

ARNOLD'S INFLUENCE ON THE
LITERARY CRITICISM OF T.S. ELIOT.

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot are two distinguished critics who not only were great for their own ages, but have achieved a permanent place in the history of English criticism. They have influenced the literary tastes of their ages. They are aware of the public role of the literary critics, and so they both tried their best to fulfill this role. They share much more than views on criticism. They have similar ideas regarding the 'modern age,' the value of religion and morality, and the need of education and 'culture' in society. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between the nineteenth century giant and the work of the early twentieth century giant.

Eliot's awareness of the importance of Arnold's role in the history of English criticism provides the stimulus for this study of the possible influence that Eliot's reading of Arnold exerted on his thoughts and techniques as a literary critic. This comparative study of Eliot and Arnold becomes all the more interesting and fruitful when we observe the undercurrent of Arnold's ideas flowing through much of Eliot's writing. However, although Eliot

makes frequent references to Arnold in his essays, he fancies himself a representative of a tradition antithetical to Arnold's. Ian Gregor writes:

Certainly it was Eliot's sharp awareness of Arnold as the spokesman for an age that shaped his critical estimate of him. To distinguish himself from Arnold became for Eliot a way of characterizing that revolution of taste which he was concerned to bring about, a revolution which, while it set 'the poets and the poems in a new order,' also enabled him to create a climate of opinion favorable to his own poetic practice.

Eliot assumes that as the next leader in order, he has to be different from Arnold hence he opposes Arnold very loudly, whenever possible. In reality, as it is the aim of this study to show, Eliot has many similarities with Arnold, and he is influenced by Arnold in his ideas as a critic.

It has been pointed out by some critics that Eliot belongs to the tradition of Arnold. For example, M.L.S. Loring suggests that Eliot is a lineal descendent of Arnold. Loring feels that they are much alike, particularly in their views on the social purpose of criticism and the purpose of art. In a number of respects Eliot is a latter-day Arnold.² Douglas Bush believes similarly that

¹
Ian Gregor, "Eliot and Matthew Arnold," Graham Martin (ed) Eliot in Perspective: A Symposium (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), p. 267.

²
M. L. S. Loring, "T. S. Eliot on Matthew Arnold," Sewanee Review, XLIII (1935), pp. 479-488.

Eliot is the most suitable modern critic to be called Arnold's descendent.

Eliot was born five months after the death of Matthew Arnold. Though one would hesitate to suggest a transmigration of souls (certainly one would not suggest it to Mr. Eliot), and though fundamental differences are at least as marked as resemblances, no one else has come so close to being what Arnold was or³ what twentieth century Arnold might have been.

His reasons for this suggestion are that,

... they are linked together by their fine taste, their cosmopolitan, anti-provincial, anti-romantic conception of literature, their faith in the living value of⁴ tradition, authority, standards, discipline.

It is with this major current of criticism that I agree. I do not intend to claim Eliot to be Arnold's direct heir, but it is certain that their thinking is quite similar, and Eliot's reading of Arnold contributed considerably towards the formation of his views on criticism. This will help in the understanding of some of the positions that Eliot held as a critic and may put Arnold in a new perspective. It will also be an aim of this study to show how, in similar ages of crisis, one great mind can profitably utilize the solutions offered by another great mind, thus substantiating Eliot's belief which follows:

³
Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1957), p. 508.

⁴
Ibid., p. 509.

From time to time, every hundred years or so, it is desirable that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature, and set the poets and the poems in a new order ... Dryden, Johnson and Arnold have each performed the task as well as human frailty will allow.⁵

A third aim of this study is to show in a new way the different sensibilities of two ages--since Eliot and Arnold respectively embody the essentials of the literary consciousness of their ages.

One problem arises--how far is it possible and profitable to study the influence of one writer on another? Although we seldom have empirical support for influence, still we can productively infer certain influences. In the case of Eliot such influences are all the more possible and natural, because Eliot was a strong believer in tradition. Eliot believes that no poet is an individual artist, that he is greatly influenced by the writers who preceded him. He writes,

... if we approach a poet without his prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.⁶

By influence here I do not mean Eliot's willing acceptance of Arnoldic attitudes and principles. Maybe the whole process of influence is unconscious. At least

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T. S. Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), pp. 108-9.

6

Eliot, "Tradition and The Individual Talent," in The Sacred Wood (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1953), p. 48.

there is no evidence that an effort was involved on the part of the receiver of such an influence. I fully agree with Joseph Chiari when he says,

...since the word 'influence' implies a willful acceptance of authority and directives, one should say, perhaps, the nourishing sources, which enabled Eliot to discover, and to develop the essential structure of his own genius.⁷

This paper will demonstrate that Matthew Arnold is one of the more powerful 'nourishing sources' for Eliot.

Chiari continues, "the second premise is that a creative genius is subject to the rule of heliotropism which makes him turn instinctively towards what he needs to feed his genius, and to express it, in just as natural and spontaneous a way as the sunflower turns towards sun."⁸ This premise corresponds with Eliot's notion that the past is alive in every individual poet. For example, he says, "This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional."⁹ Using the word 'influence' in both of these senses I intend to examine Arnold's influence on Eliot.

Arnold is one of the geniuses who transcend their age. He greatly influenced the formation of Eliot's ideas.

⁷ Joseph Chiari, T. S. Eliot: Poet and Dramatist (London: Vision Press Ltd., 1972), p. 20.

⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁹ Eliot, loc. cit., p. 49.

Arnold's practices as a critic worked as a model for Eliot. Of course, Arnold is not the only influence.

Several studies in the past four decades have discovered similarities in the thinking of Eliot and Arnold. Some of these are quite well done. Leonard Brown and M.L.S. Loring suggest that Eliot is a lineal descendent of Arnold. Douglas Bush also believes the same. Brown, in "Matthew Arnold's Succession: 1850-1914,"¹⁰ suggests that Arnold's noblest bequest was not his opinions but his attitudes. He thinks that Arnold's "true heirs were the poets who had direct contact with his skepticism and therefore faced life with honesty and courage--Swinburne, Meredith, Hardy, De la Mare, and T. S. Eliot."¹¹ M.L.S. Loring in "T. S. Eliot on Matthew Arnold"¹² is basically concerned with contrasting Eliot's hostility to Arnold with his own practices as a critic. Loring feels that Eliot's attacks on Arnold seem 'rather weak'. Although he points out certain similarities between Eliot and Arnold, he describes Eliot's attitude to Arnold as paradoxical.

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Leonard Brown, "Matthew Arnold's Succession: 1850-1914," Sewanee Review, XLII (1934), pp. 158-179.

11

Frederic Faverty, ed., The Victorian Poets: A Guide to Research (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, 2nd ed.), p. 222.

12

M.L.S. Loring, op. cit.

Douglas Bush suggests a strong relationship between Arnold and Eliot. He says that as "confident, dogmatic, classicist critics" they have many things in common.¹³ He also feels that they have much in common as poets and social critics.

Daniel Joseph Cahill and Ian Gregor's studies are among the few very good studies: Cahill's A Comparative Study of the Criticism of Arnold and Eliot¹⁴ is the most comprehensive study in this respect. He observes that despite Eliot's superficial antipathy towards Arnold, his practices as a critic correspond very much with Arnold's ideals for criticism. This is a very detailed study of the similarities that exist between Eliot and Arnold, for example, both fall within the classical tradition, both fought against the romantic theory of criticism, both feel the need for criticism to become involved with the larger questions of life, and both have given the nature of an ideal critic. Ian Gregor has compared Eliot and Arnold as critics as well as poets. "Eliot and Matthew Arnold" is an attempt to show the similarities as well as differences that existed between them. Gregor feels that Eliot's hostile references to Arnold can be a result of his desire to differentiate himself from Arnold.¹⁵

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Douglas Bush, op. cit., vide Chapter 13.

14

Daniel Joseph Cahill, A Comparative Study of the Criticism of Arnold and Eliot. (The Univ. of Iowa Ph.D. dissertation, 1966).

15

Ian Gregor, op. cit.

