'purging and renewing experience' which could only have benefitted his future poetic career -- Kingsmill fancied that 'the shade of Dr Arnold would have been powerless against the substance of George Sand.'⁶¹ Alas, it was not to be, but even that romantic pilgrimage paled in comparison with a far more passionate European rendezvous.

At the crux of the matter, almost as an allegory of the moral-aesthetic conflict, Kingsmill placed the relationship with Marguerite. Gosse had hinted at its importance in 1918, regretting that there were no extant letters from the period which might shed light on the episode; Kingsmill, on the other hand, made it central to his understanding of Arnold's development and even suggested that the lack of correspondence surrounding the Marguerite affair was the result of a conspiracy of silence on the part of a disapproving family, George Russell having been a willing accessory to 'the obscurity in which the piety of his family and friends has involved the period from 1845 to 1851.'⁶² Although Russell might have inferred that the Marguerite poems were 'pleasant exercises of fancy composed during Matt's honeymoon in the intervals between theological and political discussion with his bride,' Kingsmill regarded them as crucial to an understanding of the period between Rugby and the Civil Service when the battle between Arnold's poetic sensibility and his father's morality was at its height. In the absence of contemporary data, Kingsmill declared that he would take the poems as biographical statements on the basis of 'internal evidence.' The critics were rightly sceptical about the conclusions drawn by such a method -- the unfounded inference that as a French woman in German Switzerland, Marguerite must have been there to improve her language, for example -- but illogical leaps such as these were the result of an attempt to correlate the episode with his central thesis, as a parable of the struggle between Victorianism and the free imagination rather than to recreate what had actually occurred at Thun in 1846. To this end, it suited Kingsmill to portray Marguerite as a governess or someone of ignoble social standing. The whole issue thereafter became one of the power of love and individual emotion over social convention, Arnold's response to Marguerite being, for Kingsmill, the acid test:

One's whole view of Matt would be altered if it could be proved that at any time in his life he had felt strongly enough to escape the social prejudices which condition the emotional experiences of most men; had, for example, fallen passionately in love with a waitress.

But far from discovering in his 'Fox How Byron' such a decisive rebellion against the pious training of his youth, Kingsmill read in Arnold's response to Marguerite 'the best Victorian traditions,' his final rejection of her being on moral grounds. This is what

essentially separated Kingsmill from Arnold in his own mind. He had himself chosen to break with respectability and the security of his father's business, choosing to earn a meagre living by writing, whereas Arnold had finally submitted to marriage with a judge's daughter and a career in the civil service. From that point on, the course of Arnold's life was determined. By rejecting the promptings of his sensual nature he had committed himself once and for all to a prosaic career that was destined to bury whatever poetry had survived the moral assaults of his father. It was the same worldliness, therefore, with which he dismissed Marguerite that eventually led him to 'waste so many years in trying to direct mankind along the road to perfection.'⁶³

Having his only real awareness of the modern condition usurped by the deadening influence of his age, it was little wonder Arnold's poetic vein dried up. Of 'A Summer Night' Kingsmill wrote:

Arnold's imagination never carried him higher than in this picture of a freed prisoner wrecked in the storm; but as a criticism of life, his own test of poetry, it is false, or at least inadequate. Of those who escape from the brazen prison, the most are wrecked, but a few reach the shores of beauty and die in harbour. Arnold might have been among these, had he not put back to port as soon as the tempest began to threaten.⁶⁴

The use of the shipwreck image to convey the notion of the ego's struggle with external values portrayed Arnold as a personality momentarily free from 'the brazen prison' of conventional life who must yet face the consequences of his romantic action. Kingsmill was clearly symbolically aligning himself with that generation who, having no faith in political systems of any kind, sought to separate themselves from inherited social structures.

Although Kingsmill detected clear evidence of Arnold's creeping Hebraism in the period which produced *Essays in Criticism* (roughly corresponding with what I have in chapter one called the 'interregnum,' that period of extreme personal conflict between Arnold's aesthetic and cultural phases) he set 1867 as the point at which the 'wasted' years began:

Clearly Matt, even in 1861, was very nearly in the right mood to set up as general adviser to the world. I have, however, taken 1867 as the date of his definite entry into that office Besides, between 1861 and 1867 he was still occupied with literature.⁶⁵

Kingsmill, like Saintsbury and Russell, correctly saw *Culture and Anarchy* as the watershed in Arnold's career, the moment at which, for the first time, he effected a personal compromise between poetry and morality, the Hebraic element gaining at least an equal footing with the Hellenic, allowing social concerns to finally usurp aesthetics. 'I have taken 1877 as the date at which Arnold's crusade ended,' Kingsmill boldly stated, making the chronology of these wasted years correspond exactly with Saintsbury's 'wilderness' decade. Although he recognized his interest in politics before and beyond those dates, Arnold's primary concern with 'literature' rescued both series of *Essays in Criticism* for Kingsmill. In keeping with Saintsbury's assessment, however, there were still elements in the literary criticism that offended Kingsmill's aesthetic sensibility.

Besides the general 'temptation to stray beyond his limits' as a critic of literature alone, Kingsmill detected in Arnold the need for external props that Strachey had earlier diagnosed. Arnold's dependence on standards outside himself was first manifested in his 'abasement before Homer,' according to Kingsmill, and found eventual solace in the concept of disinterestedness and his proposal for a national Academy, 'the external support he always craved.' Kingsmill addressed the *Essays in Criticism* in a chapter called 'Objects as in themselves they really aren't,' a quip he owed to Oscar Wilde, in which he placed himself unequivocally with a statement that showed his own critical position as a descendant of nineties aestheticism:

All criticism is finally self-expression . . . a platitude which Arnold, with his need of external support, whether in the form of academies or a sense of disinterestedness, did not see; yet, owing to his sincerity and to his narrow range, the autobiographical basis of his criticism is especially easy to recognize . . . for example, there are three studies, of Marcus Aurelius, Joubert and Heine, from which a fairly complete portrait of Matthew Arnold could be pieced together.

That last sentence is revealing and has implications for Kingsmill's own critical approach which, as we have seen, was constructed on a similar autobiographical basis. Strachey had stressed the importance of the artistic over the analytical, and it was this early element in Arnold's literary criticism to which Kingsmill was naturally attracted. When he came to address Arnold's final return to literature in the last decade of his life, Kingsmill was predictably opposed to the suggestion that criticism should precede creation and that true

poetry was, in fact, 'a criticism of life.' As 'an attempt to turn poetry itself into criticism' the old familiar phrase was always destined to evoke severe displeasure from Kingsmill who, like Saintsbury and Strachey before him, held firmly to a belief in the autonomy of art. In repeating the notorious dictate, stated Kingsmill, Arnold was hoping that 'enough repetitions [would] suddenly make it clear, if not to himself at least to his readers No refutation will shake a man who is developing an argument in which he does not really believe.'⁶⁶ This is a telling piece of generosity on Kingsmill's part. Zealous as was Arnold's adherence to the misguided notion of the interdependence of life and letters, there was, underneath it all, the 'real' Matthew Arnold who was not really convinced of its truth. This was alas the sole remaining trace of an inspirational young poet now entombed in the ageing frame of a pusillanimous and slightly ridiculous school inspector.

Having stated his general outline of the Arnold canon and put what he determined to be the most productive years behind him, Kingsmill proceeded to analyse the tendency that dominated Arnold's cultural phase. Kingsmill's belief in a romantic egocentricity, so characteristic of aestheticism, was never more apparent than in his approach to this period, for the beginning of Arnold's demise he placed at the year in which he took up the government post. 'Arnold's descent from poet to prophet,' we read, 'was accomplished in early stages, over a long period, from 1851 to 1867.' By inspecting mostly nonconformist schools Arnold was, after all, 'immersed in an atmosphere which resembled, however grotesquely, the atmosphere his father had created at Rugby,' argued Kingsmill. About the fact that he spent the rest of his life attacking that atmosphere Kingsmill had nothing to say, preferring instead to portray him as an individual drawn more and more into the Philistine world until his personal identity all but disappeared under the weight of a political obsession:

Matt had not enough strength to be simply the thing he was, a poet. He succumbed to the hostile forces which had attracted him continuously from the beginning, and he became a prophet; and like other poets turned prophet put the blame for the transformation on his age.

Kingsmill devoted relatively little space to Arnold's cultural phase, suggesting that 'it would be tedious to follow in detail his wanderings during the next ten years,' but his position on the matter was made repeatedly clear.⁶⁷ *Culture and Anarchy, Friendship's*

Garland, and *Literature and Dogma* were all considered to be merely products of Arnold's inability to come to terms with his own individuality and a consequence of the age's obsession with socio-political concerns. Between 1870 and 1920, Kingsmill believed, 'all the world-wide reputations were made by denouncing the individual and exalting the community.'⁶⁸ It was therefore no accident that Arnold's most acutely moral proclamations occurred in the period after 1870. Like many of the post-war generation Kingsmill was sceptical about any scheme for social renewal, all of which he termed 'dawnist.' In this sense, Kingsmill was not only attacking Utopian socialist schemes but the whole nineteenth century Liberal tradition to which Russell, and to some extent Arnold, belonged and from which Orage and Forster's social conscience had derived, a tradition which had worked on the assumption that worthwhile comments about politics could be made and social problems could be confronted optimistically.⁶⁹ In attempting 'to purge Liberalism of its faults,' Arnold was doomed to failure, Kingsmill wrote sardonically, since 'a Liberalism purged of its faults would have to be wheeled about in a bath-chair, and could therefore not help him with his dawn.' Dawnism Kingsmill defined as a general principle of collective idealism in direct opposition to the concept of individual development:

Dawnism, or the heralding of the dawn of a new world . . . in short, an excited anticipation that some form of collective action is about to solve all the troubles of the individual, is an intermittent but apparently incurable malady of mankind.

The essence of dawnism being to escape from the sphere of the individual into an ideal collective sphere, dawnism is most intense where the conditions of life are least favourable to the individual.⁷⁰

Elsewhere he defined this same concept as 'the transference to society of the individual's disappointed expectations of personal happiness.'⁷¹ With such a framework it was only natural for him to read Arnold's transition from poet to social critic as an illustration of this tendency at work. There was predictably no mention of the individual aspect of Arnoldian culture, nor the importance of Hellenism to the overall programme of *Culture and Anarchy*; instead, Kingsmill spent the rest of his book attacking Arnold as 'a mildly utopian collectivist.' Considering Arnold's actual position, Kingsmill was obviously guilty of setting up a straw man, whether he knew it or not. What he did know was that England had just passed through a period in which collectivist ideology had been the primary

moving force among leading literary intellectuals but that there was another influence in the ascendant better suited to the aesthetic temperament. Describing the circumstances that surrounded his intellectual development Kingsmill later identified:

Two great movements [that] were gathering speed in the first years of this century, the one towards collectivism as a refuge from the isolation in which the current theory of a mechanical universe had engulfed the individual; the other . . . was just beginning to be heard, down in the depths of human consciousness to an enfolding darkness which was at least more comforting than the bleak surface of a world deprived of any god or goal.

With the War, claimed Kingsmill, these two movements were 'immensely quickened' and consequently the collectivist movement led to the popularization of Marxist theory while the 'complementary and opposite movement,' owing much to the work of Freud, resulted in the work of Lawrence, Joyce, and Eliot. Although he had mild rebukes for a certain 'lack of breadth' in these practitioners of modernism, Kingsmill believed that they 'greatly stimulated the sensibility of the individual' which collectivism had all but destroyed.⁷²

It was perhaps predictable that Kingsmill's thesis would not be well received, especially by critics who valued Arnold's social message above his poetry. Consequently, it was for the most part ignored, the only favourable response coming from his personal friend, William Gerhardi.⁷³ The most scathing review, on the other hand, came from the politically occupied *New Statesman*. More important than the early verse, or even the literary criticism of the sixties, it replied, was Arnold's 'position of still greater prominence in social thought and theological opinion.' So paramount was Arnold's socio-cultural phase, argued the review, that 'England in the twenty odd years between the *Essays in Criticism* and his death is unimaginable without the figure of Matthew Arnold.' While it would have certainly welcomed a modern biography of this important political figure, Kingsmill's attempt was sometimes 'perverse,' and at others 'an elaborate structure of guess-work.' Besides the conjecture about Marguerite, the *New Statesman* levelled its attack, predictably, against Kingsmill's 'dawnist' theory. 'Matthew Arnold had an enlightened modern view of the State,' it added, and, despite any claims to the contrary, *Culture and Anarchy* 'was based upon the supreme duty of devotion to the task of achieving individual perfection.'⁷⁴

Kingsmill's obsessive emphasis on Arnold's collectivism at the expense of that part of Arnoldian culture which concerned itself with the perfection of the individual had certainly left him open to such attacks, but the wholly dismissive tone of the review was to set him on the defensive. In a letter of reply the following week, Kingsmill defended himself against a number of minor charges that the reviewer had listed against him, but, perhaps wisely, avoided all mention of his book's political implications.⁷⁵ In a letter to his friend, Hesketh Pearson, however, Kingsmill wrote: 'The *New Statesman* as a Dawnist paper attacked me very soundly last week.' Pearson, himself opposed to the socialist leanings of the paper, agreed that its reply had been 'sheer unadulterated piffle of the most ball-aching nature.' With friendly candour, though, Pearson hinted to his friend that the historical content of the biography had perhaps been a little too much sacrificed to its subjective method.⁷⁶

If Kingsmill's (auto)biographical method had earned him mild rebukes from his closest friends -- Gerhardi had also made reference to it -- those academic critics who regarded the book's speculative nature as an offence to true scholarship were not so tolerant. More than anything else, Kingsmill's study was to bring to the surface the widespread admiration that was still held for Arnold in the universities. One leading academic, F.S. Boas, suggested that 'as a serious contribution to the study of Arnold the book is of very little value.'⁷⁷ But the full ire of the academic establishment was unleashed by E.K. Chambers who noted how, 'like most of his contemporaries,' Arnold had become 'a natural target for the shafts of post-war criticism.' Kingsmill, he said, 'appears to have taken his inspiration from the insolent grace of Mr Lytton Strachey, and to have succeeded admirably in catching the insolence.'⁷⁸

Perhaps the most significant academic response, however, was Howard Foster Lowry's 1932 publication of *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, the introduction of which may be read as a reply to the Strachey-Kingsmill view. In an attempt to resurrect both the reputation of Dr Arnold and his son, Lowry remarked that not only had the headmaster been 'misunderstood in his own day . . . he is still in our time the

object of both eulogy and satire.' So direct was Lowry's reply to Kingsmill that it is worth quoting at length:

To many modern tempers, lusting for free expression and impatient of inhibitions earthly or divine, there is something unpleasant and pitiable about this man who 'carried his sheep in his hand.' To them he will never be more than the pious Englishman who turned Tom Brown's fellows into first-rate prigs and made little boys grow old before their years. And, probably, to the rough skull-breaking set at Rugby, although he won them too, he was, even in his own time, the embodiment of Duty waiting with a birch in hand, haunting their doubtful dreams like a Hebrew prophet, and summoning upon their guilty heads the fiery wrath of God.