John Raleigh, in Matthew Arnold and American Culture, has devoted one chapter to T.S. Eliot. He shows how the relationship of Eliot and Arnold is threefold: (1) obvious resemblances, (2) obvious differences--through Eliot's open criticism of Arnold, and (3) intimate kinship by which Eliot assumed the same position as Arnold. He suggests that Eliot asked the same questions as Arnold, but asked them often at a deeper level and invariably provided a more extreme or radical answer.¹⁶

John Peter tries to find reasons for Eliot's constant references to Arnold in "Criterion," and shows how important Arnold was to Eliot.¹⁷ He suggests that he feels "a touch of jealousy" in Eliot's intolerance of Arnold, because Arnold got there first. He also lists those places in "Criterion" where Eliot shows high regard for Arnold. He says that Arnold's influence on Eliot extends beyond matters of content to matters of style.

These studies have tried to bring out the similarities and differences between Eliot and Arnold, but none has explored thoroughly Arnold's influence on Eliot. I suggest that not only did Eliot admire Arnold's contribution to

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John H. Raleigh, Matthew Arnold and American Culture, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961).

17

John Peter, "Eliot and The 'Criterion'," ed. Graham Martin, Eliot in Perspective: A Symposium (New York: Humanities Press, 1970).

English criticism, but he tried to match his own work with that of Arnold's.

Both, at the beginning of their careers as critics, aimed at establishing a critical theory, and tried to put it in practice. The following will outline the major critical tenets first of Arnold and then of Eliot, and will establish the foundations for this thesis.

It is very important to understand Arnold's critical position because no English or American critic since Coleridge has had a more extensive influence. His main contribution lies in three areas: (1) his constant support of the dignity of critical thinking; (2) his attempt to turn the view of the reader toward a wider, more cosmopolitan range; and (3) his courageous attempt, in an increasingly hostile environment, to reassert the traditional value of literature and his reapplication of classical criteria.

Arnold's definition of criticism is "...in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." ¹⁸ Criticism "tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces

18

This passage occurs in the concluding paragraph of the second of Arnold's lectures on Homer (Matthew Arnold, The Complete Prose Works, I., ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 140).

... Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature."¹⁹ He alludes to Periclean Athens, Elizabethan England, and Goethe's Germany.

According to Arnold, the critical spirit operates whenever a mind is functioning disinterestedly upon any subject, that is, when it is searching for "the best that is known and thought in the world" upon that subject.²⁰ Thus its business will be to create a current of true and fresh ideas.

In Arnold's hands, criticism achieves a paramount importance as a discriminating power. "To discover and define, then the dominant tendency of his age, to analyze the good from the bad, foster the good, diminish the bad-- this will be Arnold's program of criticism. Its keynote²¹ is activism and affirmation: objectivity, in short."

19

Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Essays in Criticism: First Series, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 11.

20

Ibid., p. 18.

21

Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965, 2nd ed.). p. 146.

Arnold was a great admirer of established tradition. He regarded it as a guide to future progress and knowledge. The soundness of any solution to man's problems can be strengthened by the values derived from tradition.²² The modern poet needs 'a hand to guide,' he needs to fix his attention on excellent models. The poet must look to the ancients, they are the best models for instruction. Here Arnold proposes the "touchstone" theory in criticism. By this method, any new poem should be judged against the models of the past.

Finally, for Arnold, characteristics of an ideal critic are, "the critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible and elastic spirit imaginable; he should be indeed the 'onde-yant et divers;' the undulating and diverse being of Montaigne."²³

Eliot defines the critical process most systematically in "The Function of Criticism" and "The Frontiers of Criticism." For him the critic's work is two fold, "to interpret the past to the present, and to judge the present

22

Arnold, Literature and Dogma, (London: MacMillan & Co.Ltd., 1903). Arnold argues for the need of religion in life because it represents established tradition, and, therefore, is a valuable fund of man's accumulated wisdom.

23

Arnold, "On Translating Homer," in Super, op. cit., p. 174.

in the light of the past."²⁴ Criticism functions as a guideline to poetry. It preserves the new poems within the tradition and fits them within the "ideal order" of existing monuments.

Another function of criticism for Eliot is "to preserve tradition--where a good tradition exists. It is part of his business to see literature steadily and to see it whole; and this is eminently to see it not as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time."²⁵ Eliot's emphasis on the significance of the past is well known. In "Tradition and Individual Talent" he denies any credit to a poet's claim to individuality,

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone...²⁶

A third function of criticism is to determine the nature of poetry. The critic tries to find answers to questions such as 'What is Poetry?,' although, as Eliot has admitted himself, it is not easy to find definite answers to these questions. Once the critic decides this, then he evaluates existing poetry in the light of his

²⁴
Eliot, The Bookman, LXX, No. 3, (November 1929), p. 225.

²⁵
Eliot, "Introduction," The Sacred Wood, pp. xv-xvi.

²⁶
Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 49.

discovery. This helps him to differentiate good from bad poems.

Criticism should not be used as means of expressing one's personal feelings and thoughts; it should be a sincere effort to assess the work of art according to certain standards. While performing his duty as a critic, an "ideal critic" should have no emotions except those "immediately provoked by a work of art."²⁷ But, as Eliot indicates through his writings, he realized that this is a goal which cannot be reached. For Eliot, criticism is a complementary activity to creation. His ideal critic is the poet-critic because his criticism will be genuine, and not the satisfaction of a suppressed creative wish.

Literary criticism, according to Eliot, is not auto-telic and this is the basic difference for him between art and criticism. Since art is an end in itself, it is not required to have any other ends in view; but criticism, as Eliot has pointed out, is by definition about something other than itself.²⁸ The critic also looks solely and steadfastly at the object before him. The requirements of a critic are; a remarkable sensitiveness, erudition, sense of fact and sense of history, and generalizing

²⁷Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," The Sacred Wood, p. 12.

²⁸Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," Selected Essays (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1969), p. 24.

power. He should above all things, "promote a pure contemplation of art,"²⁹ from which the accidents of personal emotion are removed. He describes criticism as follows:

...the true generalization is not something superposed upon an accumulation of perceptions; the perceptions do not, in a really appreciative mind, accumulate as a mass, but form themselves as a structure; and criticism is the statement in language of ~~th~~^{is} structure; it is a development of sensibility.

This brief sketch of Arnold's and Eliot's critical views will assist in study which follows. I will first examine Eliot's attitude towards Arnold, as reflected in his essays. Then I will examine the less evident aspects which link their works. Finally I will summarize my feelings on the influence of Arnold on Eliot.

In this chapter I have tried to set the aim of this study, which is to see the influence of Arnold on Eliot's ideas as a literary critic. The scope of this paper does not allow the examination of such influence in social and religious criticism of Eliot. Also, I have made clear the meaning of the word influence as it is used here. By influence I mean a nourishing power which enabled Eliot to discover his own genius. The assumption of this study

²⁹Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," pp. 14-15.

³⁰Ibid., p. 15.

is that Arnold was one of the nourishing sources for Eliot's genius. I have given a brief survey of those critics who have already studied Eliot and Arnold in comparison. Finally, I have given a brief description of Arnold's and Eliot's views on criticism.

Chapter II

ELIOT ON ARNOLD

Throughout his career, Eliot made explicit references to Arnold. Eliot's feelings toward Arnold are ambivalent. As a critic Eliot shares many of Arnold's beliefs, but he openly disavows a connection. He openly attacks Arnold and his comments imply strong disagreement. In spite of this surface opposition to Arnold, the reader feels that Eliot admires Arnold for what he was in his own time. In fact, in some of his writings, Eliot acknowledges Arnold's greatness and his contribution to English criticism.¹ Eliot's hostility to Arnold will be examined in this chapter. In chapter three I will examine the inherent similarities of the two critics' ideas.

It is of particular interest to note that Eliot calls Arnold "rather a friend than a leader."² Eliot wishes to be considered a "companion" rather than a "disciple." This may be Eliot's way of suggesting that he is definitely

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The main works in considering Eliot's overt opinions are as follows:

- (a) "The Return of Matthew Arnold" (part of a "Criterion" commentary written in 1925),
- (b) "Arnold and Pater," (1930), Selected Essays
- (c) "Matthew Arnold," (1933), a lecture given at Harvard.
- (d) some paragraphs in Notes Towards the Definition of Culture

2

Eliot, "Arnold and Pater", Selected Essays, p. 433.

influenced by Arnold--not as a disciple is influenced by a leader, but as one is influenced by a companion. There is little room for disagreement in the relationship between a leader and his disciples, but of course one can always disagree with, and argue with friends. This may explain why Eliot so often refers to Arnold in a tone of disagreement if not serious difference of opinion. It seems that Eliot challenged Arnold either simultaneously with or prior to a final, although not very open, acceptance of the friend's opinion.³

One area of disagreement between Eliot and Arnold is in the definition of the role of a critic. Arnold saw criticism as "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."⁴ Eliot's objection is that "this is only a prerequisite of the critic and is not criticism, which may be the result of such an endeavour."⁵ For Arnold, the work of criticism is the creation of an order of ideas, and a spirit of disinterestedness is very essential for this. Eliot seems to ignore this implication when he calls Arnold's definition of criticism 'a mere prerequisite.'

³ M.L.S. Loring in "T. S. Eliot on Matthew Arnold," p. 479, suggests that by accepting Arnold as a 'friend' and not a 'leader' Eliot recognizes the anomaly of his position.

⁴ Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 29.

⁵ Eliot, "Imperfect Critics," The Sacred Wood, p. 43.

As a matter of fact, Eliot has agreed that the basic problem of criticism is creation of order. The first task of the critic, according to Eliot, is the creation and preservation of a worthy literary tradition. Clearly, Eliot and Arnold are trying to do the same thing, that is, to create an order of ideas through criticism.

Another of Eliot's objections is Arnold's failure to recognize the boundaries of literary criticism. Eliot objects to Arnold's extension of criticism into religion, philosophy, and history. What Eliot objects to, in the words of Cahill, is not so much that Arnold found it necessary to expand the borders of criticism beyond aesthetic considerations, but that Arnold made criticism a tool for a moral or ethical indoctrination.⁶ Eliot is more a purely literary critic than Arnold, and his main objections are that Arnold ceased to be attentive to criticism of literature and thereby diminished his own effectiveness as a critic. Arnold's entry into cultural and religious fields is, in Eliot's estimation, an injudicious expansion of the critic's role. As Ian Gregor says:

⁶ Cahill, op. cit., p. 111.

Eliot's repeated charge (is) that Arnold did not know enough or practice a strict enough discipline about the kind of criticism he was employing, literary, theological, philosophical, and as a consequence he blurred the frontiers and asked questions of one genre appropriate to the other.⁷

In "Experiment in Criticism"⁸ Eliot admits that the critic must deal with the significance of ideas and with their moral and ethical implications. From 1932 onwards Eliot had increasingly committed himself to ideas that do not fall within the scope of pure literary criticism.

Eliot's strongest objections to Arnold's critical position is in the following statement on the function of poetry:

More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry our science will appear most incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.⁹

Arnold's calling poetry our "consolation and stay" is threatening to Eliot. It has an unfounded and illegitimate destiny. Here Arnold expects too much from poetry. What is more objectionable to Eliot is that Arnold gives predominance to ideas:

7

Ian Gregor, op. cit., p. 269.

8

Eliot, The Bookman, LXX, No. 3 (November, 1929), p. 230.

9

Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," Essays in Criticism: Second Series (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), p. 2.

...for poetry the idea is everything: the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact.¹⁰

Eliot also does not like Arnold's incapacity for connected reasoning:

Just as his poetry is too reflective, too ruminative, to rise over to the first rank, so also is his criticism. He is not, on the one hand, quite a pure enough poet to have the sudden illuminations which we find in the criticisms of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats; and on the other hand he lacked the mental discipline, the passion for exactness in the use of words and for consistency and continuity of reasoning, which distinguishes the philosopher. He sometimes confuses words and meanings: neither as poet nor as philosopher should he have been satisfied with such an utterance as that "poetry is at bottom a criticism of life." A more profound insight into poetry and a more exact use of language than Arnold's are required.¹¹

Eliot assures us that Arnold lacks "the power of connected reasoning at any length: his flights are either short flights or circular flights. Nothing in his prose work, therefore, will stand very close analysis, and we may well feel that the positive content of many words is very small."¹²

In other words, Eliot believes that Arnold is a vague and imprecise thinker, an easy prey to the temptation of confusing genres. In "The Return of Matthew Arnold" Eliot says,

¹⁰

Ibid., p. 1

¹¹

Eliot, "The Modern Mind," The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 122.

¹²

Eliot, "Arnold and Pater," Selected Essays, p. 431.

We realize now that Arnold was neither thorough enough, nor comprehensive enough, to mark any fundamental alteration of literary values: he failed to ascend to first principles: his thought lacks the logical rigour of his master Newman: his taste is biased by convictions and prejudices which he did not take the trouble to dissect to their elements. The best of Arnold's criticism is an illustration of his ethical views ...¹³

Eliot attacks the vagueness of Arnold's thinking in another of his famous works, The Sacred Wood. In the introduction, he says, "In Culture and Anarchy, in Literature and Dogma, Arnold was not occupied so much in establishing criticism as in attacking the uncritical. The difference is that while in constructive work something can be done, destructive work must incessantly be repeated ..."¹⁴ Eliot contents that Arnold is more concerned with "attacking the uncritical" rather than with establishing and preserving a sound literary theory.

In the closing paragraph of "The Perfect Critic" Eliot has said that it is false "to assume that there are ages of criticism and ages of creativeness, as if by plunging ourselves into intellectual darkness we were in better hopes of finding spiritual light."¹⁵ Eliot maintains that "Matthew Arnold distinguishes far too bluntly

¹³

Eliot, "The Criterion," Vol. III, No. 10 (1925) p. 162.

¹⁴

Eliot, "Introduction," The Sacred Wood, p. xiii.

¹⁵

Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," p. 16.

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¹³

Eliot, "The Criterion," Vol. III, No. 10 (1925) p. 162.

¹⁴

Eliot, "Introduction," The Sacred Wood, p. xiii.

¹⁵

Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," p. 16.

... between the two activities (criticism and creation)". He asserts that "you cannot fuse creation with criticism as you can fuse criticism with creation. The critical activity finds its highest, its true fulfilment in a kind of union with creation in the labour of the artist."¹⁶

For Eliot, criticism and creation are two complementary directions of sensibility. This close relation probably originates in his belief that the critic and 'the creative artist should frequently be the same person.' For Eliot, criticism is more than "a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere," and more than a "preparation" for creation: it is a vital complementary activity of the creative art itself.

As the essays in The Sacred Wood show, Eliot sees criticism as a supplement to the creative process. One of the functions of criticism is to answer questions like What is Poetry? and What are its uses? It is never primarily concerned with ideas. In Eliot's opinion, Arnold went wrong here. "This was the flaw in Arnold's criticism as Eliot evaluated it. Arnold became too preoccupied with propagandizing ideas and progressively less attentive to the free inquiry so crucial to criticism."¹⁷ Eliot

¹⁶
Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," pp. 29 and 30-31.

¹⁷
Cahill, op. cit., p. 92.

accuses Arnold of being "rather a propagandist for criticism than a critic, a popularizer rather than a creator of ideas."¹⁸

While admitting the justice of Eliot's reactions it is interesting to note how Eliot's own later critical practice becomes less at variance with Arnold's. For example, Eliot's insistence on the boundary between religion and poetry becomes vague as time goes by. Ian Gregor notes that he can be criticized for doing the same mixing of genres that he ascribed to Arnold: "... the kind of justice or injustice which Eliot does to Arnold's criticism seems to matter less as his work falls into perspective."¹⁹

Eliot is constantly aware of his similarities to Arnold, and to distinguish himself from Arnold seems to have become a main task in his writing. John Peter says that jealousy for Arnold's achievements is the reason of Eliot's intolerance, "A faint sense of grievance that--in the matter of outlook at least--Arnold had often rather irritatingly got there first."²⁰

The harshness of Eliot's reactions to Arnold should be balanced against the high regard that he had for

18

Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," p. 1.
Here I agree with Eliot. Propagandist is to be taken here in the sense of 'one who is theorizing,' rather than a practitioner of criticism. That Arnold is. But in that sense it is so true of Eliot himself.

19

Ian Gregor, op. cit., p. 270.