But there was another kind of boy at Rugby to whom Dr Arnold was a hero. To Arthur Stanley, Clough, and their like, the vigorous man with the flashing eyes, barely past forty and in the full abundance of his powers, opened a new world. If he taught them the reality of evil, he showed them also the glory of righteousness and the thrill of high endeavour. If he let them be over-concerned about their fellows, he sent them forth with an ardent social passion, into an England wherein man was yet unkind to man. They had heard of his love of beauty, of his travels in strange lands, of his zest for the mountain lakes which were his home, and of his deep affection for his children. And on Sundays, when into the pulpit of the Chapel he brought them an added something of himself, they forgave him whatever had offended them during the week, as he suggested to them man's life as it might some day be. With all his confessed errors in judgement, he had the charm that arises from a really great passion; he 'stands out among schoolmasters because he brought the zeal of a Crusader into what the world persists in thinking a prosaic profession.'

About one side of Dr Arnold and his work at Rugby too little has been said. Merely because he was a pioneer in his notion that the building of character was a task for the public schools, that phase of his work has largely obscured all others. His best pupils saw something else. They caught from their head master, not merely a moral straightening, but also a large intellectual deliverance. For Dr Arnold cared about a boy's mind as well as about his conscience. He opened at Rugby a wealth of classical and historical learning that had no trace of pedantry. To religious thought he brought the newest discoveries of the continental school and a large way of thinking that was wholly divorced from the narrow theology of England. Under his touch, the civilizations of Greece and Rome lived again.

Matthew Arnold was a keen judge in such matters, and saw clearly this other side of his father If, indeed, the son was later to wander between two worlds in his attempt toward some congenial form of faith, his father had no small part in the movement of mind that set him wandering.

If nothing else, the letters proved to Lowry that Matthew Arnold had not been nearly so susceptible as his friend to the Puritan side of his father: 'There is even a fine irony in watching Dr Arnold's son endeavour to remove from Clough an excessive habit of mind that Dr Arnold had himself engendered.'⁷⁹

To a certain extent, Kingsmill justifiably felt that the *Letters to Clough*, with their mysterious 'pair of blue eyes' passage, had vindicated his theory that Marguerite had, in fact, been a real person, but Lowry's overall approach only served to reinforce his belief that:

The orthodox partisans of Matthew Arnold, who are all drawn from that academic type which mistakes a weak stomach for a fine palate, resent as bad taste the suggestion that Arnold was both oppressed and warped by his father's influence.

Understandably angered by the way in which the Arnold family had accommodated the American critic only four years after having denied Kingsmill himself access to the letters, he insinuated that, like George Russell before him, 'Professor Lowry, perhaps hampered by the necessity of keeping his followers in good humour . . . is very bitter about critics of Dr Arnold.' In concluding, Kingsmill said that 'to regret that the influence of an . . . unimaginative Evangelical on a sensitive poetic spirit' -- clearly a reference to the thesis of his own book -- 'does not necessarily imply a savage antinomianism.' In fact, Arnold's own recognition of himself as 'a whorson bullrush' in Lowry's edition, if nothing else, confirmed to Kingsmill the image of a son's 'half-hearted rebellion against his father.'⁸⁰ In Kingsmill's view, Lowry's commentary had done nothing more than reinforce Russell's moral bias and was, in the face of the evidence, similarly guilty of succumbing to the pressure of family concerns. If Kingsmill had been given access to the Clough correspondence in 1927, his presentation of it, we must surely imagine, would have been quite different. As it was, Lowry's introduction represented, to him, just another example of the way in which 'respectable' society had closed ranks around a highly misunderstood individual who had himself been destroyed by that very society.

But that was not the end of the matter, and in an article that appeared two months later, Lowry was credited with having 'done something to fill the gap' in information about Arnold's early life. Its author, Alan Harris, also used the letters to suggest that Arnold was not so old-fashioned and unaesthetic as Kingsmill's portrait had suggested, having 'shed his orthodox beliefs with few of the usual struggles.' Nor had Arnold conformed so readily with Dr Arnold's piety, said Harris, since, 'as an undergraduate he could recommend his father's sermons to a High Church friend, while he himself went off to St Mary's to hear Newman purely for the sensation.' Harris's most direct refutation of Kingsmill, however, was on the 'dawnism' issue. While he recognized traces of this tendency in Arnold, he quite deliberately separated Arnold from the rather extreme claims made for him by George Russell and, less sympathetically, by Kingsmill himself: 'Social conscience was part of the Arnold tradition (the Christian Socialist movement owed a good deal to Dr Arnold), nor was Matthew without it; but he never let it get the better of him.'

Rachel, George Sand, and Marguerite were also recruited by Harris, not to contrast the older Arnold with the youthful romantic, but merely to show how 'Arnold's appreciation of good living . . . contrasts with the almost inhuman asceticism of Clough.'⁸¹

Kingsmill's final brush with academe on the Arnold question occurred two years later with the publication of Iris Esther Sells' *Matthew Arnold and France*, an account of Arnold's early poetic years that was largely influenced by Lowry's *Letters to Clough* and Harris's article. In yet another attempt to rescue the reputation of Dr Arnold, Sells chose to dwell on the father's distinctly un-Victorian enthusiasm for European thought. Despite the fact that he regarded it as 'a real moral weakness in himself,' the Doctor's 'passionate preference for the Continent' caused him continually to return, 'thoroughly enjoying his visits.' At a time when European ideals were regarded as distasteful in England, 'it is noteworthy,' said Sells, 'that Dr Arnold maintained his 'great admiration for . . . French culture . . . in marked opposition to the taste of his day.' Even speculating that the Arnold family, as a whole, had shared Matthew's interest in the actress Rachel, Sells endeavoured to show how Dr Arnold, rather than stifling the intellectual growth of the boys at Rugby, actually enhanced it by dispelling a native provincialism through the introduction of foreign ideas. While she could not deny that the later Matthew Arnold 'seems to withdraw more and more from his early romantic interests . . . his attitude to French culture,' claimed Sells, 'remained unchanged.' Contrary to Kingsmill's image of an individual progressively severing himself from his romantic origins, Sells concluded by claiming that 'in the second part of Matthew Arnold's career, we shall find the influences of the Continent operating as strongly as ever.'⁸² Characteristically scathing, Kingsmill responded by implying that, no matter how distasteful they had found it, after the publication of the *Letters to Clough*, weak-stomached academics could no longer deny his claim for the actuality of the Marguerite episode. 'Earlier attempts to show that Marguerite was a real person,' sneered Kingsmill in a terse review of *Matthew Arnold and France*, 'have met with stout resistance, especially in academic circles, but Mrs Sells has made Marguerite safe for North Oxford by picturing her as an aristocratic French maiden.'⁸³

Kingsmill's approach was never to be taken seriously by academics who regarded its

tone as too personal and its author little more than a less skilful imitator of Strachey, the low regard for him among critics being acutely apparent from the conspicuous lack of references to him in studies since. His centrality to the ongoing debate on Arnold's divided nature, however, especially in terms of attitudes that were soon to follow, suggests that the relative obscurity of Kingsmill's place is out of proportion to his importance in modern Arnold criticism. In an attempt to find a solution to his own personal situation, he had produced a book which may be regarded as perhaps the first truly modern reading of Arnold. It is hard to believe, for example, that Auden's poem on Arnold was not inspired by Kingsmill's book.⁸⁴ For all its shortcomings, Kingsmill's portrait of a divided Arnold was not merely a poor imitation of *Eminent Victorians* but an important link between Saintsbury and the response to academic Arnoldism that was to find more specific articulation in the early essays of T.S. Eliot.

Notes

- ¹Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1872-1914* (London, 1967), 70-71.
- ²André Maurois, *Poets and Prophets*, translated by Hamish Miles (London, 1936), 169.
- ³Richard D. Altick, *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America* (New York, 1969), 282. Altick's chapter on 'The Strachey Revolution' [281-300] provides an excellent introduction to the influence of Strachey on English biography.
- ⁴Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (London, 1918), viii.
- ⁵S.P. Rosenbaum, *Victorian Bloomsbury: An Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group* (London, 1987), 28-30.
- ⁶Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury Group* (Harmondsworth, 1971), 53.
- ⁷The formulae of Holroyd and Rosenbaum, after all, may be a little too neat. It could, of course, be claimed that the Bloomsbury ethos (if indeed such a thing existed) was, by its nature, not opposed to social reform: the work of Maynard Keynes in economics and Leonard Woolf in politics clearly suggested an interest in extra-aesthetic problems. That the phenomenon we now call Bloomsbury stood for no unified intellectual position, but only a group of individuals who, while sharing many ideas, also represented a diversity of views, is now widely recognized. Holroyd's claim that the group was 'the culmination . . . of the aesthetic movement' would, presumably, be truer in the cases of Roger Fry and Clive Bell, for instance, than Keynes and Leonard Woolf.
- ⁸Lytton Strachey, *Characters and Commentaries* (London, 1933), 189.
- ⁹Charles Richard Sanders, *Lytton Strachey: His Mind and His Art* (London, 1957), 175, 173.
- ¹⁰For favourable comments by Lytton Strachey on Arnold's poetry see: 'The Praise of Shakespeare,' *Spectator*, 92 (June 4, 1904), 882; 'Mr Sidney Lee on Shakespeare,' *Spectator*, 97 (December 1, 1906), 887-888.
- ¹¹Strachey, *Characters and Commentaries*, 188.
- ¹²Strachey, *Characters and Commentaries*, 191.
- ¹³Lytton Strachey, 'L'Art Administratif,' *Spectator* (December 28, 1907), 1093-4.
- ¹⁴Strachey, *Characters and Commentaries*, 192.
- ¹⁵Strachey, *Characters and Commentaries*, 194.
- ¹⁶The conclusion to 'A Victorian Critic' expressed this in the most sardonic of terms: 'Unfortunately, he mistook his vocation. He might, no doubt, if he had chosen, have done some excellent and lasting work upon the movements of glaciers or the fertilisation of plants or have been quite a satisfactory collector in an up-country district in India. But no; he *would* be a critic.' [Strachey, *Characters and Commentaries*, 194].
- ¹⁷Strachey, *Characters and Commentaries*, 189-90.
- ¹⁸Sanders, *Lytton Strachey*, 176.
- ¹⁹Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, (London, 1918), 194.
- ²⁰It was Fitzjames Stephen's thesis . . . of Papa's being a narrow bustling fanatic,' Arnold had told his mother, 'which moved me first to write the poem.' [*The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, edited by Howard Foster Lowry (London, 1932), 164]. Matthew's running battle with Leslie Stephen must also have contributed to the Bloomsbury aversion to the Arnolds. Dover Wilson, remarking on Leslie Stephen's attack on 'the Arnold tradition,' asked: 'What is Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* but a series of variations on that theme. Indeed, the more we read Stephen, the clearer grows our appreciation of Strachey's debt to him.' [John Dover Wilson, *Leslie Stephen and Matthew Arnold as Critics of Wordsworth* (Cambridge, 1939), 19].
- ²¹To write a memorial of Dr Arnold was no easy task, even with the necessary poetic impetus; for though the poet was in full sympathy with the moral fervour of his father, he lacked the religious conviction which was its source. He could hardly write of Dr Arnold and omit all reference to his Christian faith; therefore the poet fell inevitably into the traditional language of Christianity, and we read with a certain surprise the words of the author of 'Dover Beach' and the Chartreuse stanzas about the saving of souls, the journey to the City of God, and the future life.' [C.B. Tinker and H.F. Lowry, *The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1940), 240-241].
- ²²Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 204.
- ²³Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 168.
- ²⁴Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 187-188.
- ²⁵Edmund Gosse, *More Books on the Table* (London, 1923), 381.

²⁶Harold Nicolson, in discussing 'the important contribution made to twentieth-century biography by Mr Lytton Strachey and Sir Edmund Gosse,' regarded Gosse's autobiography as the most important immediate predecessor of *Eminent Victorians*, saying that, in 1907, the public was not prepared for 'the shock occasioned by *Father and Son*.' [Harold Nicolson, *The Development of English Biography* (London, 1927), 145]. Gosse's biographer also notes the connection between Gosse and Strachey, saying that 'in a short span, he had . . . paved the way for Strachey.' [Ann Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape 1849-1928* (Oxford, 1985), 410].

²⁷Gosse was born in 1849, only four years before George Russell.

²⁸'We live too close to him, and in an intellectual atmosphere of which he is too much a component part, to be certain how far his beautiful ironic prose-writing will have a durable influence.' [Edmund Gosse and Richard Garnett, *English Literature: An Illustrated Record*, volume 4 (London, 1903), 308].

²⁹Gosse, *English Literature*, 307.

³⁰Gosse, *More Books on the Table*, 381-382.

³¹Gosse, *More Books on the Table*, 383-384.

³²'To speak of . . . the controversialist of *On Translating Homer* . . . sparkling harlequin of *Friendship's Garland* [and] sincere and earnest philosopher of *Culture and Anarchy* . . . at all in so rapid a survey as this seems futile.' [Gosse, *More Books on the Table*, 385]. It is interesting to note that, on one occasion, Gosse was responsible for making public several letters from Arnold to Swinburne in order 'to dispel the legend of his "jealousy" and "want of appreciation."' It is reasonable to assume that this was an attempt by Gosse to counter the image consciously held by aesthetes, that of Arnold as someone incapable of recognizing the work of 'a master of lyric beauty.' [Edmund Gosse, 'Matthew Arnold and Swinburne,' *Times Literary Supplement* (August 12, 1920), 517].

³³Edmund Gosse, *Some Diversions of a Man of Letters* (London, 1919), 313.

³⁴The changes that Gosse's reputation underwent owed much to his place as a transitional figure. Ever since John Churton Collins had publically embarrassed him by pointing out numerous errors in his scholarship, Gosse's respect as a writer had been flagging. [For an account of the Collins affair and its effect on Gosse's reputation, see Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 276-97]. In the 1890s, Gosse had been highly regarded by aesthetes like Richard Le Gallienne and Max Beerbohm who, according to Thwaite, had seen him as an 'elder statesman.' By the turn of the century, however, haunted by the Collins affair, he was beginning to be regarded as a figure of the past. The publication of *Father and Son* in 1907, however, marked the watershed in Gosse's career and won him immediate acclaim with young iconoclasts who readily identified with his own anxieties as an heir of the Victorian age. According to Hilary Bacon, 'from this point on, Gosse's life and career began to shine again.' [*Father and Son*, edited by Hilary Bacon (London, 1984), p.vii]. It is hardly surprising, then, that before *Father and Son* Strachey appears to have cared little for Gosse, regarding him as a remnant of the supercilious age in criticism. On hearing Gosse lecture in 1900, for example, Strachey remarked, 'Law! He *did* think himself clever,' and thought him rude to Virginia Woolf's cousin. After 1907, however, a friendship soon developed between the two writers, resulting in Gosse's 1927 dedication of *Leaves and Fruit* to Strachey 'with affectionate admiration.' At Gosse's death, Strachey was to defend him to Virginia Woolf, who had disliked Gosse on account of his lack of respect for her father, accusing her of being 'narrow-minded about Gosse.' [Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 410, 499].