²⁰John Peter, op. cit., p. 253.

Arnold's writings. For example, he has accepted Arnold as the most influential critic of the late nineteenth century. Examples of this regard for Arnold are seen in the next chapter. We can see that Eliot is definitely influenced by Arnold and criticizes him severely in self defense as if he is trying to remind the reader every now and then by 'I am not like Arnold.'

In this chapter I have mainly explored Eliot's references of Arnold in the tone of disagreement. Some of these objections were voiced in self-defense on the part of Eliot. Eliot is very keen on differentiating himself from Arnold, and that is why he has so many objections. Besides, some of these objections do not carry great weight because Eliot's practices as a critic happen to be at variance with the objections that he raised against Arnold.

Chapter III

TWO GREAT CRITICS

In the introduction of The Sacred Wood Eliot apologizes for his own earlier objections to Arnold. His uneasiness is evident in the following passage:

To anyone who is at all capable of experiencing the pleasures of justice, it is gratifying to be able to make amends to a writer whom one has vaguely depreciated for some years. The faults and foibles of Matthew Arnold are no less evident to me now than twelve years ago, after my first admiration for him; but I hope that now, on re-reading some of his prose with more care, I can better appreciate his position.¹

This is a proof of Eliot's attempt to re-evaluate Arnold. At other places Eliot has praised Arnold as in his commentaries in the "Criterion" and his essays in The Sacred Wood. This is an evidence of Eliot's belief that in spite of faults or weaknesses, Arnold had undertaken a great task and achieved great success.

Among the places where Eliot praised Arnold was his commentaries on Prof. Garrod. Eliot says that Garrod's tributes to Matthew Arnold and Aristotle are "merited and appropriate."² This suggests Eliot's respect for Arnold. Again, in his commentary on F. H. Bradley, Eliot says:

¹ Eliot, "Introduction," The Sacred Wood, p. xi.

² Eliot, "The Criterion," Vol. II, No. 8 (1924), p. 371.

Those who belittle the importance of Oxford in the modern world should hesitate over the names of Arnold, Newman, Pater, and Bradley. None of these writers had, or could have, the prodigious popularity and apparent influence of the author of Sartor Resartus, or the kingdoms of this world which have been conveyed to Mr. H. G. Wells and Mr. Bernard Shaw. They worked in comparative obscurity, or in the deceptive certainty of moderate success. But their intentions were not squandered upon their generation; and, in the gradual dissolution of the nineteenth century ideas and ideals, theirs are amongst the names which carry the most promise of future power.³

Arnold, for Eliot, holds an important place among the philosophers Oxford gave to England.

In his essay "Imperfect Critics" Arnold is named among the 'notable English critics.' Here Eliot is complimentary, "Matthew Arnold was intelligent, and by so much difference as the presence of one intelligent man makes, our age is inferior to that of Arnold."⁴ Eliot praises Arnold because he "had real taste" and his work "will always have been good sense." Eliot eventually admits that "even if the delight we get from Arnold's writings, prose and verse, be moderate, yet he is in some respects the most satisfactory man of his age ... however well-nourished we may be on previous literature and previous culture, we cannot afford to neglect Arnold."⁵

³ Eliot, "The Criterion," Vol. III, No. 9 (1924), p. 1.

⁴ Eliot, "Imperfect Critics," pp. 39 and 45.

⁵ Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," pp. 104-105.

Arnold is given another credit—he is accepted as the most influential critic of his age by Eliot. For Eliot the academic literary opinions of his time were formed by Arnold:

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.

Here Arnold is accepted as the leading critic of his age.

Eliot's ideal critic is the poet critic. Swinburne meets this requirement. Eliot says, "Swinburne found an adequate outlet for the creative impulse in his poetry; and none of it was forced back and out through his critical prose."⁷ Eliot attacks Arnold for distinguishing the powers of criticism and creativity "far too bluntly." But this criticism of Arnold is not substantial--Eliot apparently ignores the fact that Arnold has suggested, at the end of "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," that criticism "may have, in no contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity."⁸ In other words, this attack is further evidence of Eliot's uncertainty regarding

⁶ Eliot, "The Modern Mind," pp. 122-123.

⁷ Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," p. 6.

⁸ Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 30.

Arnold's attitudes. Eliot finds Arnold a threat to his own status as a poet-critic. Instead of admitting Arnold's greatness as a poet-critic, Eliot accuses him on other theoretical grounds.

Eliot's charge that "Arnold was a propagandist rather than a critic" can be justified. Eliot regrets the fact that Arnold wasted his energies on non-literary polemics, simply because the England of his time did not have enough second-order minds. Eliot is sympathetic to Arnold in his judgment and suggests that "in a society in which the arts were seriously studied, in which the art of writing was respected, Arnold might have become a critic."⁹ At another place Eliot says that

...A man of ideas needs ideas, or pseudo-ideas, to fight against. And Arnold lacked the active resistance which is necessary to keep the mind at its sharpest.¹⁰

Eliot feels that Arnold was "a talented victim of the circumstances which he was the first one to diagnose and fight against."¹¹ Arnold lived in such an age that he had to do the job of minor critics too, and this turned him into a propagandist. Also, he did not have many strong

⁹ Eliot, "Introduction," The Sacred Wood, p. xiii.

¹⁰ Eliot, "Imperfect Critics," pp. 45-46.

¹¹ John Henry Raleigh, Matthew Arnold and American Culture (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), p. 206.

adversaries to keep his wits alert. Had he lived in a different age, he would have been a successful man of letters.

As we know from his own writings, Eliot is conscious of carrying on the work of Arnold as a leading critic. In the last chapter I showed how strongly Eliot objected to some of Arnold's opinions regarding literary criticism. The best explanation for these objections can be elicited from Eliot's essays. It is interesting to note that Eliot uses the word "weaknesses" whenever referring to these objections. Arnold is among the masters in criticism who, every hundred years or so, try to put the poets and the poems in a new order. Eliot is conscious that he himself is next in line after Arnold. He is also aware that this task of reordering is tough, "it only represents an ideal," especially because the majority of the public and critics blindly follow the opinions of the previous master, without taking the trouble to think. Dryden, Johnson and Arnold have "performed the task as well as human frailty will allow."¹² Thus the leader does not succeed completely, his work has some weaknesses. The nature of such weaknesses differs from one leader to another: "Each new master of criticism performs a useful service merely by the fact that his errors are of

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Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," p. 109.

a different kind from the last; and the longer the sequence of critics we have, the greater amount of correction is possible."¹³

Thus, Eliot suggests that most of Arnold's faults were not personal failures but the result of his age. Eliot understands this and regrets that Arnold was a victim of circumstances. This approach to Arnold is similar to his treatment of Johnson. Eliot tries to justify the failings of Johnson by showing their causes. He wants us to take into account the literary and religious limitations of his time instead of stressing where he outgrew them.

Eliot's criticism of Arnold is one aspect of their relationship. As literary critics, however, they had many things in common. For example, similarities are found in their ideas and techniques as critics. John Chalker says,

It has been shown that Eliot's tone can be closely paralleled in Arnold and there are many areas where their ideas are also very similar. In both one finds a reverence for a free play of intelligence which is said to be characteristic of the French mind; both are fond of imagining cultural development as an organic growth towards maturity; both insist on the importance of viewing the European tradition as a whole. Nor do they necessarily disagree in their particular judgments: Eliot returns more than once to praise one of the lines from Dante which Arnold had used as a touchstone of excellence.

¹³

Ibid.

¹⁴

John Chalker, "Authority and Personality in Eliot's Criticism," in Martin, ed., op. cit., p. 196.

The first marked similarity is their dissatisfaction with the age in which they lived. Both found their times unpoetic, and both condemned the poetic taste of their age. Arnold more than once shows great concern for the declining poetic taste in his day--a day which lacked coherence and unity; was without "moral grandeur," marked with "spiritual discomfort." In his letters to Clough he bemoans his unpoetic age, "Reflect, too as I cannot but do here more and more ... how deeply unpoetical the age and all one's surroundings are. Not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving--but unpoetical."¹⁵

Arnold's dissatisfaction with the unpoetic age in which he lived is very vividly seen in his last image of the "Dover Beach."