³⁵Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays*, volume 4 (London, 1967), 83.

³⁶At the lowest ebb in Gosse's career, Arnold had refused to fuel his critics' fire by siding with Churton Collins. [See *Letters from Matthew Arnold to John Churton Collins* (London, 1910), 6]. Shortly before his death, Arnold had sent Gosse a copy of the first, and at that time only, edition of *Alaric at Rome*, even by then an extremely rare item. [See E.H.M. Cox, *The Library of Edmund Gosse: Being a Descriptive and Bibliographical Catalogue of a Portion of His Collection* (London, 1924), 30]. Gosse's biographer remarks on his relationship with Arnold, noting how Arnold had provided a reference for Gosse's application for the Clark Lectureship: 'In March 1883 Gosse started rallying support for his candidature. He decided to ask Matthew Arnold, whom he knew only slightly but was to describe as "the prophet whom we loved and almost worshipped." They had met at dinner tables in London a few times. The previous year, Gosse had sent him, as was his wont with people he wanted to cultivate, a warm comment on an Arnold poem in one of the periodicals. Arnold had replied at length though "buried under examination papers" . . . a few months later, Arnold wrote again at length to thank Gosse for his life of Gray. And in 1883, he was happy to recommend Gosse to the Masters and Fellows of Trinity College as their first Clark Lecturer.' [Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 236-7].

³⁷Gosse, *More Books on the Table*, 382.

³⁸Gosse, 'The Custom of Biography,' *Anglo-Saxon Review*, 8 (March, 1901) 195-208.

- 39^{As I understand he was preparing to do when he died, the lives of Browning, Matthew Arnold, and General Booth.} [Guy Boas, Lytton Strachey, *English Association Pamphlet*, 93 (November, 1935), 8].
- 40^{*Elizabeth and Essex* utterly prostrated Lytton . . . He was to live almost four years more, but over much of this final period the pulses of creative work seemed to have grown feeble . . . After *Elizabeth and Essex* he published only four new essays.} [Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury Group*, 963].
- 41^{In the book in which he traced his own development as a biographer, Kingsmill spoke candidly about the influence of Strachey on his generation: 'No one who read *Eminent Victorians* on its appearance was able, even if he disliked it, to ignore the change of attitude which it initiated.'} Kingsmill, who had first come across the book in a German prison camp, remembered his first encounter with *Eminent Victorians*: 'That I assumed the title was unironic illuminates the state into which biography had fallen: and the immediate impression the brevity, coherence, and verisimilitude of the book made on me suggests the indebtedness to Lytton Strachey of everyone who has written biography within the last thirty years.' [Hugh Kingsmill, *The Progress of a Biographer* (London, 1949), 7]. Kingsmill wrote what might be regarded as his own *Eminent Victorians* in the form of a book called *After Puritanism 1850-1900* (London, 1929), whose portraits of Dean Farrar, Samuel Butler, W.T. Stead, and Frank Harris were also written 'to illustrate the abnormal extremes produced by the Victorian atmosphere.' [Kingsmill quoted in Richard Ingrams, *God's Apology: A Chronicle of Three Friends* (London, 1977), 81].
- 42^{Altick, *Lives and Letters*, 293; Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 139. David DeLaura also believes that, 'in elaborating the . . . simple view that Thomas Arnold was the villain of Matthew Arnold's career,' Kingsmill was propagating 'a view probably picked up from Lytton Strachey.'} [David DeLaura, ed., *Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research* (New York, 1973), 258].
- 43^{Gosse's review provides a tangible link between Strachey's book and the genesis of Kingsmill's *Matthew Arnold*. Not only did he, too, begin by vindicating Strachey's biographical method, but Gosse made much of the importance of the mysterious Marguerite to Arnold's early life and development, the crucial event around which Kingsmill's study revolves.}
- 44^{Michael Holroyd, *Hugh Kingsmill: A Critical Biography* (London, 1964), 113.}
- 45^{Gosse, 'The Custom of Biography,' 195-208.}
- 46^{David Novarr, *The Lines of Life: Theories of Biography 1880-1970* (West Lafayette, 1986), 28.}
- 47^{Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 9-10.}
- 48^{Lytton Strachey, Review of Guglielmo Ferrero's *Greatness and Decline of Rome*, *Spectator* (January 2, 1909), 20-21.}
- 49^{Kingsmill, *Progress of a Biographer*, 14.}
- 50^{Holroyd, *Hugh Kingsmill*, 99. Malcolm Muggeridge, later a close friend of Kingsmill, said that 'he felt he had too much in common with Arnold, since he was inclined to equate Dr Arnold with Sir Henry Lunn, and to see Matt (as he always called him) as a fellow victim of excessive parental authority.'} [Hesketh Pearson & Malcolm Muggeridge, *About Kingsmill* (London, 1951), 88].
- 51^{Hugh Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1928), xiii.}
- 52^{By the 1920s Sir Henry's business acumen had earned him such financial success that he could afford to give his son a generously paid post with his European tourist agency. Throughout his life, his parents' religious dogmatism and economic orthodoxy had sat uneasily on Kingsmill but the European post had more than adequately provided the means by which he could support his wife and child with a minimum of distraction while launching a writing career. In the year in which he wrote *Matthew Arnold*, however, Kingsmill evoked parental displeasure that was to lead to expulsion from his father's company in the following spring. After his wife left Switzerland in 1927 Kingsmill, having fallen passionately in love with a woman at Wengen, immediately notified his wife that he wanted a divorce. Upon hearing of his son's actions, Sir Henry Lunn informed him that, if he were to go through with the legal proceedings, his son would lose his job; owing to the travel agency's connection with the Free Church Touring Guild, he was told, as a divorced man he would not be of any use to the company. After a series of heated exchanges between father and son Kingsmill eventually followed through with his plans resulting in not only the forfeiture of his family's good faith but also his rather substantial salary. This was the decisive moment in Kingsmill's life. Never before had he cause to worry about his own social and financial standing but all this he sacrificed for the captivating love of a woman. In one grand gesture he had affirmed his romantic individuality in the face of a lifetime of respectability and social convention. The nonconformist piety that surrounded the Lunn household took a severe battering that summer and the family responded in the only way they knew how: by cutting out the offending part and severing their ties with him completely. There must have been a touch of quiet satisfaction for Sir Henry when, shortly afterwards, his son's illicit partner rejected him in favour of a wealthy guardian. [For accounts of the personal circumstances surrounding the}

writing of Kingsmill's *Matthew Arnold*, see Ingrams, *God's Apology*, 70-81; and Holroyd, *Hugh Kingsmill*, 95-105].

⁵³Pearson, *About Kingsmill*, 68.

⁵⁴Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 1,3.

⁵⁵Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 10.

⁵⁶Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 47,14.

⁵⁷In the light of the fact that at Harrow 'he was not so happy, being wholly inept at the various sports which formed so intensive a part of public school life,' the conclusion to Strachey's 'Dr. Arnold' must have struck a familiar chord with Kingsmill: 'Upon these two poles our public schools have turned for so long . . . the worship of athletics and the worship of good form.' [Holroyd, *Hugh Kingsmill*, 36; Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 187].

⁵⁸Before this juxtaposition of Russell and Arthur, Kingsmill had provided a sardonic reading of the 'Idylls' in which the fictional character was shown to be dedicated to a perverse sense of duty. [Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 5-12].

⁵⁹To an article in which George Orwell called Kingsmill an exemplar of 'Neo-Toryism,' he replied: 'I do not wish to pretend I am editing a literary supplement in a Tory review by chance, or, that my sympathies are equally divided between the Right and the Left. On the Right there is room for those who believe that the individual is the only absolute unit, and that all larger units are temporal and transient groupings.' [George Orwell, 'Notes on Nationalism,' *Polemic*, 1 (January, 1946), 41; Kingsmill, *Progress of a Biographer*, 173].

⁶⁰Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 15.

⁶¹Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 33, 51.

⁶²Gosse remarked that the lack of personal data had made it almost impossible to trace Arnold's development during those years, especially in regard to the mysterious Marguerite: 'Matthew Arnold travelled frequently in his youth, and in Switzerland the shadowy Marguerite becomes *Marguerite Revisited*. But who was she, and what were the young poet's relations with her?' [Gosse, *More Books on the Table*, 383]. On trying to acquire documents pertaining to Arnold's early life from surviving relatives and being informed that while 'Dr Arnold's correspondence had been religiously preserved,' none of his son's letters from this period remained, Kingsmill was led to conclude that 'the destruction of Matthew's correspondence was not an accidental by-product of spring cleaning.' [Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 59].

⁶³Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 63, 69.

⁶⁴Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 78.

⁶⁵Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 170.

⁶⁶Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 203, 222, 224, 264.

⁶⁷Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 143, 189, 234.

⁶⁸Kingsmill, *The Poisoned Crown* (London, 1944), 15.

⁶⁹In an interesting assessment of Orage's career some years later, Kingsmill attacked the mixture of politics and aesthetics that he saw manifest in 'his bent . . . towards working on the will through rhetoric, not on the spirit through the imagination.' Kingsmill went on to lament that fact that 'between these two extremes he passed his life.' [Hugh Kingsmill, 'Literary Notes,' *English Review*, 61 (December, 1935), 745, 746].

⁷⁰Kingsmill, *Matthew Arnold*, 237, 190.

⁷¹Kingsmill, *The Poisoned Crown*, 7.

⁷²Kingsmill, *The Progress of a Biographer*, 8, 3, 4.

⁷³See William Gerhardi, 'Matthew Arnold -- and a Few Others,' *Fortnightly Review*, 131 (March, 1929), 341-354.

⁷⁴Anonymous review, 'Matthew Arnold,' *New Statesman*, 32 (November 3, 1928), v-vi. Another dismissive review came from the *Bookman*, in which its writer said that Kingsmill had 'nothing particular to say and says it very badly.' His Marguerite theory, it went on, was 'supported by quotations from which no intelligent reader could draw any such conclusions.' It short, it finished, 'it is difficult to imagine how this book came to be either written or published.' [R. Ellis Roberts, 'The Brownings and Arnold,' *Bookman*, 75 (December, 1928), 182-183].

⁷⁵See Hugh Kingsmill's 'Matthew Arnold,' *New Statesman*, 32 (November 10, 1928), 152.

⁷⁶'The obvious criticism,' wrote Pearson, 'is that as an exposition of Kingsmill it contains too much Matt and as an exposition of Matt contains too much Kingsmill You have not made me in the least

interested in Matt, but you make me extremely interested in Kingsmill: I should really like to meet the latter. Please phone me and fix up a meeting.' [Quoted in Ingrams, *God's Apology*, 78-79].

⁷⁷Boas, however, was a little more tolerant than most of Kingsmill's subjective method which he traced back to Arnold himself: 'He reads his author in such a way to develop himself That is to say he enjoys to the full the twentieth-century passion for self-expression. And whom have we to thank for this freedom? Nobody more than Matthew Arnold, who now, in this case, becomes its victim.' [F.S. Boas, 'The Nineteenth Century and After,' *Year's Work in English Studies*, 9 (Oxford, 1930), 327].

⁷⁸E.K. Chambers, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 18 (London, 1932), 3. Another academic response to Strachey had appeared in the same year as Kingsmill's *Matthew Arnold*. In writing his *Dr Arnold of Rugby*, Arnold Whitridge, Matthew Arnold's grandson, 'had access to unpublished papers in the possession of the Arnold family at Fox How.' Citing the diversity of the headmaster's influence, Whitridge said that 'it is no easy task to take the measure of a man who could win the devotion . . . of a poet and a man of the world like Matthew Arnold . . . and who although only a schoolmaster was eminent enough to excite the irony of Mr Lytton Strachey.' [Arnold Whitridge, *Dr Arnold of Rugby* (London, 1928), ix, 1].

⁷⁹*Letters to Clough*, 3-4, 11. According to Arthur Kyle Davis, the effect of the *Letters to Clough* was to present another side of Arnold that the cautious Russell had neglected: 'Unquestionably the combination of lifeliness and youthful profundity found in Arnold's letters to Clough did much to enhance Arnold's reputation as a letter writer, and . . . presented a new world of Arnold letters to redress the balance of the older world of Russell and his cautiously edited family letters.' [Arthur Kyle Davis, *Matthew Arnold's Letters: A Descriptive Checklist* (Charlottesville, 1968), xxi].

⁸⁰Hugh Kingsmill, review of *Letters of Arnold to Clough*, *English Review*, 56 (February, 1933), 227-230.

⁸¹Alan Harris, 'Matthew Arnold: The Unknown Years,' *Nineteenth Century and After*, 113 (April, 1933), 500, 501, 503.

⁸²Iris Esther Sells, *Matthew Arnold and France: The Poet* (Cambridge, 1935), 4, 5-6, 7, 255-256.

⁸³Hugh Kingsmill, 'Literary Notes,' *English Review*, 60 (April, 1935), 489.

⁸⁴While recognizing the 'mischief' done by Kingsmill's portrayal of Dr Arnold, David DeLaura admits that the biography 'is probably too much neglected by students of Arnold for its unrelentingly harsh tone Kingsmill anticipates recent judgments in speaking of Arnold's "divided impulses."' [DeLaura, ed., *Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research*, 258].

CHAPTER SEVEN

T.S. Eliot and the Revaluation of the Arnoldian Legacy

The aesthetic-moral problem that was evident throughout Arnold's work and permeated commentaries during the half century after his death found its most influential articulation and, at the same time, its most complex embodiment in the criticism of T.S. Eliot. In the prose of Eliot, more than anywhere else in the criticism of the period, we see an examination of the relationship between art and ethics with regard to the influence of Arnold. For all of Eliot's antagonism, it is, ironically, in his own work that we see the re-enactment of the problems facing a poet-critic who comes to be similarly engaged in cultural and theological debate. Eliot's evolution, from poet-critic to religious and social theorist, is itself strikingly similar to Arnold's own; for this reason, Eliot's critique touches every aspect of his own development, from the first literary pieces in *The Sacred Wood* (1920) to the social issues addressed in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948).

Much has been written about Eliot and Arnold, and their relationship is far too complex to deal with comprehensively in one chapter. This, however, is not meant to be so much an exposition of Eliot's position on Arnold as an examination of Eliot's response in the context of the divided Arnoldian tradition as it was evident in the work of his contemporaries. Although Eliot's image of Arnold took three full decades to unfold, I believe it is possible to read Eliot's Arnold as a direct result of the later critic's own uncertain place within the aesthetic and social Arnoldian traditions that had first been articulated by Saintsbury and Russell. In his response to liberal humanism especially it is helpful to remember that Eliot's critical 'moment' begins less than a decade after *Howards End* and simultaneous with the final years of Orage's *New Age*, and that the Arnoldian cultural synthesis, to which both of these writers gave voice, was part of the English critical legacy that Eliot took it upon himself to confront. That Eliot's Arnold was not only a reaction against the writer himself, but also a reaction against the effect that he felt certain Arnoldian precepts were having on his contemporaries, is evident throughout Eliot's

treatment. Even admitting at one stage that he was more interested in Arnold's posthumous influence than his nineteenth century reputation, Eliot remarked that 'the revival of Arnold in our own time . . . is a very different thing from the influence he exerted in his own time.'¹ Consequently, in his reaction to the contemporary Arnoldian influence Eliot's comments might be said to act as a useful gauge of the state of Arnoldism between the twenties and forties. Indeed it is only against this background that his critical mission can be fully understood.

Eliot's evaluation of the Arnoldian legacy is all the more relevant since it was divided into phases which, thematically at least, bore a striking resemblance to Arnold's own development: in the early critical writings of the twenties, he sought to achieve a reevaluation of prevailing literary assumptions by subverting the Arnoldian definition of 'criticism;' throughout the thirties he attempted to reinstate the religious dogma which he felt Arnold had sought to replace with aesthetic values; and in the forties, Eliot concluded with what he perceived as the moral and social consequences of Arnoldian 'culture.'

The Function of Criticism

At best, Eliot's early critical relationship with Arnold was ambiguous. Since Arnold was his chief critical predecessor, Eliot had respect for the place that he still held in the modern world while, at the same, believing that many of the shortcomings of his own generation were the legacies of fundamental mistakes made by Arnold. His own awareness of this ambiguity is attested to in the very title of his first collection of essays, *The Sacred Wood*. The use of Sir James Frazer's account of the tribal myth of the 'King of the Wood' is revealing, especially if we take it as an introduction to Eliot's treatment of Arnold:

In the sacred grove there grew a certain tree round which at any time of the day, and probably far into the night, a grim figure might be seen to prowl. In his hand he carried a drawn sword, and he kept peering warily about him as if at every instant he expected to be set upon by an enemy. He was a priest and a murderer; and the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead. Such was the rule of the sanctuary. A candidate for the priesthood could only succeed to office by slaying the priest, and having slain him, he retained the office till he was himself slain by the stronger and craftier.²

Of primary importance to the young Eliot was this concept of 'the stronger and craftier' critic, an emphasis for which he owed much to the influence of his mentor Ezra Pound. Eliot knew that if he was to provide a sufficient challenge to Arnold, by common consent the father of English criticism, it would not be simply by putting forward an alternative point of view. The Arnoldian influence so permeated English letters that Eliot knew only by a more rigorous and shrewd approach could it be superseded. One comment, made by Eliot in a letter discussing his aim in *The Sacred Wood*, is revealing and helps to explain something of this ambiguous relationship: 'I am using Arnold a little as a stalking horse,' he says, 'or as a cloak of invisibility-respectability to protect me from the elderly. I wanted him as a scarecrow with a real gun under his arm.' His purpose, in other words, is two-fold: first, by invoking Arnold or Arnoldian language, he feels he will gain credence with established critics, themselves largely sympathetic with Arnold; second, he intends to use Arnold (or a likeness of Arnold) to interrogate the critical establishment, an aim implicit in his later comment that if he were still alive, Arnold would have all of his work to do over again. And an earlier comment in this same letter, that 'Arnold is tarred with his own brush,' seems to suggest that Eliot is confident in his ability to undermine what he regards as the Arnoldian tradition from the mouth of Arnold himself.³

As Ian Gregor observes, 'to distinguish himself from Arnold became a way of characterising the revolution in taste which he was concerned to bring about.'⁴ Eliot took it upon himself as a key part of his campaign for critical reform to bring into sharp focus many of the ideas and phrases that among older critics had become inseparably linked with Arnold. In this respect, it is particularly relevant that Eliot's arrival at Oxford coincided with the growth in the university study of English that occurred in the second decade of this century. Thanks to the influence of a whole generation of critics whose vocabularies and methods had developed in the shadow of Arnold's influence, the academic study of English Literature might be said to have been largely conducted along Arnoldian lines. Both Pound and Eliot felt that literary scholarship in the University had become something vague and indeterminate and consequently took it upon themselves to combat the intellectual mediocrity that they felt had come to characterize English academic criticism. Literary

studies at the beginning of the twentieth century, Pound later recalled, 'was cumbrous and inefficient One was asked to remember what some critic (deceased) had said, scarcely to consider whether his views were still valid.'⁵ There is little doubt that academics and reviewers were heavily influenced by Arnold, so that 'The Function of Criticism' and 'The Study of Poetry' had become seminal documents, founding charters for this young discipline which had come to rely on the Arnoldian synthesis of aesthetics and morality to justify its place in the curriculum. In his campaign for the foundation of English Studies at Oxford, John Churton Collins had been the first to recruit Arnold in support of the new discipline. Rather than being a mere aesthetic trifler, Collins had argued, the ideal teacher would, in true Arnoldian style, 'see in all poetry . . . a criticism of life.'⁶ Another heir of the Arnoldian legacy and spokesman for the moral influence of English Literature was Arthur Quiller-Couch who, in his Inaugural Address at the University of Cambridge, expressed the need for a concept like Arnoldian 'culture' and spoke of literature as 'a nurse of noble natures,' stating that 'right reading makes a full man . . . better.'⁷ Such a high regard for literature was by no means unique and it is certain that, as a young student at Oxford, Eliot would have been surrounded by a whole generation of such Arnoldians, something of which he was acutely aware and which is shown in his later comment about the status of Arnold among academics at the turn of the century:

The critical method of Arnold, the assumptions of Arnold, remained valid for the rest of his century. In quite diverse developments, it is the criticism of Arnold that sets the tone: Walter Pater, Arthur Symonds, Addington Symonds, Leslie Stephen, F.W.H. Myers, George Saintsbury -- all the more eminent critical names of the time bear witness to it.⁸

Indeed, Eliot's famous comment on Arnold being less of a critic than a 'propagandist for criticism' takes on full significance in the context of a discipline whose territory and very *raison d'être* it owed largely to the pamphleteering of Arnold fifty years before. But Arnold had not merely been credited with earning for literature a place in the university curriculum: his claim for the moral value of poetry was to be transformed, by younger critics, into a claim for the *magister vitæ* status of literary studies itself. 'Arnold's insistence upon order in poetry according to a moral valuation was,' said Eliot, 'for better or worse, of the first importance of his age.' Taking to task the 'criticism of life' equation, the front line of

Eliot's attack on Arnold and his successors was that they 'lacked mental discipline, the passion for exactness in the use of words and for the continuity of reasoning, which distinguishes the philosopher.'⁹ The talismanic status that Arnoldian language had gained since his death contributed towards making it a prime target for Eliot who considered the invocation of Arnoldian concepts like 'criticism' and 'culture,' as indeed for many English Literature professors they had become, an excuse for an uncritical dilettantism. To a certain extent, Pound and Eliot were correct in their assumption that in their enthusiasm to adopt ambiguous Arnoldian terminology many were attempting to justify their own lack of theoretic justification. In Arnold it had been possible to recruit an ally in the fight against a scientifically oriented liberal education. In the battle against philology, the anti-scientific bent in Arnoldian criticism was to find as much favour as the claims that had been made for the future of poetry and its potential as a *magister vitae*. In an increasingly scientific environment, Eliot and a number of other critics of the younger generation came to believe that the only way in which literary criticism could compete with science was to become itself more specialized. In opposition to the widespread strategy of attempting to establish the respectability of English Literature as a discipline by pitting it against scientific values and dwelling on its ability to 'humanize,' Eliot proposed that only by careful thought and linguistic precision could English criticism recover from the malaise caused by the too easy acceptance of its own lack of theoretic direction. How far he fulfilled these ends is, of course, open to question; that he wished to establish criticism as an autonomous, almost pseudo-scientific, discipline is certain. And crucial to this programme was the overthrow of the detrimental Arnoldian influence that had, as far as Eliot was concerned, helped prop up a decadent criticism.

Despite his later disclaimer that *The Sacred Wood* was 'a document of its time,' the task set out in that book is crucial to understanding much that the later Eliot came to hold regarding Arnold. In his introduction Eliot made his own view of the Arnold canon plain:

In a society in which the arts were seriously studied, in which the art of writing was respected, Arnold might have become a critic. How astonishing it would be, if a man like Arnold had concerned himself with the art of the novel, had compared Thackeray with Flaubert, had analysed the works of Dickens In *Culture and Anarchy*, in *Literature and Dogma*, Arnold was not occupied so much in establishing a criticism as in attacking

the uncritical. The difference is that while in constructive work something can be done, destructive work must incessantly be repeated; and furthermore Arnold, in his destruction, went for game outside of the literary preserve altogether, much of it political game untouched and inviolable by ideas. This activity of Arnold's we must regret; it might perhaps have been carried on as effectively, if not quite so neatly, by some disciple (had there been one) in an editorial position on a newspaper. Arnold is not to be blamed: he wasted his strength, as men of superior ability sometimes do, because he saw something to be done and no one else to do it. The temptation, to any man who is interested in ideas and primarily in literature, to put literature into the corner until he has cleaned up the whole country first, is almost irresistible.¹⁰

As Eliot's first word on Arnold, this sounds like little more than a reiteration of Saintsbury. Indeed, Eliot's condemnation sprang from the same basic belief in literary criticism as a specialist pursuit, presupposing the exclusivity of aesthetic discourse. For this reason, Eliot's model critic had more in common with Arnold of the 1853 Preface, a poet writing for other poets, than the more judicial 1865 critic; while Eliot's criticism of his predecessor was almost always negative, there was nevertheless much that they shared in common.

Eliot's impersonal theory, with its call for the sublimation of personality to the artistic object, harked back to Arnold's reactionary desire to 'have so much respect for our art as to prefer it to ourselves.'¹¹ The essay on 'Hamlet and His Problems,' for instance, was almost a restatement of his predecessor's rationale for the exclusion of 'Empedocles' from the 1853 edition. Arnold's transformation of Empedocles into a paradigm for the inner confusion that he felt characterized the modern condition, where 'suffering finds no vent in action,' was reenacted in Eliot's Hamlet who experienced 'a feeling which he cannot understand and it therefore remains to poison his life and obstruct action.'¹² The 'objective correlative,' which Eliot defined as 'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events,' bringing relief to this otherwise confused matrix of emotions, was similar, too, to Arnold's call for noble actions which, if employed by the artist, would banish 'all feelings of contradiction.' It was therefore the objective Arnold, that side of him which constantly brought into question the romantic personality, with whom Eliot shared the most affinity in 1920. This was only a partial reading of Arnold, though. Whereas the 1853 Preface, with its wholesale dismissal of 'the mind's dialogue with itself,' is generally considered as the product of a reactionary episode in the life of a critic who later came to reassert the importance of individuality, a blanket condemnation of a romanticism which 'leads its

disciples back upon themselves,' was to remain, throughout his critical career, a central tenet of Eliot's programme.

'Tradition and the Individual Talent' might be seen as Eliot's answer to the dilemma articulated by Arnold in 'The Strayed Reveller,' the tension between withdrawal into unified personality and the clashing life of objective existence in the external universe. Only by subverting Arnold's antagonistic categories of thought and emotion -- 'poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion' -- could Eliot 'escape from personality,' completely sidestepping the whole question of a potentially unified aesthetic individual. 'The point of view which I am struggling to attack,' he boldly admitted, 'is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul.' Eliot's outright dismissal of this aspect of the romantic heritage was something which the later Arnold, who struggled all his life with the conflict between individual poetic genius and public responsibility, could never do. Therefore, while Eliot could recruit Arnold in his battle against Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth, saying that 'his judgment of the Romantic Generation has not . . . ever been successfully controverted,' he also felt compelled to rebuke Arnold's tendency to define criticism 'merely in terms of the personal ideal.'¹³ Arnold's effort to hold the middle ground between a subjective romanticism and a formalized classicism was untenable for Eliot who felt that only through a displacement of its romantic heritage could a revolution in English letters take place.

It was the modern influence of Arnoldian language that primarily concerned Eliot, the ambiguous nature of which he blamed for having impaired much contemporary criticism by smuggling in this contraband romantic element. 'The phrases by which Arnold is best known,' he warned, 'may be inadequate . . . but they usually have some meaning.' Through this imprecision and lack of definition, Arnold was accused of 'using a language which constantly tempts the user away from dispassionate exposition.' Thus, rather than simply adopting Arnoldian terminology as many of his contemporaries were apt to do, Eliot began, with *The Sacred Wood*, to redefine it and make it his own. There was naturally some Arnoldian rhetoric in which he could find no virtue whatsoever: the definition of poetry as 'the most highly organised form of human activity' was patently false, said Eliot,

while 'a criticism of life' was simply 'a facile phrase.' Other Arnoldian terms he transformed in order to conform with his own belief in the autonomy of aesthetics: in a direct corruption of the phrase with which Arnold had described Sophocles, the self-possessed individual who could combine, at the same time, artistic ability with philosophical poise, Eliot said that the critic's business was 'to see literature steadily and to see it whole.' By substituting 'literature' for 'life,' Eliot was blatantly stripping the Arnoldian phrase of its ethical significance, thus reinforcing his own belief in an exclusively literary criticism at the expense of Arnold's moral connotation. Similarly, that side of Arnoldian criticism which Pater and Wilde had been credited with having taken to its personal limit, Eliot took to its opposite extreme:

The end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all accidents of personal emotion are removed; thus we aim to see the object as in itself it really is and find a meaning for the words of Arnold.¹⁴

Although he could continue to advocate that side of Arnoldism which claimed for criticism 'the Indian virtue of detachment,' the accompanying alternate need for the critic to 'let his own judgment pass along with it' was, for Eliot the objectivist, anathema.

In that one phrase, 'the object as in itself it really is,' Eliot's quarrel with two distinct but, in his opinion, equally damaging Arnoldian legacies was sharply defined. Since Arnold, he claimed, 'English criticism has followed two directions.' Eliot's reactions to Arnold were, by his own claims, dictated by the impulse to correct, on the one hand, critics like Arthur Symons and Oscar Wilde who had taken their Arnold with a pinch of Pater, and, on the other, dilettantes like George Russell and George Wyndham who, in their amateur yoking of society and art had, in his opinion, failed to see that 'literature and politics . . . have nothing to do with each other' and that 'the Arts insist that a man shall dispose of all that he has . . . and follow art alone.' As the solution to both, Eliot proposed 'to divert interest from the poet to the poetry.'¹⁵ Consequently, the autonomy of aesthetic discourse from all social, moral, and religious considerations was to become a familiar theme throughout his critical career and central to his repudiation of Arnold.