...the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.¹⁶

Eliot is also highly dissatisfied with the deteriorating cultural values in his society. In "The Waste Land" he

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Arnold, Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Clough, ed., H. F. Lowry (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 99.

16

Arnold, Poems: Lyric & Elegiac Poems (London: Macmillan & Co., 1885), p. 64.

has expressed this:

The river's tent is broken; the last fingers
of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the broken land, unheard. The nymphs
are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich
papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette
ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. 17

Eliot also had complained against the poetic taste of his age. Like his nineteenth century predecessor Eliot is deeply concerned about the decay in the standards of art and culture 'in any mass society organized for profit.' Eliot analyses the causes that brought about that decay and gives his definition of culture as 'a whole way of life.' Arnold had made similar attempts to ward off the encroachments of philistinism over the values of a cultured society. His conception of culture as leading to 'true human perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a general perfection developing all parts of our society' is echoed in Eliot's conception of culture. Both would love to see England attain this ideal culture.

A natural consequence of this awareness of the unpoetic age is distrust in the reading public's sense of

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Eliot, Collected Poems: 1909-1962. (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1963) p. 60.

judgment. It is not an exaggeration to say that Arnold addressed his poetry more to the practitioners of the poetic art than to its readers. Eliot did likewise. In the words of Trilling, "...Arnold could find little charm in the bourgeois world. Like Wordsworth before him, like T.S. Eliot after, he wrote primarily for a small group of saddened intellectuals for whom the dominant world was a wasteland, men who felt heartsick and deprived of some part of their energy by their civilization."¹⁸

In ages of such chaos, both men consciously assumed a position of leadership among the thinking public. They decided to perform the task of 'those few who have taken the trouble to think.' They both are very much aware of this responsibilities, similarly addressing themselves to poets and critics, and not so much to the reading public. When the "majority of critics can be expected only to parrot the opinions of the last master of criticism; among more independent minds a period of destruction, of preposterous over-estimation, and of successive fashions takes place...a new authority comes to introduce some order."¹⁹ Both Arnold and Eliot felt that their ages needed such authority, and they tried to fulfill this need.

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Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

19

Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," p. 109.

Since contemporary age was not an ideal age for literary pursuit, each yearned for and took serious interest in the past. Arnold yearned for Periclean Greece. He called it a 'modern' society because it had achieved the maturity which gives modernity to any society as well as to its literature. The literature of Rome, though modern, is not adequate for Arnold. This sense of yearning for past is stronger in Arnold than in Eliot.

Another striking similarity is their common regard for tradition and classicism. As critics, Eliot and Arnold shared a high esteem for classical tradition. Both are accepted as classicists--they regard classical qualities in literature as essential for any great literature or literary criticism. Further, the values that they discovered in a classical work are quite similar. Eliot's characteristics of a classic--maturity of mind, manners and language--are in line with Arnold's. Even their definition of criticism and the role that they assign to the critic are very much within the classical tradition. In the words of Cahill,

...each looked to criticism as an instrument to correct taste and foster significant and permanent values in literature ... each man viewed criticism not as an end in itself but as vital and complementary to the creation of poetry.²⁰

Both Arnold and Eliot have positive theories regarding the relationship of creation and criticism. These two processes are not alien but connected necessarily. In Eliot's opinion, the creative and critical are two complementary directions of the same sensibility. Criticism is important in the work of creation itself. "Probably, indeed, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of sifting combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing: this fruitful toil is as much critical as creative ... some creative writers are superior to others because their critical faculty is superior."²¹ Arnold has said something similar, "...to have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and the great proof of being alive, and it is not denied to criticism to have it; but then criticism must be sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever widening its knowledge. Then it may have, in one contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity..."²²

We cannot separate the two activities.

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Cahill, op. cit., p. 148.

21

Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," p. 30.

22

Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 30.

Both critics put special emphasis on the value of tradition. Arnold has suggested a greater emphasis upon the value of tradition and the need for an authoritative center of excellence. For him, an adequate literature must be "founded upon a rich past and upon an instructive fullness of experience." Eliot substantiates Arnold's emphasis on tradition in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," where he declares that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone, you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical criticism."²³

In addition both put great emphasis on traditional rather than individual authority. Both fought against the romantic theory of criticism that emphasises the mind of the poet and claims that the psychological pattern produces the work of art. Eliot finds fault with Blake, saying that Blake lacked the framework of accepted and traditional ideas which would have prevented him from indulging in a philosophy of his own, and concentrated his attention

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Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 49.

upon the problems of the poet.²⁴ The same critical principle can be seen in his treatment of Shelley, too.

As mentioned earlier, each has tried to formulate his own theory of criticism, and to establish critical standards which would be valid independent of time and space. Eliot's ideas of the function of criticism are not in total opposition to Arnold's. For Eliot, as for Arnold, the chief principle of criticism is the problem of order. Cahill says, "Each critic had a compelling need to create both a personal and a literary order out of the chaos around him."²⁵ For Arnold, criticism tends to establish an order of ideas and to make best ideas prevail. These ideas, in their turn, help the creative power to operate properly. Eliot shares this view that no artist can produce great literature without the order, recognition, and arrangement which the critical faculty alone provides.

Arnold's insistence on disinterestedness in criticism is echoed in Eliot's notion of legitimate critical activity. As Cahill has observed: "In a fashion similar to Arnold, Eliot has upheld the virtue of impersonality in criticism, and he has stressed the need for an Arnoldian disinterestedness--an effort to raise honest criticism

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Eliot, "William Blake," Selected Essays, p. 322.

²⁵

Cahill, op. cit., p. 78.

above the inhibiting forces or personal, practical, and political likes and dislikes."²⁶ In the words of Eliot, "a critic should have no emotions at all except those provoked by a work of art and these ... are, when valid, not to be called emotions at all."²⁷ Arnold says that the rule for English criticism can be summarized in one word--disinterestedness. Then he adds: "And how is criticism to show disinterestness? By keeping aloof from what is called the practical view of things; by resolutely following the law of its one nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which he touches."²⁸

Each has tried to define the nature of an ideal critic. Eliot, like Arnold, believes that an ideal critic must have an acute awareness of facts. This is not "a trifling or frequent gift..the sense of fact is something very slow to develop..."²⁹ Fact does not mean biographical or historical details of the writer's life. An ideal critic should be a master and not a servant of facts. For example, the discovery of Shakespeare's laundry bills would not be of much use to him. Fact will help the reader in his

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Ibid., p. 97.

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Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," pp. 12-13.

²⁸

Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 18.

²⁹

Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," pp. 31-33.

preparation for understanding a work of art. Coleridge and Goethe fall short in their judgment of fact because they allow personal opinion and fancy to rule over the sense of fact. Arnold calls this sense "truth," which an ideal critic must pursue. Sainte-Beuve had this quality of 'truth'. In Arnold's words, Sainte-Beuve was "a critic of measure, not exuberant; of the centre, not provincial; of keen industry and curiosity, with 'Truth' ... for his motto; moreover with gay and amiable temper, his manner as good as his matter,"³⁰

An ideal critic, for both Eliot and Arnold, should also be in pursuit of cosmopolitan culture. Arnold says, "The English critic of literature...must dwell much on foreign thought..."³¹ It is suggested by Prof. Saintsbury that Arnold was the first English critic to urge systematically "the importance, the necessity, of that comparative criticism of different literatures, the half-blind working of which had helped to create, if it had not actually created, the Romantic movement."³² In

30

Arnold, Five Uncollected Essays, ed., Kenneth Allott, (Liverpool, 1953), p. 74.

31

Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 18.

32

George Saintsbury, A History of English Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe, III, Modern Criticism (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1904), p. 535.

England in the nineteenth century Spanish and Italian poetry were neglected, even French poetry had lost its charm, and German literature was comparatively little known. This was a threatening situation and so Arnold pointed out that the duty of a critic is 'to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas.'

As the editor of "The Criterion," Eliot put this ideal into practice. The aim of "The Criterion" was to bring together "the best in new thinking and new writing in its time from all countries of Europe that had anything to contribute to the common good."³³ John Peter has recorded,

...he (Eliot) notes with justifiable pride that the "Criterion" was then the first English periodical to print such European authors as 'Marcel Proust, Paul Valery, Jacques Riviere, Jean Cocteau, Ramon Fernandez, Jacques Maritain, Charles Maurras, Henri Massis, Wilhelm Worringer, Max Scheler, E. R. Curtius' (Criterion, " XVIII, p. 271) and perhaps Pirandello, thus introducing them to many readers for the first time.³⁴

Arnold suggests the 'touchstone' method as a means of executing his duties for an ideal critic. Arnold

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T. S. Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1967), p. 115.

34

John Peter, "Eliot and the 'Criterion'," in Martin, ed., op. cit., p. 260.

advises a critic "to have always in ... mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry." These passages will work as "an infallible touchstones for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality..."³⁵ As a critic, Eliot shows his awareness of tradition by often employing Arnold's 'Touchstone' method of judging poetry, although the comparisons he makes are much wider in range and more appropriate for the passage in question.

The two critics show an expanding awareness of the moral significance of literature. Both felt the need for criticism to become involved with the larger questions of life. Both put special emphasis on the need for art and criticism to be aware of the moral values in life. Eliot started by opposing Arnold's mixing of genres, but he himself realized in his later career that criticism cannot deal with pure literary problems: it has to embrace other branches of human existence.

Not only in the theory of criticism, but also in their reactions to certain movements of literature, both Arnold and Eliot show similarities. Eliot approved of Arnold's objections to the Romantic movement, "The valuation of the Romantic poets, in academic circles, is

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Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," p. 10.

still very largely that which Arnold made. It was right, it was just, it was necessary for its time..."³⁶ Arnold's objection to Romantic poetry is that these poets were deficient in knowledge: they relied too much on individual judgment. In the words of Arnold, "The English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety."³⁷ In Eliot's view, the Romantics are heretics; worse, they are immature. Echoing Goethe he has said, "There may be a good deal to be said for romanticism in life, there is no place for it in literature." This suggests, along with the similarity in the qualities that Arnold and Eliot ascribed to a classic, that they are looking for the same values for great literature. With their classical mentality, both disagreed with the Romantic ideology.

In "The Metaphysical Poets" Eliot distinguishes between the reflective poet and the intellectual poet. This is similar to Arnold's distinction regarding the varying powers of the poet to render thought and experience in

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Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," p. 110.

³⁷

Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 12.

poetic wholes. Eliot has said of Tennyson that he "thought and felt by fits."³⁸ Arnold has similarly criticized Tennyson. In "On Translating Homer" Arnold quotes Tennyson as an example of the reflective poet and says, "In Homer's poetry it is all natural thought in natural words: in Mr. Tennyson's poetry it is all distilled thoughts in distilled words."³⁹ Thus, the 'reflective' quality is the same as 'distilled thoughts in distilled words.'

This does not mean that Eliot's thinking is always similar to Arnold's. There are striking differences also. For example. Eliot has disagreed with Arnold in the evaluation of Milton. Milton is praised highly by Arnold as the solitary and significant exception of a great poet in the Elizabethan age. He is a touchstone for Arnold. Milton is in continuous possession of the 'grand style', and according to Arnold, is the only English poet who has "the power and the charm of the great poets of antiquity."⁴⁰ For Eliot Milton is unsatisfactory in many respects. He finds Milton's language artificial and conventional, "his style is not a classic style in that it is not the elevation of a common style, by the final touch of genius,

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Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays, p. 288.

³⁹
Arnold, "On Translating Homer," in Super, ed., Complete Prose Works, I., op. cit., p. 205.

⁴⁰
Arnold, "Milton," Essays in Criticism: Second Series, pp. 34-40.

to greatness." Milton's influence on the later period was much more deplorable than Dryden's because the latter tried to preserve "the tradition of conversational language in poetry." Milton was not able to achieve an integration of his ideas and poetry as there is a division within him "between the philosopher or theologian and the poet."

But this disagreement with Arnold only proves Arnold's influence on Eliot. Eliot has used Arnold's critical commentaries as an index of areas of literary importance, even though he agreed with certain points of Arnold and disagreed on others. The very fact that he used Arnold as an index proves that he was strongly influenced by Arnold.

In this chapter I have examined Eliot's praise of Arnold. Eliot's objections must be weighted against his praise of Arnold. Wherever he deserved it, Eliot has given due merit to Arnold's greatness. As it is seen here, Eliot tried to re-evaluate his harsh criticism of Arnold. Many similarities exist between these two critics. I have tried to show some of them. They also have differences, but these differences suggest influence of Arnold on Eliot. In the next chapter I will explore more of Arnold's influence on Eliot.

Chapter 4

INFLUENCES

As was observed in the previous three chapters, Eliot constantly returns to Arnold--not always, it is true, to offer compliments--because while opinions, conclusions and methods divide them, they are intimately linked by diagnoses, attitudes and ideals that are similar, if not actually common or identical. Both Eliot and Arnold belong to the same stream of intellectual opinion, and share a common world view. The world view that they share is reflected in their conception of the past, their concern for the present and their ideal for the future of literature. Before examining affinities of Arnold and Eliot, a summary of the findings thus far will be necessary.

It was shown in the last chapter that the similarities that exist between Arnold and Eliot are found in their thoughts, attitudes, and techniques. Both Eliot and Arnold have a strong awareness of the significance of the past in the present and future. Both insisted on the need of preserving the tradition--in life as well as in literature. Tradition serves as a norm, a guideline for individual behavior. Therefore, special efforts should be made to preserve and enrich tradition. Both are aware of the dangers of investing too much power in individual judgment,

and suggest that we should let tradition regulate our decisions. It is the critic's duty to recognize and sustain tradition.

Arnold suggested the 'touchstone' method as a way of utilizing tradition. The lines and expressions of the great masters can serve as touchstones for new poems. Eliot has recommended a similar method, with his own list of such lines. This desire to keep within the limits of tradition suggests an inclination for classicism. Eliot has declared himself a classicist, and although Arnold is ascribed some romantic qualities, his main interests and ideals have established him as a classicist.

Another aspect of their world view is their concern for the present--the age in which they lived. Both have expressed a dissatisfaction with the poetic taste in their respective societies. The low standard of their contemporaries disturbed them. They took up the initiative to raise this standard. One way of doing this was to familiarize the reading public with the best ideas available in other literatures. References to other literatures and cultures are prevalent in Eliot's and Arnold's writings.

Eliot and Arnold tried to relate literature to morality and thereby to improve the poetic taste of their times. They were not only literary critics, but also social and religious critics. Because of the complex ages in which

they lived, a critic could not limit himself to purely literary problems.

Their common world view also includes a provision for the future. It is the critic's responsibility to create a milieu in which future poets can create good literature. A closer connection between creative and critical activities is needed. For this, the society needs an ideal critic. For Eliot, as for Arnold, the main characteristic of the ideal critic is disinterestedness. The critic should not let his personal bias or private feelings interfere with his judgment. Criticism should establish and follow rules which are true for all ages and all nations.

The fact that they are sharers of the same world view indicates a possible--direct or indirect--influence of Arnold on Eliot. But, these similarities alone are not strong evidence of such an influence. However, not only are there similarities between Eliot and Arnold but real affinities also exist between them. In Raleigh's opinion, the relationship between Arnold and Eliot is three-fold:

...on one level there are obvious resemblances. On the other level, that is, in Eliot's explicit criticism of Arnold, there are obvious differences. On a third, and more profound level, there is an intimate kinship by which Eliot assumed the same position as Arnold, but made

radical and carried to an extremity his predecessor's thought.¹

It is this 'intimate kinship'--I have called it real affinity--that indicates the degree that Eliot was influenced by Arnold. In this chapter, I will first examine these affinities, and then show influences.

As used here, affinity means any connection that exists between two people through natural attraction or a close likeness in nature and taste. Affinity suggests a much closer relationship between the ideas than similarities. In other words, affinities may be called 'known similarities'--those similarities that are inherent, and recognized by one or both people.