This maintained separation of art and morals was to have no small influence on perhaps Eliot's most significant critical undertaking, his editorship of *The Criterion*,

beginning in 1923. While his description of the ideal literary review in the first volume of the magazine might suggest, at first, a slight concession to individual morality and the critic's role in society -- 'a literary review should maintain the application, in literature, of principles which have their consequences also in politics and in private conduct' -- these principles, he was careful to maintain, should be applied 'without tolerating any confusion of the purposes of pure literature with the purposes of politics and ethics.' As the editor of a topical periodical, Eliot knew that he would have to grant space to extra-literary subject matter, making even more urgent the need to distinguish between art and ethics:

In the common mind all interests are confused, and each degraded by the confusion. And where they are confused, they cannot be related; in the common mind any specialized activity is conceived as something isolated from life, an odious task or a pastime of mandarins. To maintain the autonomy, and the disinterestedness, of every human activity, and to perceive it in relation to every other, require considerable discipline. It is the function of a literary review to maintain the autonomy of and disinterestedness of literature -- not to 'life,' as something contrasted to literature, but to all other activities which, together with literature, are the components of life.¹⁶

The undoing of Arnold's 'criticism of life' equation was therefore at the heart of Eliot's *Criterion* project. Hoping to avoid the confusion of aesthetics and morality, while at the same time disarming their relationship, Eliot's criticism was, at this stage, still experimental; and yet there were to occur certain tentative shifts over the next few years, suggesting that, despite his confident tone, Eliot was at this stage really unsure of his own ability to maintain the distinction between literary and other interests.

In 'The Function of Criticism,' one of Eliot's first *Criterion* essays, whose title alone suggested another attempt to challenge Arnold's place of supremacy among critics, there appears to be an early retreat, if ever so slight, from the claim for a highly specialized autonomous aesthetic. Coming just three years after *The Sacred Wood*, 'The Function of Criticism' served to qualify the artistic separatism that had dominated Eliot's original attack on the Arnoldian synthesis. 'No exponent of criticism,' said Eliot, 'has . . . ever made the preposterous assumption that criticism is an autotelic activity.' Art, he continued, undeniably serves 'ends beyond itself,' as does criticism. Still, he was unwilling to go as far as Arnold who had granted to the critic not only the role of arbiter of taste but also moral guardian. 'Of the general use of the word "criticism" . . . as Matthew Arnold uses it in his

essay,' said Eliot, 'I shall presently make several qualifications.' Again, Eliot's reworking of Arnold, which might appear at first in the guise of sympathy, turns out to be not only a severe qualification but even a redefinition: 'Criticism . . . appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste.'¹⁷ While he may have revised his belief in the 'autotelic' nature of aesthetic criticism, he was still unwilling to make ethical claims for it. Of primary concern to Eliot, once more, was not so much the content of the *Essays in Criticism* as the moral precedents he felt they had set for his fellow critics.

One of these critics was John Middleton Murry who, in his 1920 review of *The Sacred Wood*, had written his own 'Function of Criticism.' Although a contemporary of Eliot, Murry had consciously distanced himself from those 'younger men of letters actively concerned with the present condition of literary criticism.' Specifically singling out Eliot, Murry had rebuked him for his 'anxiety to assert the full autonomy of art' at the expense of the morality embodied in aesthetic values. In Aristotle, Coleridge, and Arnold, said Murry, 'there is a strict and mutually fertilising relation between the moral and the aesthetic values.' Resorting to a language which had Arnoldian overtones, Murry went on to assert that 'art is the consciousness of life' and that 'by regarding the work of art as a thing in itself' the critic 'will never forget . . . that the active ideal of art is indeed to see life steadily and see it whole.'¹⁸

Eliot's 'Function of Criticism' was, in part, a reply to Murry who for him stood as a prime example of the Arnoldian critic who had taken Arnold as the prophet of a new aesthetic philosophy based on the cultivation of the individual. True to form, Eliot employed a redefinition of Arnoldian language to deal with one of Arnold's own disciples. His invocation of the older critic in opposition to Murry's 'inner voice' serves to throw Eliot's strategy into relief: 'The inner voice, in fact, sounds remarkably like an old principle which has been formulated by an elder critic in the now familiar phrase of "doing as one likes."¹⁹ Less of a scarecrow than a straw man, Eliot's Arnold was being used to undermine an idea which had been central to Arnold's whole programme, for Murry's 'inner voice' -- the sane and cultivated personality, tempered and softened by classical reading and common sense -- was more akin to Arnold's own 'best self' than the

dissenting caprice that had been the subject of the 'doing as one likes' diatribe in *Culture and Anarchy*. This is perhaps Eliot at his most unfair and we would have to say that his use of Arnold to dismiss a writer with whom the older critic would have been in basic sympathy was, at best, mistaken, at worst, misleading.

Although Murry was a journalist and not primarily associated with the university study of English Literature, many of the views he held on the ameliorizing power of poetry were similar to those shared by his colleagues in the academy. One pillar of the British academic establishment who shared Murry's confidence in the ethical significance of literature was H.W. Garrod. As a member of Balliol, winner of the Newdigate, and an enthusiastic classicist, it was no accident that Garrod felt strongly the influence of Arnold. When, in 1923, he assumed the Poetry Chair that Arnold had done much to make respectable Garrod had often reflected, he said, 'in whose seat I sat.'²⁰ Consequently, in his Inaugural Lecture at Oxford, Garrod took it upon himself to defend Arnold's claims for the moral significance of poetry, reasserting the 'criticism of life' formula.²¹ In his commentary for July, 1924, Eliot vehemently attacked Garrod's Oxford lecture, saying that his views on politics and morality were 'meaningless.' Despite his 'appropriate tributes to Matthew Arnold,' Garrod represented to Eliot the malevolent side of Arnoldian influence on academic criticism. Yet again, Eliot used the opportunity to criticize 'a growing and alarming tendency in our time for literary criticism to be something else; to be the expression of an attitude "toward life" or of an attitude toward religion or of an attitude toward society, or of various humanitarian emotions.' The really damaging result of such an 'obliteration of distinctions,' Eliot concluded, was 'the most dangerous . . . tendency to confuse literature with religion -- a tendency which can only have the effect of degrading literature and annihilating religion.'²²

Despite Eliot's attack, Garrod was to continue, throughout his career, to reiterate the spiritual significance of poetry and when, in 1929, he delivered the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures on 'Poetry and the Criticism of Life,' it was to reply to Eliot's charge that, like Arnold, he had used poetry to moralize too readily. Eliot's comparison of Arnold and Bradley was, said Garrod, 'wasted ingenuity.' For his part, Garrod had 'never felt [the

criticism of life dictum] to be absurd, but,' he said, 'it can easily be made to seem so.' Through Eliot's lack of sympathy, therefore, he felt that 'Matthew Arnold has the ill-luck to be remembered by a travesty of his views on the relation between poetry and moral ideas.' Deliberately distancing himself from younger critics who, he felt, no longer read Arnold, Garrod may be seen as one of several heirs to George Russell's social Arnoldism since it was not, for him, Arnold's literary criticism which was the most valuable, but his writings on politics and society, Arnold being, in his opinion, 'a man of letters who became a literary critic by accident.'²³

Garrod's distinction between young and old commentators on Arnold was one that Eliot had himself done much to foster by consciously cultivating an avant-garde, anti-academic, criticism. The 'revival of interest in the prose works of Matthew Arnold,' he wrote in 1925, is 'more critical and judicious, I believe, than the academic estimate of Arnold as Literary Critic which prevailed some twenty years ago.'²⁴ Again, Eliot knew that the spectre of Arnold was so powerful with young and old alike that the only real means of subverting his predecessor's negative influence was to attempt to redefine that influence itself. By recruiting not Arnold but someone with Arnold's name who used, rather selectively, language that sounded vaguely like Arnold's own, Eliot knew that he could achieve more than if he sustained an outright attack on the revered critic. Hence, in his hands 'disinterestedness' became not simply 'seeing the object as it really is' so much as seeing the artistic object as autonomous from ethical values, an ideal to which Arnold (at least after 1863) would have never subscribed. After all, Eliot's employment of the Arnold scarecrow was perhaps never more obvious than when he had used Arnold's own condemnation of 'doing as one likes' to discuss Middleton Murry's 'inner voice.' Murry's belief in the power of the individual to generate his own best self through experience and cultivated reading was, after all, an idea that Arnold would have recognized immediately. From these two examples alone it is possible to see Eliot's intention to take Arnoldian language and, by making it his own, diffuse many aspects of it which he found objectionable.

Throughout his tenure with *The Criterion*, Eliot continued to address the aesthetic-moral question but, as time passed, it became apparent that, through his deeper involvement in political and theological controversy, he was drifting away from his earlier claim to be a poet working within a specialized aesthetic discourse. As Gregor asserts, despite the poignancy of the early Eliot's challenge to the Arnoldian tradition, his 'own later critical practice becomes less at variance with Arnold's.'²⁵ The watershed in this regard came in 1927 when, in response to what he interpreted as a heightened state of crisis on the international political scene, Eliot abandoned his earlier literary specialization in order to engage openly in matters of Church and State. It was somewhat apologetically that he wrote in his *Criterion* commentary for November, 1927:

The interesting point is that such subjects, and such varied subjects, would hardly have engaged so much attention from men of letters of the previous generation, or even fifteen years ago. The man of letters to-day is interested in a great many subjects -- not because he has many interests, but because he finds that the study of his own subject leads him irresistibly to the study of the others; and he must study the others if he is to disentangle his own, to find out what he is really doing himself Politics has become too serious a matter to be left to politicians. We are compelled, to the extent of our abilities, to be amateur economists, in an age in which politics and economics can no longer be kept wholly apart.²⁶

How different this sounds from the Eliot who, eight years earlier, had chastised Arnold the political amateur for having 'put literature into the corner until he cleaned up the whole country first.' In the new edition of *The Sacred Wood*, published in the following year, Eliot made clear his own awareness of the shift that had occurred in his own work: 'I by no means disown . . . having passed on to another problem . . . that of the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times.' Nevertheless his belief in the autonomy of art from all moral and philosophical speculations was something from which he had not, at least by 1928, departed. This led him to attack as 'frigid' Arnold's 'criticism of life' formula, saying that only by a 'monstrous abuse of words' could poetry be regarded as 'the inculcation of morals . . . the direction of politics . . . or an equivalent of religion.' While it may indeed 'have something to do' with each of these conceptual domains, said Eliot, 'we cannot say what.' Continuing to react against the Arnoldian fusion that writers like Forster, Orage, Murry, and Garrod had explored and tried to institute by imbuing liberal moral values with aesthetic qualities, Eliot claimed that it was

more prudent to regard poetry as rather 'a superior amusement' and approach morals, politics, and religion on their own terms.²⁷

While he may have given lip service to the exclusivity of these pursuits, though, the revised programme Eliot envisioned for *The Criterion* in order to accommodate his new extra-literary interests brought him astonishingly close to advocating the morally responsible criticism that Arnold had advocated in the 1860s. While it was 'desireable to maintain our designation of a "literary" review,' Eliot told his readers, the same 'critical attitude' that had been applied in the study of literature should be 'extended to all the problems of contemporary civilization.' In a prospectus that sounded uncannily similar to Arnold's prescriptions in 'The Function of Criticism,' Eliot insisted that in its treatment of politics *The Criterion* would attempt to 'be dissociated from party politics' and maintain a 'dispassionate examination' of social questions. Religious controversies, too, were to fall within the critical scope of the journal which, nevertheless, 'can take no side.' In whatever subject it addressed, *The Criterion* was not to express 'a common adhesion to a set of dogmatic principles,' and was to avoid, at all costs, becoming 'the organ of one programme or policy of passion or prejudice.' In concluding, Eliot claimed that '*The Criterion* is quite disinterested.'²⁸ It would be difficult to find a closer approximation than this to the prescription set out by Arnold in the *Essays in Criticism*, even down to the final word: 'disinterestedness,' after all, had been the capstone of the earlier writer's objective critical ideal. Even as early as *The Sacred Wood* Eliot had renewed the call for a periodical press which, as 'an instrument of transport,' would carry the "'current of ideas" . . . of which Arnold speaks.'²⁹ In *The Criterion*, it appears, he was to attempt to realize that Arnoldian ideal.

Although throughout the twenties Eliot may be seen, as an editor, to have been moving closer to the functions of criticism as publicized by Arnold, he still continued his own critical effort to undo the Arnoldian synthesis of art and morality as evidenced in others, one of whom was I.A. Richards who, with *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Science and Poetry* (1926), had endeavoured to overturn Eliot's prescription for a purely aesthetic experience, devoid of all moral values. While Richards had not singled out

Eliot specifically, *Principles of Literary Criticism* might be taken as an answer to *The Sacred Wood*. Recent attempts to treat 'morals . . . as a side issue for criticism, from which the special concern of the critic must be carefully separated,' were, said Richards, nothing more than 'indiscretions, vulgarities, and absurdities.' Reaffirming the importance that Arnold had put on 'the wider social and moral aspects of art,' Richards cited the controversial phrase over which Eliot had taken great pains to dismiss: 'Matthew Arnold when he said that poetry is a criticism of life was saying something so obvious that it is constantly overlooked.'³⁰ Taking up the theme of morality and art again in *Science and Poetry*, Richards made even clearer his debt to Arnold's concept of literature and its functions. Not only did Arnold's strongest statement on 'the future of poetry' stand as an epigraph on the fly-leaf of the book, but Richards also concluded with the claim that, in the face of discredited religious dogma, 'we shall be thrown back, as Matthew Arnold foresaw, upon poetry. It is capable of saving us.'³¹

Although Eliot saw Richards as a 'first-rate mind,' his response to *Science and Poetry* shows that he regarded his fellow critic as one firmly placed within the very tradition which he was seeking to destroy. In Richards' 'pseudo-statement' theory, Eliot saw an attempt 'to do . . . the same as . . . Arnold wanted to do.' By desiring 'to preserve emotions without the belief,' Richards, like his forbear, was 'engaged in a rear-guard religious action,' asserted Eliot.³² But Eliot's distress at what he regarded as Richards' claims for the imminent replacement of traditional religious belief with poetry was not, at this point, born out of the same motives that had earlier led him to search for a pure aestheticism; despite continuing to argue for the isolation of art from philosophical speculation, Eliot had, well before the thirties, already become an Anglican with fairly orthodox religious views. In the guise of a disinterested critic, he had at the same time begun to introduce his own brand of morality, based on a criticism that was informed from his own definite ideological perspective. Indeed, as Eliot was later to come to admit, under his editorship *The Criterion* had gradually departed from its originally stated ideal of disinterestedness. From 1930 on, he said, 'a right political philosophy came more and more to imply a right theology -- and right economics depend on right ethics.' Such a

change of perspective, he eventually realized, had 'somewhat stretched the original framework of a literary review.'³³

The Redefinition of Culture

Commenting on the general shift that had taken place in the critical outlook since 1930, George Orwell remarked that the aesthetic line, as transmitted by Pater and Saintsbury, was largely replaced by a renewed concern with literature as a political medium. Whereas 'the characteristic writers of the nineteen-twenties,' said Orwell -- naming Eliot and Pound in particular -- 'were writers who put the main emphasis on technique,' literature had since become decidedly more political in orientation, thus destroying 'the illusion of pure aestheticism.' Citing the economic slump of 1931 and the invasion of Poland in 1939 among the historic causes for this radical reevaluation of literary attitudes, Orwell concluded that 'the events of the last ten years have left us rather in the air . . . living in a world in which . . . one's whole scheme of values is constantly menaced.'³⁴

In many ways, it was out of this cultural crisis that the social implications of Arnoldian criticism were given a new lease of life, and against the background of which the second phase of Eliot's response to his predecessor's legacy must be regarded. Speaking several years later, Eliot attributed the failure of *The Criterion* as a disinterested vehicle for the transmission of ideas to 'the gradual closing of the mental frontiers of Europe,' which had led to 'cultural autarky.'³⁵ Consequently, in his later criticism, Eliot was to justify his sustained foray into subjects on which he was a self-confessed amateur, with an appeal to the sense of 'urgency' that surrounded the 'immediate perplexities that fill our minds.'³⁶ Ironically, therefore, Eliot's own shift to socio-religious commentary might be said to have been initiated by the same sense of cultural disintegration that preceded the revival of interest in Arnoldian social criticism; his solutions were, however, quite different and, as ever, it was largely in opposition to Arnoldism, this time in the form of a more politicized humanism, that Eliot's redefinition of Arnold was enacted.

Despite the damage that he felt had been done by Arnold's direct attacks on religious orthodoxy in *Literature and Dogma*, by the thirties at least, Eliot was forced to admit that his 'culture survives better than his conduct.'³⁷ Central to Eliot's strategy for displacing the negative influence of Arnoldism throughout the thirties and forties, therefore, was his analysis of the rhetorical term that had been crucial to Arnold's strategy for unifying not only aesthetic and moral values, but also the concepts of individual perfection and social improvement. There had been a hint in *The Sacred Wood* at the influence of Arnold's criticism on contemporary romantics like More and Babbitt, but it was in two later essays in particular, 'Arnold and Pater' (1930) and 'Matthew Arnold' (1933), that Eliot concentrated this effort on disentangling the aesthetic-moral synthesis by defining in detail what he regarded the malevolent side of Arnoldian culture to be.

Once more, Eliot's response to the Arnoldian heritage was governed by his own desire to separate art and morals, which, he believed, had become sadly confused in the nineties. Through the ambiguity of his language Arnold, claimed Eliot, had made provision for *fin de siècle* aestheticism, 'so the gospel of Pater follows naturally upon the prophecy of Arnold.' In a continued effort to uphold his early belief in the autonomy of aesthetics, Eliot discussed the concept of 'art for art's sake,' suggesting that, far from being a pure aesthete, Pater was, in fact, a 'moralist,' what he called 'art for art's sake' being merely 'itself a theory of ethics . . . concerned not with art but life.' Returning to his anti-Arnoldian *Sacred Wood* thesis, Eliot argued that 'art for art's sake' was still valid 'in so far as it can be taken as an exhortation to the artist to stick to his job' and not lead to the 'confusion between life and art.' Once again attempting to dismiss Arnoldism with its own language, he claimed that, 'being primarily a moralist,' Pater had been 'incapable of seeing any work of art simply as it is.'³⁸ To a certain extent, Eliot was justified in his criticism that Arnold's diverse influence could be attributed to his use of an approximate language with little 'positive content,' allowing it to stand for whatever various readers wanted. This was one undeniable result of the conciliatory effort for which Arnold's 'innocent' critical language was forged. But Eliot's claims that 'literature, or culture, tended with Arnold to usurp the place of Religion,' and that 'the total effect of Arnold's philosophy is

to set Culture in the place of Religion,' were just a little too neat. For one thing, the interchangeable use of 'literature' and 'culture' is something that, although at times implied, was never overtly expressed in Arnold. For another, to define the Arnoldian heritage only, or even primarily, in terms of the Paterian lineage is to ignore the existence of many twentieth century critics, like I.A. Richards, Arnoldians who nevertheless had severe reservations about the place of Pater.³⁹ For Eliot, though, Arnold was a symbol of all that he considered damaging in Victorian, and specifically nineties, romanticism, especially as it tended to claim, in its Hellenic approach to literature, the inferiority of religious dogma to aesthetic values.

Throughout these essays it is plain that, by seeking to confine his opponent historically, portraying him as a representative of a past age, Eliot was attempting to defuse as much of Arnold's contemporary influence as possible. Thus we read that Arnold 'is the poet and critic of a period of false stability,' and that 'the instruments of Arnold's time appear now . . . very antiquated.'⁴⁰ While some modern churchmen had seen, in *Literature and Dogma*, a precedent for many twentieth century theological developments, Eliot declared it obsolete in the company of 'modern solvers;' while *Culture and Anarchy* continued to be regarded as a seminal text for many literary critics, Eliot said that whereas, yes, it had been useful 'as an invective against the crudities of the industrialism of his time' and had even 'taught English . . . prose a restraint and urbanity it needed,' in the modern world, Arnold's view of culture was 'powerless to aid or to harm.' In effect, said Eliot, Arnold was little more than 'a champion of . . . ideas we no longer take seriously.' And yet, Eliot's claim that the aesthetic morality that had descended from Arnold had not 'influenced a single first-rate mind of a later generation' rings a little false in the light of the widespread regard that many of his contemporaries had for the power of culture to fill the space left by an already withdrawn sea of faith.⁴¹

Although there is no mention of Arnold in 'Religion and Literature' (1934), that essay may be taken as Eliot's most sustained reply to *Literature and Dogma*. In a direct challenge to Arnold, who had proposed the application of literary critical methods to the Bible, Eliot fulminated against 'the persons who enjoy these writings solely because of

their literary merit,' saying that such readers were 'essentially parasites.' Like Arnold, Eliot now objected to those who would separate philosophical from literary values, so that literature was no longer the 'superior amusement' that had been advocated in *The Sacred Wood*, but a pursuit so important as to have serious ethical consequences:

If we, as readers, keep our religious and moral convictions in one compartment, and take our reading merely for entertainment, or on a higher plane, for aesthetic pleasure, I would point out that . . . we are affected by it, as human beings, whether we intend to be or not.

The operative word here is 'convictions' which, for Eliot, meant a set of formal religious precepts. Whereas Arnold had proposed the critical examination of biblical texts for readers who could no longer value scripture as dogma, Eliot was proposing the very opposite: by interrogating literary works from a given religious position, dogma could provide the ultimate means of critical evaluation. For Arnold, the Hellenic 'best that has been known and thought' was to be the criterion for literary judgment. For Eliot the Hebrew, on the other hand, the 'best' was simply not good enough. 'We shall certainly continue to read the best of its kind,' he proclaimed, 'but we must tirelessly criticize it according to our own principles.' With those religious principles he was not to regard art alone. In time, he came to apply them to much broader issues. 'When the whole mind of society is moderately healthy and in order,' Eliot had remarked in 'Arnold and Pater,' 'there is an easy and natural association between religion and art.'⁴² So it was a natural progression that the next step in Eliot's challenge to the Arnoldian legacy was to be on the basis of its influence on social questions.

In his introduction of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* Eliot began by registering disapproval over some contemporary abuses of the term, stating that 'to rescue the word is the extreme of my ambition.'⁴³ If Arnold's culture had been, as Huxley had suggested, merely belletristic, it would have remained fairly innocuous to Eliot, just another example of second-rate Victorian journalism. But Eliot saw that there were within Arnold's use of the concept not only moral but also social implications. While Eliot had earlier objected to the provision made for the aesthetic morality of Pater, it was now the more general application of humanism on a social scale that concerned him. Earlier, Eliot had complained that, in Arnold, 'Culture is a term which each man not only may interpret

as he pleases, but must interpret as he can.⁴⁴ In the light of recent developments in which the concept was taking on far more definite connotations, it was no longer possible simply to dismiss it as meaningless. In *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, therefore, Eliot's task was largely to bring into question the social claims made for Arnoldian culture by his contemporaries, and thereby offer an alternative.

While recent events had, as Orwell suggested, turned men of letters from purely artistic questions to more urgent social issues and Saintsbury's aestheticism may have been rendered irrelevant in an atmosphere of political crisis, another version of Arnoldism, with which some young writers were to confront that very crisis, was to emerge in its place. It cannot be denied that while some commentators from this period, like Eliot, saw Arnold as a social critic belonging to a period of 'false stasis,' there were others who, in their adoption of Arnoldian culture, could, in fact, be regarded as the inheritors of a new form of George Russell's social Arnoldism. Eliot and Saintsbury's attempt to present readers with an Arnold devoid of both moral content and current social relevance was consequently to be challenged by many young critics (some of them Saintsbury's own pupils) who were to reaffirm the importance of *Culture and Anarchy*, not only in the claims it made for personal morality but also in its wider implications for social cohesion. One early example was Oliver Elton who, in a direct reference to a phrase used in Saintsbury's blanket condemnation of Arnold's post-1867 writing, remarked:

Arnold's excursions into theology, social preaching, and politics . . . are sometimes called a mere sojourn in the wilderness; but this is an erroneous view. They contain some of his best exposition and satire; he put his heart into them, and they made their mark on opinion.

Part of Elton's aim was to rescue Arnold from what he saw as an ineffectual aestheticism that had little bearing on social reform. For him, that meant dismissing Eliot's Paterian version of Arnold in favour of the social vision of Arnold's later years. Rather than 'Beauty,' said Elton, 'Matthew Arnold's sacred words . . . are . . . "culture" or "sweetness and light."' Because of the damage that the currency of these terms had done, Elton believed that 'it takes some courage to-day to revive them, and to urge how much truth and value is really to be found in them. But they represent a genuine religion . . . Who can

say that these conceptions are done with, or that we can all take them for granted.' In direct contravention to Eliot's and Saintsbury's dismissal of that aspect of *Essays in Criticism* which claimed for the critic an extra-literary, even a social, role, Elton credited 'The Function of Criticism' with having defined 'the federal ideal of thought and literature.' Arnold's great contribution was that he 'enlarged the whole field of critical vision' and thereby forged a discourse 'which will keep us from harbouring wrong admirations in life and literature and set us in the right way.'⁴⁵

It is perhaps significant that, throughout this period, several important reassessments of Arnold were to appear, each of which, like Elton's, with its affirmation of Arnold as a critic with moral and political currency, was to provide a direct challenge to Eliot's dismissal of Arnold's social criticism by placing *Culture and Anarchy* at the centre of the Arnold canon. Some, like Charles Harvey, while recognizing Arnold's value as a social reformer, even regretted that his culture had not gone far enough towards the proposal of specific legislative reforms. Nevertheless, Harvey was still able to see in Arnold's teachings the source of many social improvements that had come about since *Culture and Anarchy* first appeared.⁴⁶ Also among those who were not as anxious as Eliot to confine Arnold to the nineteenth century was John Dover Wilson who, in the introduction to his 1932 edition of *Culture and Anarchy*, firmly established Arnold as a social prophet with modern relevance. Thanks to Arnold's influence on educational thought, said Wilson, there had been a greater spread of sweetness and light since his death. 'Nor is his own view of culture in any way out of date,' he went on, 'it can never be since its relevance is eternal.'⁴⁷ Another contradiction of Eliot's attempt to isolate Arnoldian culture historically came from the leader writer of the *Times Literary Supplement* who, after elucidating on the importance of Arnold's theory of 'a religious conception of individual regeneration' to social improvement, said that 'fifty years have passed since his death; he has yet to come into his own.'⁴⁸

Perhaps the most significant opposition to Eliot's view of Arnold to appear in the 1930s, however, and one that was greatly to effect the reputation of Arnold in future decades, was the work of F.R. Leavis. It was in Arnold, more than anywhere else, that

Leavis was to find a precedent for the kind of criticism that he wished to promote through his books and his editorship of *Scrutiny*. Responding to the same sense of social crisis that haunted Eliot throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Leavis suggested that 'it is the modern disintegration that makes it urgent in our day to get a real literary criticism functioning.'⁴⁹ Despite his great respect for Eliot, Leavis's own response to this crisis and the implications it was to have for his view of literary criticism -- particularly as it related to his reading of Arnold -- were quite different. Rather than seeing, in *Essays in Criticism* and *Culture and Anarchy*, a dangerous mixture of aesthetic and moral values, Leavis found in them the inspiration, or at least mandate, for the setting up of a new order in which the literary critic was to be the unacknowledged legislator of morality. Not surprisingly, Leavis was to provide a direct response to Eliot's view of Arnold in the form of an article that appeared in *Scrutiny* in 1938. Like many, Eliot had fundamentally misunderstood the meaning of Arnold's 'criticism of life,' wrote Leavis, by trying to read into it a clear definition of poetry, rather than a statement about the way in which art could more indirectly inform judgement. What was more, he argued, that phrase alone was enough to refute Eliot's claim that art for art's sake was the logical outcome of Arnold's culture.⁵⁰

In the work of Leavis and the *Scrutiny* group, writes Chris Baldick, Arnold's literary view of culture was 'revived and modified.'⁵¹ Indeed, the claim that Arnold had made about 'the tact that letters alone can give' found an echo, albeit somewhat balder, in the Leavisite claim that 'without . . . the trained frequentation that literature alone can bring, the thinking that attends social and political studies will not have the edge and force it should.'⁵² Finding such precedents in Arnold's tendency for political engagement was perhaps a natural progression from the earlier claims made for the moral value of literary criticism by earlier champions of English Studies like Churton Collins, whose biographer has called him 'a follower of Matthew Arnold [and] a precursor of F.R. Leavis.'⁵³ At a time of social crisis, artists and critics, especially those who believed that literature could act as 'a criticism of life,' felt they had, in the words of a poet who had suggested the application to extra-literary questions of an aesthetically based criticism, a moral mandate to address cultural matters. At the heart of their defences of Arnold, writers like Dover

Wilson and Leavis were restating, largely in response to Eliot, the importance of the place of the man of letters as a critic of life, and, in short, the extent to which an individual's aesthetic sensibility could inform his ability to make political proclamations. Consequently, one writer in *The Listener* wrote that although it was 'easy to pick holes in Arnold's conception of culture, as Mr Eliot has done,' Arnold had, in fact, succeeded in identifying 'connections between good poetry, good morals . . . and good government.'⁵⁴ To be sure, the relationship between art and ethics had never been explicit in *Culture and Anarchy* -- in many ways the word itself represented a rhetorical strategy allowing for such ambiguity -- but literary commentators seeking to justify their own political engagement were apt to claim, with Dover Wilson, that 'for Arnold, there was never any frontier between life and letters.'⁵⁵ For this reason, and perhaps even with Dover Wilson in mind, Eliot began his *Definition of Culture* by reiterating his earlier argument about the autonomy of art from politics or morality, and the exclusivity of polemics from any theory about the culturally regenerative power of poetry or any other form of art:

Culture is the product of more or less harmonious activities, each pursued for its own sake: the artist must concentrate upon his canvas, the poet upon his typewriter, the civil servant upon the just settlement of particular problems as they present themselves upon his desk, each according to the situation in which he finds himself.