Affinities can and do exist in spite of several points of disagreement between two people. Although Eliot strongly objected to some of Arnold's notions, he has praised him on many occasions. This praise balances his severe criticism of Arnold. Moreover, as is shown in Chapter three, Eliot is ready to re-evaluate Arnold, and view his weaknesses sympathetically. He finds fault with the age in which Arnold lived as a means of justifying Arnold's failures. That Eliot tries to exculpate Arnold for any reason argues strongly that the differences of opinions

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Raleigh, Matthew Arnold and the American Culture, op. cit., p. 195.

on certain points do not preclude the existence of affinities between these two critics. Raleigh has observed,

If...Eliot's criticism does not seek to demolish Arnold absolutely, and if, in sum, it contains much praise as well as blame, the reason is that there are deep and powerful affinities between the two critics. They both asked the same kind of questions, and their answers differ in degree rather than in kind.²

The affinities listed in the following lines are likely to show their relationships in a new light. First, in personal life as well as in literature they are advocates of discipline and order--literature is a creation of order. Second, there is a preference for classical maturity over romantic confusion. Third, they both exhibit cultural cosmopolitanism--both feel that it is not enough to know your own culture, you must know other cultures too. Fourth, both Arnold and Eliot feel the necessity for the critic to think in order to preserve the literary taste since 'the mass of mankind will never have an ardent zeal for seeing things as they are.'³

The force of Eliot's attraction to Arnold indicates that he was aware of these affinities. It seems that Eliot regarded Arnold as the only Victorian critic worth

²Ibid., p. 214.

³M. Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," pp. 21-22.

discussing or even worth dissenting from on particular issues. According to Eliot, Arnold alone among his contemporaries reacted correctly to the critical situation of his time. He raised the right questions, even if he did not always give the right answers or answers correctly or adequately formulated.

It is 'the sense of his time' reflected in some of his pursuits that makes Arnold important to Eliot. Eliot is willing to see Arnold "in his age," not from the viewpoint of the early twentieth century, but as his greatness was in his own age, Arnold's work may seem insignificant in the early twentieth century, but indeed it was very valuable for the Victorian age. Eliot observed that Arnold's judgment of the Romantic poets "must have appeared startlingly independent...at its time." Eliot finds Arnold to be "in some respects the most satisfactory man of letters of his age."⁴

Arnold's contribution to the development of Eliot's notion of "poet-critic" in England is significant. Raleigh observes, rightly, that one development in the history of English criticism, for Eliot, was an accelerating growth of self consciousness and subtlety, as the comparison of

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T. S. Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," p. 104.

Dryden and Coleridge would attest.⁵ The kind of importance Eliot attached to Arnold can be seen from the following remark:

In the criticism of Arnold we find a continuation of the work of the Romantic poets with a new appraisal of the poetry of the past by a method which, lacking the precision of Johnson, gropes toward wider and deeper connections.⁶

This passage supplies the clue to Eliot's rarely noticed affinities with Arnold. These affinities are more fundamental than any differences. Because of the chaos around him, and a lack of certainty regarding his approach, method and formulations, Arnold only "gropes" and can not achieve complete success in new fields. Yet, it is more important, as Eliot notes above, that Arnold gropes towards "wider and deeper connections" than his contemporaries were aware of. The fact that Eliot has noticed Arnold's contribution brings him closer to Arnold, and suggests that Eliot recognized the deep affinities that existed between the two. This suggests that by following a line of thinking similar to Arnold's, Eliot might successfully achieve those wider and deeper connections that Arnold was only 'groping' to achieve.

On the basis of these affinities, and the similarities explored in Chapter three, I propose that Eliot's reading

⁵ Raleigh, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁶ Eliot, "The Modern Mind," p. 122.

of Arnold strongly influenced his ideas as a critic.

Eliot is definitely influenced by Arnold's belief that it is the function of criticism to create ideas, which, in their turn, serve as raw material for the creative artist. Eliot feels very strongly that the poet should not attempt to create new ideas, but follow a viable tradition. Dante's greatness, for Eliot, consisted in his acute sensitiveness to the cultural and intellectual tradition in which he was placed. Dante did not attempt to create tradition, nor did he impose any original ideas upon his work.

Arnold had said that the proper poet has nothing to do with making ideas. All of Eliot's criticism flows from this statement. Eliot also feels the same way, saying that such an attempt diverts the poet's attention from the aim of the creation. In his essay on Blake he says that this was the deficiency of Blake's poetry--his philosophy illustrates "the crankiness, the eccentricity, which frequently affects writers outside of the Latin traditions and which such a critic as Arnold should certainly have rebuked."⁷ Eliot measures Blake's greatness by this standards set by Arnold. Eliot rejects highly original, eccentric or heterodox ideas in poetry.

Eliot placed a supreme value on tradition because it allows a vital continuation of the great poetic achieve-

⁷Eliot, "William Blake," pp. 321-322.

ments of the past. Eliot indicates again and again the necessity for the poet to work within the scope of a living tradition. All poets stand in a two-fold relationship to this 'ideal order': either they are in rebellion against this tradition, or they are in harmony with its positive effects on poetry. Eliot has insisted, like Arnold before him, that no poet stands alone, that his meaning and significance must always be assessed in relation to the poets of the past, because the past is the vital shaping force of the present. The poet can never neglect the impact the past exerts upon him. The past, kept alive; through tradition, works as a significant creative stimulus. "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone...you must set him for contrast and comparison, among the dead."⁸ Eliot believes that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past.

Eliot renounced the cult of the "free intellegence"--the critic and the poet should possess an awareness of the two-and-a-half thousand years of the European literary tradition. The significance that Arnold and Eliot attached to the past and tradition is reflected in their dislike for and protest against the aesthetic anarchism of the nineteenth century. Arnold's belief in the classical

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Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" p. 49.

ideal of order, clarity and definition has affected Eliot's preference for classicism. Eliot declared himself a 'classicist in literature' and insisted on order, definition and clarity as essential qualities of art.

For Eliot, criticism should have maturity and a sense of history--this is clearly Arnold's influence, because maturity and sense of history are the foundations of Arnold's function of criticism. In Arnold's opinion, the production of great literature is possible only in the atmosphere of intense maturity and intellectual activity. He believes that it is the task of criticism to 'establish an order of ideas.' When such order does not exist, the result is immaturity. Eliot has directed the charge of immaturity against the Romantics--their age was unripe. Eliot's maturity is Arnold's vision of social and intellectual ripeness.

One practical function of tradition is to provide a norm for the new works of art. This is called the 'touchstone' method. Lines from great poems of the past are selected and used as a standard for all the new poems. Arnold's touchstone method has influenced Eliot. Using Homer, Dante, Villon and Leopardi as standards for assessing English poets, Arnold formulated, however tentatively, a comparative method which anticipated Eliot's own concept and procedure of criticism. The following remark from the 1928 preface

to The Sacred Wood shows the influence clearly:

Hence, in criticizing poetry, we are right if we begin, with what sensibility and what knowledge of other poetry we possess, with poetry as excellent words in excellent arrangement and excellent metre.⁹

The touchstone method implies Arnold's recognition of English literature as an integral part of European literature and, in that sense, can be taken as the beginning of the war on "provincialism" which Eliot, along with Pound, was to continue in the early twentieth century. The term "provincialism" is often used similarly by Arnold and Eliot. Eliot's definition of the expression "provincial" in his essay, "What is a Classic?" is an echo of Arnold-- agreement by assimilation. In "Arnold and Pater," Eliot had acknowledged Arnold's use of this word, although he noticed that "in his books dealing with Christianity he seems bent upon illustrating in himself the provincialism which is rebuked in others."¹⁰

In an age of conflict and instability, Arnold's 'gropings' in the wider intellectual sphere covered the area of cultural integration also. The only method of attaining cultural integrity is to establish connections between creation and criticism, literature and culture, and between

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Eliot, "Preface," The Sacred Wood, p. ix.

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Eliot, "Arnold and Pater," p. 435.

culture and religion. Arnold was the first one to recognize this need. Eliot's concern for cultural integrity and durability came under similar Arnoldic influence.

For Arnold, literature is closely associated with culture. Arnold's conception of criticism is: "...it is a temper of mind which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result."¹¹ It is very essential to know other cultures thoroughly before one can know one's own culture. The knowledge of different cultures gives a broad outlook and prevents the tendency of 'provincialism.' The duty of the critic is to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world. This openness to other cultures and literatures aids the critic in his goal of circulation of fresh ideas in the society. Eliot's cosmopolitan outlook was formed under the influence of Arnold. Eliot, inspired by Arnold, championed the necessity of one European culture, and strived for it.