Here were some very definite implications for the admirers of Arnold the school inspector who had seen 'an immense future' for the role of poetry in society. Whereas Arnold had used the concept of culture as a rhetorical device to forge an organic view in which the perfection of the individual, both aesthetic and moral, would eventually lead to the improvement of society, Eliot was still unwilling to admit a distinguishable relationship between artistic culture and social organization. In a direct attack on Arnold, Eliot suggested that 'even a very great artist' cannot by virtue of his aesthetic gift alone, call himself a 'man of culture.' Only in the most primitive of societies, he went on, are 'the several activities of culture . . . inextricably interwoven,' whereas 'it is only at a much further stage [of civilization] that religion, science, politics, and art become abstractly conceived apart from each other.'⁵⁶

The greatest danger of the prevalent view of culture 'among men of letters and moralists,' said Eliot, was that it made provision for the individual but failed to address the needs of a whole society:

The most easily remembered example of this . . . is Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold is concerned primarily with the individual and the 'perfection' at which he should aim The impression of thinness which Arnold's 'culture' conveys to the modern reader is partly due to the absence of social background to the picture.

In direct opposition to the Arnoldian idealism that continued to hold sway with many of his contemporaries, Eliot resorted to a more scientific connotation for his own culture, recruiting in his defence the emerging theories of anthropology. For him, culture had three distinct meanings: depending on its context, it could relate to the 'individual,' the 'class,' or the 'whole society.'⁵⁷ Arnold, though, had seen the cultured individual as the unifying force by which all of these aspects were closely knit and reliant on one another. To Eliot, whose belief in original sin made impossible such an optimistic view of human nature, the solution lay not with individuals but the authoritarian administration of the community along dogmatic lines.⁵⁸ It was therefore the Hellenic side of Arnold to which Eliot was objecting; hardly surprising, since he had himself become a dogmatist who saw, in 'the free play of the mind' on philosophical issues, the greatest risk of anarchy. In effect, the same scepticism which had led him, in 1920, to reject 'The Study of Poetry,' with its claim for the morally improving power of literature, eventually led him now to reject the notion of an organic society made up of 'best selves.'

By 1948, Eliot's critique of Arnold had come full circle, so that, in the end, Eliot strikes us as a more articulate George Saintsbury. It might be helpful to remember that, despite some very obvious differences in methodology, Eliot the high churchman, Tory, and literary polyglot, was closer philosophically to Saintsbury than any other commentator before or since.⁵⁹ Like Saintsbury, Eliot sought to isolate what he found valuable in Arnoldian criticism and to dispense with the rest. This is made all the more poignant since the early Eliot was, like Saintsbury, an advocate of an aestheticism based on the autonomy of artistic experience stripped of the ethical claims made for it by Pater. Whereas Saintsbury, objecting to Pater's 'Hedonism,' had either failed to see or chose to ignore the

philosophical implications of *Marius the Epicurean*, however, Eliot objected to the strain of humanism that he believed had come through him, seeing the full implication in Paterian aestheticism for the proposition of a new morality. Despite literary, political, and religious similarities, then, Eliot's response was the more complex. Whereas the older critic had proceeded by simply borrowing or rejecting those aspects of Arnold which helped prop up his own position, Eliot's endeavours went beyond such casual exchanges in order to define what it was at the root of Arnold's criticism that made it so objectionable to him. Whereas Saintsbury the Arnoldian had something of the rebellious student about him, Eliot, although informed from the same ideological standpoint, stood in a far more ambiguous relationship to Arnold. Yet, while Eliot's critique often served to expose the limitations inherent in Arnold's attempt to integrate aesthetics and morality, particularly in his use of the concepts of 'criticism' and 'culture' -- the ambiguity of language, irrationality of thought, dishonesty of rhetoric -- his own solution, the positivist separation of poetry from its ideological implications, strikes us as no more convincing, especially when he came eventually to renounce it in the adoption of his own religious aesthetic and social orthodoxy.

Another key problem with Eliot's reading of Arnold is that, like so many others, it remained decidedly one-sided. In his criticism of the 'best self,' Eliot's social theory was not to develop substantially beyond his critique of romantic art in *The Sacred Wood*. Ignoring that aspect of Arnoldian culture which was concerned with the structure of society itself, Eliot saw merely another example of the nineteenth century preoccupation with individualism. In broad terms, therefore, Eliot's social theory was a reaction against only one aspect of the culture for which Arnold had claimed a dual function: in his preoccupation with the humanist notion of an individual perfection that was largely aesthetic in orientation, Eliot was seemingly unaware of the potency of the Arnoldian idea that 'men of culture are the true prophets of equality,' which had repeatedly been used in support of the socio-liberal call for democracy since George Russell's *Matthew Arnold*. Although a mistrust of the popular concept of social equality that had often recruited Arnold the educationist in support of its argument may be seen throughout much of Eliot's cultural

writing, it is this one aspect of his predecessor's influence with which he never credited him. On the other hand, he might readily have borrowed Arnold's view of the State and National Church in support of his own, more authoritative point of view. But, while Kingsmill and others had been worried about the implied loss of individuality inherent in the Arnoldian view of the State, it was the anarchic nature of the unchecked will (ironically, something Arnold himself feared) that most troubled Eliot.⁶⁰ To say that Eliot ignored the very practical, democratic side of Arnold is not to say that he ignored it in Arnold's descendents. Far from it. Indeed, much of Eliot's redefinition of culture was concerned with combatting the call for equality and classlessness that had been fundamental to the social agenda of *Culture and Anarchy*.

In attempting to mediate between aesthetics and morality, individual sensibility and social responsibility, Arnold had earned himself enemies on both sides of the debate. Whereas Kingsmill had attacked what he regarded as Arnold's overpowering Hebraic tendency to dictate practical political reforms, Eliot's main argument with *Culture and Anarchy* was quite the opposite: in its attention to personal values, Eliot claimed that Arnoldian culture had neglected the social mechanism, making it, as a means of government, wholly ineffectual. Perhaps the reason he chose to ignore Arnold as the prophet of equality was because of his potency in that capacity; while some critics agreed with Eliot that Arnold's 'man of culture' was ineffectual on a social scale, there were others who saw, in the wider dissemination of 'sweetness and light,' the hope for national regeneration. Liberal humanists like E.M. Forster, for example, had seen Arnold's attempt to create a rapprochement between aesthetics and morality, individualism and society, as admirable. It may have evaded 'the crude issue of power,' but Arnold's theory of the interdependence of Best Self and State, claimed Lionel Trilling, 'is still fertile and valuable -- and morally inescapable.'⁶¹ Another advocate of Arnoldian centrality was T. Sturge Moore, who claimed that, between orthodox Hebrews like Eliot and radical reformers all too anxious to bring about change for purely selfish reasons, there remained those followers of Arnold 'who will not grant the team spirit any virtue except as a means to a near and definite good.'⁶² Perhaps one reason for Eliot's failure to successfully challenge

Arnoldian culture, then, was his tendency to underestimate, from the twenties on, its importance as not only a personal ideology but the various ways in which it was made to stand for a practical solution to social problems in a post-Christian age.

If, as Eliot supposed, Arnold was a historical curiosity, merely a product of his time, how much more was he himself open to such a charge? Thus his startlingly honest admission, in 1933, that 'we are still in the Arnold period' suggests that he was, at least by mid-career, painfully aware of the difficulties involved in slaying the 'King of the Wood.'⁶³ To be fair, Eliot had offered the most penetrating analysis of the aesthetic-moral conflict in Arnold without accepting one aspect of it second-hand. His description of Arnold as the critic who, as the result of his own 'inner uncertainty,' had Hebraized and Hellenized at turns is one that strikes us as still perceptive. Even more so since, in a sense, Eliot came to repeat that same conflict by, first, Hellenically freeing art from philosophical dogma and, eventually, by Hebraistically interrogating literature from a fixed set of religious precepts. His own solution, though, was always destined to be more radical: embracing, at different stages, the two extremes that had also made up Arnold's personality, Eliot differed in that he never strove, as Arnold did, for equilibrium.

It is bitterly ironic that Eliot's later engagement in social and religious criticism betrayed his own main contention with Arnold. Although he continued to deny the existence of any definitive relationship between aesthetics and ethics, it was, after all, only because of the reputation he had earned as a poet-critic that he was afforded a platform for the propagation of his brands of political conservatism and Christian orthodoxy.⁶⁴ After having accused his predecessor of dilettantism in his treatment of extra-literary subjects, Eliot was to find himself, on more than one occasion, forced to admit his own amateur status in the same areas. One explanation for this shift is that Eliot the socio-religious critic came, in fact, tacitly to identify with Arnold's 'man of culture' and, despite claims to the contrary, an accompanying belief in the ethical influence of art and literary criticism.

In 1948 (the year of Eliot's redefinition of culture) E.K. Brown, looking back at Arnold's influence since his death, perceived:

The oscillation between the poles of detachment and action, of artistic contemplation and practical criticism, in which so much of Matthew Arnold's life was passed, makes him a figure of special significance for our time as for his own. His mind and self formed the theatre for a struggle between two great groups of forces which have worked with so much effect on so many artists from his age to ours as to have become a momentous fact in modern culture.⁶⁵

The conflict between aesthetics and ethics which had dominated criticism since Arnold's death had indeed functioned within a discourse for which he himself was largely responsible. Despite efforts to disown his place in the Arnoldian tradition, Eliot consequently inherited and eventually came to inhabit the very critical terrain which Arnold had framed almost a century before.

Notes

¹T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London, 1932), 432.

²James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London, 1922), 1. For a further discussion of Eliot's use of this passage, see George Watson, *The Literary Critics* (Harmondsworth, 1962), 187-188.

³*Letters of T.S. Eliot*, edited by Valerie Eiot, volume 1 (London, 1988), 406.

⁴Ian Gregor, 'Eliot and Matthew Arnold,' *Eliot in Perspective*, edited by Graham Martin (London, 1970), 267.

⁵Ezra Pound, *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited by T.S. Eliot (London, 1985), 16. Pound's *Guide to Kulchur* was dedicated to 'men who have not been able to afford an university education or for young men, whether or not threatened with universities, who want to know more at the age of fifty than I know today.' [Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London, 1938), 5].

⁶John Churton Collins, 'Can English Be Taught?' *Nineteenth Century*, 22 (November, 1887), 657.

⁷Although it had, in his view, been undermined by controversies that had surrounded it, Quiller-Couch invoked the Arnoldian notion of culture, by which right conduct could be promoted through reading: 'Cardinal Newman . . . lamented that the English language had not, like the Greek, "some definite words to express, simply and generally, intellectual proficiency or perfection, such as 'health,' as used with reference to the animal frame, and 'virtue,' with reference to our moral nature." Well, it is a reproach to us that we do not possess the term: and perhaps again a reproach to us that our attempts at it -- the word 'culture' for instance -- have been apt to take on some soil of controversy But we do earnestly desire the thing.' [Arthur Quiller-Couch, *On the Art of Writing* (Cambridge, 1923), 4-5].

⁸T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1933), 122-3. Shortly after his arrival at Oxford, Eliot was to make the customary pilgrimage to the countryside haunted by the Scholar Gipsy: 'There is a dear little village named Cumnor,' he wrote, 'where I have walked.' [*Letters of T.S. Eliot*, 61]. Taken against comments around the same period from A.C. Bradley and W.P. Ker, it seems unlikely that the poetic power of Arnold's Oxford myth would have been lost on the young Eliot.

⁹It is also important to remember that Eliot regarded himself first and foremost as a philosopher. His background in philosophy caused him to take great delight in Bradley's attack on Arnold. [Eliot, 'Francis Herbert Bradley,' *Selected Essays*, 444-455].

¹⁰T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London, 1928), xiii.

¹¹Super, I:15.

¹²Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 101.

¹³Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 58, 56, xii, 43.

¹⁴Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 2, 45, 10, 43, 14-15.

¹⁵Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 1, 26, 32.

¹⁶T.S. Eliot, 'The Function of a Literary Review,' *Criterion*, 1:4 (July, 1923), 421.

¹⁷Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 24.

¹⁸J.M. Murry, 'The Function of Criticism,' *Aspects of Literature* (London, 1920), 1, 11, 13. In 1921 Murry continued his rebuttal of what he perceived to be a prevailing move towards autonomous criticism: 'A work of literature may possess significance of various kinds; it may have historical, ethical, or aesthetic significance; that is, it may have importance at a particular phase of human consciousness, or it may be valuable as expressing a particular attitude towards human life.' For Murry, Arnold was undoubtedly 'a moralist' and therefore an example of the second kind of critic. [J.M. Murry, 'A Critical Credo,' reprinted in *Discoveries: Essays in Literary Criticism* (London, 1924), 242]. That Murry realized Arnold's own inability to embrace fully the sort of unified aesthetic philosophy to which he himself adhered, he expressed in 1923 when he remarked that, for all Arnold's self-dependence, 'he could not find in himself that inward confidence of soul which . . . would enable him to stand firm in isolation.' [Murry, *Discoveries*, 203].

¹⁹Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 27.

²⁰H.W. Garrod, *The Profession of Poetry and Other Lectures* (Oxford, 1929), viii.

²¹'The most famous of my predecessors in this Chair was thought in nothing so much to have abused his authority as when he hazarded the dictum that "poetry is a criticism of life" I may be forgiven perhaps if, in this "home of impossible loyalties," I am so far loyal to the critic of my youth . . . as to pay to this half-forgotten dictum the proper homage of a truism.' [Garrod, *The Profession of Poetry*, 4].

- 22 T.S. Eliot, 'A Commentary,' *Criterion*, 2:8 (July, 1924), 371, 375.
- 23 H.W. Garrod, *Poetry and the Criticism of Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), 69-70, 76.
- 24 T.S. Eliot, 'A Commentary,' *Criterion*, 3:10 (January, 1925), 162.
- 25 Gregor, 'Eliot and Matthew Arnold,' 269-70.
- 26 T.S. Eliot, 'A Commentary,' *Criterion*, 6:5 (November, 1927), 386.
- 27 Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, viii, ix, x.
- 28 Eliot, 'A Commentary,' *Criterion* 7:4 (June, 1928), 4.
- 29 Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, xiv.
- 30 I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London, 1924), 34, 61.
- 31 I.A. Richards, *Science and Poetry* (London, 1926), 82-3. At one stage, Eliot had even called *Science and Poetry* 'a revised version of *Literature and Dogma*.' [T.S. Eliot, 'Literature, Science, and Dogma,' *Dial*, 82:3 (March, 1927), 243].
- 32 T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1964), 134-135.
- 33 T.S. Eliot, 'Last Words,' *Criterion*, 18:71 (January, 1939), 272.
- 34 George Orwell, 'The Frontiers of Art and Propaganda,' *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, volume 2: *My Country Right or Left*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Harmondsworth, 1970), 149-53. Orwell mistakenly equates the passing of Pater with a decline in Arnoldian influence; his one-sided 'aesthetic' reading of Arnold thus sadly overlooks that aspect of Arnold's influence which, from the mid-twenties on, was to be seen in a revival of his image as first and foremost a social reformer with contemporary relevance.
- 35 T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, (London, 1948), 116.
- 36 That 'urgency is the reason for a person like myself attempting to address, on a subject beyond his usual scope, that public which is likely to read what he writes on other subjects.' [T.S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, (London, 1939), 7].
- 37 Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 432.
- 38 Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 440.
- 39 Ironically, Richards blamed Pater and his disciples for having spread the misconception that 'the values of art are unique, or capable of being considered in isolation from all others.' [Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 72].
- 40 Eliot, *Use of Poetry*, 105, 110.
- 41 Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 432-434, 442.
- 42 Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 436, 439, 440.
- 43 Eliot, *The Definition of Culture*, 17.
- 44 Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 436.
- 45 Oliver Elton, *Tennyson and Matthew Arnold* (London, 1924), 84, 58, 77, 80. As early as 1907, Elton had invoked Arnold to justify his belief in a European 'Commonwealth of Letters.' Suggesting that literature would act as a point of common interest between nations, he had argued for the influence of aesthetics on social cohesion: 'So hard it is for literature to change its dress or be cosmopolitan. But all the more must it strive to do so, in this and other ways. It must join with education and science, the forces that unite, and not with those that serve for estrangement, such as racial distrust and war; or civilization wastes a chance . . . The artist, in the past, has ever been an explorer who returned the richer for his raid on foreign countries. Written large on the face of history is the wide interplay of poetry and art between the nations.' [Oliver Elton, 'The Meaning of Literary History,' *Modern Studies* (London, 1907), 126].
- 46 Charles Harvey was perhaps the most direct mid-twentieth century heir to George Russell's social Arnoldism. In *Culture and Anarchy*, for example, he saw almost a prescription for the modern socialist state: 'His plan in this essay really amounts to a more equitable distribution of wealth . . . That it is which links him to later developments of Liberalism and by his advocacy of state action links him with socialism.' [Charles H. Harvey, *Matthew Arnold: A Critic of the Victorian Period* (London, 1931), 204-205].
- 47 John Dover Wilson, ed., *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge, 1932), xxxvii.
- 48 Unsigned leader, 'Prophet of European Unity: Matthew Arnold After Fifty Years,' *TLS* (April 16, 1938), 258.
- 49 F.R. Leavis, editor, *Determinations* (London, 1934), 2.

⁵⁰F.R. Leavis, 'Arnold as Critic,' *Scrutiny*, 7:3 (December, 1938), 324-325; another Scrutineer had earlier attacked Eliot's 'merciless insistence on the literal meaning of Matthew Arnold's "criticism of life."' [D.W. Harding, 'Mr Eliot at Harvard,' *Scrutiny*, 2:3 (December, 1933), 292].

⁵¹Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (Oxford, 1987), 4. For a full discussion of Arnold's influence on Leavis, see Baldick's last two chapters..

⁵²F.R. Leavis, 'Literature and Society,' *Scrutiny*, 12:1 (Winter, 1943), 11.

⁵³Anthony Kearney, *John Churton Collins: The Louse on the Locks of Literature* (Edinburgh, 1986), xi.

⁵⁴Review of Lionel Trilling's *Matthew Arnold*, *Listener* (April 13, 1939), 802-3.

⁵⁵Dover Wilson, ed., *Culture and Anarchy*, xx.

⁵⁶Eliot, *The Definition of Culture*, 19, 23-4.

⁵⁷Eliot, *The Definition of Culture*, 22, 21.

⁵⁸In the conclusion to his essay on 'Baudelaire,' Eliot approvingly quoted T.E. Hulme in response to the nineteenth century idea of personal perfection: 'In the light of these absolute values, man himself is judged to be essentially limited and imperfect. He is endowed with Original Sin. While he can occasionally accomplish acts which partake of perfection, he can never himself be perfect A man is essentially bad, he can only accomplish anything of value by discipline -- ethical and political. Order is thus not merely negative, but creative and liberating. Institutions are necessary.' [Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 430]. Citing this very passage in 1935, F.O. Matthiessen said that 'one could not find a more compact expression of the gradually hardening line of his thought.' [F.O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry* (London, 1935), 145].

⁵⁹In a review of Saintsbury, Eliot said that 'many people who do not share his general point of view must find his writings antipathetic. In his literary interests, in his political views, in his culinary tastes, he is the representative of a fine tradition.' ['Crites,' 'A Commentary,' *Criterion*, 3:2 (April, 1925), 341-44].

⁶⁰Of course, Eliot's own solution was to prove far more authoritarian than Arnold's. In his view, all political systems were authoritarian but some, like Fascism and Communism, were improper 'pagan' substitutes for a healthier 'Christian' society.

⁶¹Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1939), 255.

⁶²T. Sturge Moore, 'Matthew Arnold,' *Essays and Studies By Members of the English Association*, 34 (Oxford, 1938), 16.

⁶³Eliot, *Use of Poetry*, 129.

⁶⁴Eliot justified his own engagement in social criticism by saying that 'while the practice of poetry need not in itself confer wisdom or accumulate knowledge, it ought at least to train the mind in one habit of universal value: that of analysing the meaning of words.' [Eliot, *Idea of a Christian Society*, 8].

⁶⁵E.K. Brown, *Matthew Arnold: A Study in Conflict* (Chicago, 1948), 179. By 'practical,' here, Brown means simply politically and philosophically engaged criticism as opposed to exclusively artistic or literary criticism.

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APPENDIX

Editions of Arnold: 1888-1948

Editions of Arnold's Verse (1888-1948)

- Poems*, new ed. (London, 1888)
Poetical Works, popular ed. (London, 1890)
Cromwell, 3rd ed. (London, 1891)
Alaric at Rome, edited by Thomas J. Wise (London, 1893)
Alaric at Rome and Other Poems, edited by Clement Shorter (London, 1894)
Poems, 3 volumes (London, 1895)
Alaric at Rome and Other Poems, edited by Richard Garnett (London, 1896)
Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems (London, 1896)
Matthew Arnold: Selected Poems, edited by W.T. Stead (London, 1896)
Poems, new ed. (London, 1896)
Poems by Matthew Arnold, edited by G.C. Macaulay (London, 1896)
The Strayed Reveller, Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems, edited by William Sharp (London, 1896)
The Forsaken Merman (London, 1900)
Poems, edited by A.C. Benson (London, 1900)
Poems, Narrative, Elegiac, and Lyric, edited by H. Buxton Forman (London, 1900)
Dramatic and Early Poems, edited by H. Buxton Forman (London, 1902)
The Scholar Gipsy and The Forsaken Merman (London, 1905)
Selected Poems, edited by Arthur Waugh (London, 1905)
Sohrab and Rustum, Broadway Booklets (London, 1905)
Sohrab and Rustum, edited by W.K. Leask (London, 1905)
Dramas and Prize-Poems, edited by Laurie Magnus (London, 1906)
Merope, To Which Is Appended the Electra of Sophocles, edited by J. Churton Collins (Oxford, 1906)
Poems, edited by Alice Meynell (London, 1906)
Poems of Matthew Arnold, edited by Laurie Magnus (London, 1906)
Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1849-1964, edited by A.T. Quiller-Couch (Oxford, 1906)
Poems, Prior to 1864, edited by Laurie Magnus (London, 1906)
The Scholar Gipsy (London, 1906)
The Scholar Gipsy and Other Poems, *Roses of Parnassus* No.17 (London, 1906)
The Scholar Gipsy and Thyrsis (London, 1906)
Selected Poems, edited by Richard Wilson (London, 1906)
Matthew Arnold's Sohrab and Rustum, edited by J. Hamilton Castleman (London, 1907)
Matthew Arnold: Poems, edited by A.T. Quiller-Couch (Oxford, 1908)
Sohrab and Rustum, edited by H.W.B. Moreno (Calcutta, 1908)
Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1840-1866, edited by R.A. Scott-James, Everyman Library (London, 1908)
Balder Dead and Mycerinus (Oxford 1909)
Matthew Arnold's Sohrab and Rustum (Oxford, 1909)
Poems, edited by Philip Plowden (London, 1909)
Poems of Matthew Arnold, Routledge Photogravure and Colour Series (London, 1909)
Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1840-1867, edited by A.T. Quiller-Couch (Oxford, 1909)
Selected Poems, edited by Hereford George and A.M. Leigh (Oxford, 1909)
Moments with Matthew Arnold (London, 1910)
Poems, edited by D.S. (London, 1910)
Selected Poems, King's Treasury of Literary Masterpieces (London, 1910)
The Scholar Gipsy and Thyrsis, illustrated by W. Russell Flint (London, 1910)
The Forsaken Merman (London, 1911)
The Scholar Gipsy and Thyrsis, 2nd ed., illustrated by W. Russell Flint (London, 1912)
The Scholar Gipsy and Thyrsis (Oxford, 1913)

- Sohrab and Rustum and Balder Dead*, edited by Egerton Smith (London, 1913)
The Forsaken Merman and The Sick King in Bokhara, edited by Edith Fry (London, 1914)
Sohrab and Rustum, edited by F.R. Tomlinson (London, 1914)
Sohrab and Rustum, edited by W.J. Cunningham Pike and A.T. Quiller-Couch (London, 1916)
Sohrab and Rustum, edited by A.C. Ray (Calcutta, 1916)
Merope, To Which Is Appended the Electra of Sophocles, 2nd ed., edited by J. Churton Collins (Oxford, 1917)
Sohrab and Rustum, edited by Pencraft (Calcutta, 1917)
Sohrab and Rustum, edited by H.W.B. Moreno (Calcutta, 1919)
Sohrab and Rustum and Balder Dead (London, 1919)
The Forsaken Merman (Leeds, 1922)
Matthew Arnold: Poems, edited by Henry Newbolt (London, 1923)
Selections from Matthew Arnold's Poetry, edited by Ralph E.C. Houghton (London, 1924)
Poems, edited by B.L.K. Henderson (London, 1925)
Sohrab and Rustum, The Scholar Gipsy, Thyrsis, edited by G.E. Hollingsworth (London, 1925)
Sohrab and Rustum, The Scholar Gipsy, Thyrsis, edited by F.W. Payne (London, 1925)
Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1849-1867, edited by A.T. Quiller-Couch (London, 1926)
The Scholar Gipsy, Thyrsis, and Rugby Chapel (London, 1926)
The Forsaken Merman and The Scholar Gipsy (London, 1927)
Shorter Poems of Matthew Arnold (London, 1927)
Poems, edited by G.C. Macaulay, (London, 1928)
Sohrab and Rustum, The Scholar Gipsy, Thyrsis and Other Poems, edited by G.E. Hollingsworth (London, 1928)
The Oxford Poems of Matthew Arnold, 'The Scholar Gipsy' and 'Thyrsis,' With Rambles In the Country Around Oxford To Which the Poems Refer, edited by H.W. Taunt (Oxford, 1929)
Selected Poems of Matthew Arnold, edited by H. Alsop (London, 1931)
The Scholar Gipsy (London, 1933)
Arnold. Poetry and Prose, edited by E.K. Chambers (Oxford, 1939)
Balder Dead, Sohrab and Rustum, Tristram and Iseult, edited by G.E. Hollingsworth (London, 1939)

Editions of Arnold's Prose (1888-1948)

- Civilization in the United States*, 4th ed. (Boston, 1888)
Essays in Criticism, Second Series (London, 1888)
Essays in Criticism, Second Series, Colonial ed. (London, 1888)
Special Report on Elementary Education Abroad (London, 1888)
Culture and Anarchy, popular ed. (London, 1889)
A Bible Reading for Schools, 5th ed., (London, 1889)
Essays in Criticism, 6th ed. (London, 1889)
Essays in Criticism, Second Series, 2nd ed. (London, 1889)
Johnson's Lives of the Poets, 5th ed. (London, 1889)
Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882, edited by Sir Francis Sandford (London, 1889)
Irish Essays, popular ed. (London, 1891)
On Home Rule for Ireland: Two Letters to The Times (London, 1891)
On the Study of Celtic Literature, popular ed. (London, 1891)
Saint Paul and Protestantism, popular ed. (London, 1892)
Essays in Criticism, Second Series, 3rd ed. (London, 1895)
Discourses in America (London, 1896)
On Translating Homer, popular ed. (London, 1896)
Matthew Arnold's Notebooks (London, 1902)

- Literature and Dogma*, popular ed. (London, 1903)
On Translating Homer, new ed., edited by W.H.D. Rouse (London, 1905)
Essays Literary and Critical, Everyman ed., edited by G.K. Chesterton (London, 1906)
God and the Bible (London, 1907)
Critical Essays, edited by Hannaford Bennett (London, 1907)
Essays in Criticism, with the Addition of Two Essays Not Hitherto Reprinted (London, 1907)
Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882, new ed., edited by F.S. Marvin (London, 1908)
Literature and Dogma, Nelson's Shilling Library (London, 1910)
On the Study of Celtic Literature, edited by Alfred Nutt (London, 1910)
On the Study of Celtic Literature and Other Essays by Matthew Arnold, edited by Ernest Rhys (London, 1910)
Essays in Criticism, edited by Walter Raleigh (London, 1912)
Thoughts on Education, edited by Leonard Huxley (London, 1912)
Essays: Including Essays in Criticism, 1865, On Translating Homer, and F.W. Newman's Reply, and Five Other Essays Now for the First Time Collected (London, 1914)
Essays in Criticism, edited by Clement A. Miles and Leonard Smith (London, 1918)
Letters of an Old Playgoer, edited by Brander Matthews (New York, 1919)
Selected Essays of Matthew Arnold, edited by H.G. Rawlinson (London, 1924)
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Prose Selections from Matthew Arnold, edited by E.T. Campagnac (London, 1928)
Culture and Anarchy, edited by John Dover Wilson (Cambridge, 1932)
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Essays in Criticism, Second Series, edited by S.R. Littlewood (London, 1938)
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