Whatever objections Eliot expressed about Arnold as a critic, he has been influenced by Arnold's suggestion that the main task of criticism should be an attempt "to

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Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 29.

see the object as it really is." Arnold's commitment to a standard of literary values which transcends the personal and immediate has shaped Eliot's conception of criticism as a set of rules which are true for all nations for all time. For Arnold, criticism "tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces..."¹² Like Arnold, Eliot believes that the critic should see literature as timeless:

It is part of his (critic's) business to see literature steadily and see it whole; and this is eminently to see it not as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time; to see the best work of twenty-five hundred years ago with the same eyes.¹³

By asserting that criticism is something more than personal preference or application of rules, Arnold anticipated, although vaguely, Eliot's own notion of criticism as impersonal discipline. For Eliot, real criticism should not be a pretext for venting the critic's personal feelings and thoughts, but a sincere attempt to assess the work of art according to set standards. Arnold, before Eliot, had expressed a similar desire that the critic's mind should be like a mirror, unstained by personal, national, provincial, or doctrinal prejudice.

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-Arnold, Ibid., p. 18.

¹³

-Eliot, "Introduction," The Sacred Wood, pp. xv-xvi.

According to Eliot the critic must first disengage himself from those impulses which commit him to any personal, partisan, or emotional bias. The critic's greatest virtues are a free intelligence and disinterestedness--which are also the chief characteristics of Arnold's critic.

The mature critic must possess a strong faculty of disinterested intelligence. The critic's intelligence must be free from partisan commitment. Eliot calls this faculty a strong dissociative faculty. He says at one point:

For the critic needs to be able not only to saturate himself in the spirit and fashion of the time--the local flavour--but also to separate himself suddenly from it in the appreciation of the highest creative work.¹⁴

The critic must be able "to see literature all round to detach it from ourselves, to reach a state of pure contemplation."¹⁵ This great virtue of impersonality seems to have been inspired by the Arnoldian virtue of disinterestedness--an effort to raise honest criticism above the inhibiting forces of personal and practical likes and dislikes. This "disinterested endeavour to know" is

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Eliot, "Imperfect Critics," p. 37.

¹⁵

Ibid., p. 40.

a pre-requisite for criticism.

In "The Perfect Critic" Eliot has specifically mentioned Arnold in this connection: "the end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed; thus we aim to see the object as it really is and find a meaning for the words of Arnold."¹⁶ Cahill has observed,

Like Arnold, Eliot had striven for a form of criticism which concentrated upon free inquiry and a disinterested play of ideas rather than on pre-conceived demands that literature satisfy certain philosophical and theological pre-conceptions.¹⁷

Under the influence of Arnold, Eliot believes that the function of the poet is to create order. In "Poetry and Drama" Eliot writes:

It is the function of all art to give us some perception of an order in life, by imposing an order upon it...For it is ultimately the function of Art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation.¹⁸

Arnold's concept of intellectual deliverance.." that harmonious acquiescence of mind which we feel in contemplating a grand spectacle that is intelligible"¹⁹ --seems to

¹⁶

Eliot, "The Perfect Critic", pp. 14-15.

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Cahill, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁸

Eliot, "Poetry and Drama," On Poetry and Poets, (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1969), pp. 86 & 87.

¹⁹

Arnold, "On Modern Element in Literature," Super (ed) Complete Prose Works, I, op. cit., p. 20.

have inspired Eliot's notion of pure contemplation and "serenity, stillness, and reconciliation." For Eliot, as for Arnold, the end of poetry is in its appeal to the total personality of man--in its unified structuring of all the human powers.

Arnold's insistence on the moral significance of art is very important for Eliot's theory of poetry. Arnold's constant reiteration of this question of morals reveals a way of thinking, shared by Baudelaire and Henry James, which brings him close to Eliot. Eliot himself hinted at this kinship,

Arnold's insistence upon order in poetry according to a moral valuation was, for better or worse, of the first importance for his age.²⁰

One of the major principles in Eliot's later critical judgment happens to be an aesthetic order containing a moral order in art. In Essays Ancient and Modern Eliot said:

The greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.²¹

Arnold's groping toward wider and deeper connections

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Eliot, "The Modern Mind," p. 122.

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Eliot, Essays Ancient and Modern, (London: Faber & Faber, 1939), p. 93.

also extended to the relation between literature and morality. Arnold strongly recommended an incorporation of moral values into the judgment of literature. Eliot thanked Arnold for this:

To Matthew Arnold we owe the credit of bringing the religious issue explicitly into the discussion of literature and poetry...My contemporaries seem to me still to be occupied with it, whether they call themselves churchmen, or agnostics, or rationalists, or social revolutionists.²²

Eliot's later critical practice is definitely influenced by Arnold's notion of moral significance in literature, since he was mainly concerned with education and culture, rather than with literature.

Eliot's policy as the editor of "The Criterion" displays Arnold's influence. As John Peter was observed, "his whole stance as editor may fairly be called Arnoldian."²³ Eliot repeatedly quoted Arnold in his commentaries. Eliot stresses the need "to keep the intellectual blood of Europe circulating throughout the Whole of Europe," through "The Criterion," by presenting to English readers "the best of foreign thought and literary art."²⁴ John Peter observed other points of Arnold's influence:

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Eliot. "The Modern Mind," pp. 127-128.

²³

John Peter, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

²⁴

Eliot, "The Criterion," Vol. VIII, No. 33 (1929) p. 577.

In commentary after commentary we find him emphasizing the virtues of detachment, of independent thinking, of 'solitary rather than group thought,' of 'That balance of mind which a few highly-civilized individuals, such as Arjuna, the hero of the Bhagavad Gita, can maintain in action,' of 'the just impartiality' a Christian philosopher Employs. Mere interest in literature for literature's sake like Edmund Gosse's will never be enough without 'restless curiosity' and 'the demon of thought,' but such impulses are truly productive only in isolation, far from the mob excitement which honest freethinker and Christian alike are bound to avoid.²⁵

Up to this point, Arnold's influences on Eliot's thinking and beliefs have been explored. In addition, Arnold's influence can be seen in Eliot's language and style of writing. His expressions sometimes echo Arnold's expressions. David de Laura calls these the "half-conscious borrowing of ideas and key-expressions" from Arnold.²⁶ Notes Towards the Definition of Culture has many expressions that remind the reader of Arnold's expressions in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." For example, Eliot says that the purpose of "The Criterion" was that,

...the existence of such a network of independent reviews, at least one in every capital of Europe, is necessary for the transmission of ideas--and

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John Peter, op. cit., p. 255.

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As quoted in the "Introduction" of Arnold's Essays in Criticism: first Series (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), ed., Sister Thomas Marion Hctor, p. xxxvi.

to make possible the circulation of ideas while they are still fresh.²⁷

In this passage, words like 'circulation of ideas while they are still fresh' seem to be a rephrasing of Arnold's "a current of true and fresh ideas."²⁸ In another place Eliot notes the absence of a social situation in which "we could take for granted an interest, a delight, in ideas for their own sake, in the free play of intellect."²⁹ This "delight in ideas for their own sake" is Arnold's favorite dictum, which is a pre-condition for the creation of good literature.

Eliot's essay "What is a classic?" is modeled on Arnold's "On the Modern Element in Literature" and "The Study of Poetry." His treatment of Chaucer is an echo of Arnold's valuation of Chaucer. The main theme of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" has a reflection of the following ideas of Arnold:

The spectacle, the facts, presented for the comprehension of the present age, are indeed immense. The facts consist of the events, the institutions, the sciences, the arts, the literatures, in which human life has manifested itself up to the present time: the spectacle is the collective life of humanity. And everywhere there is connexion, everywhere there is illustration: no

²⁷

Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, op. cit., p. 116.

²⁸

Arnold, "The Function of criticism at the Present Time," p. 18.

²⁹

Eliot, loc. cit., p. 116.

single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events, to other literatures.³⁰

In "Matthew Arnold" Eliot complains about "...the incredible tendency of the great majority of men to repeat the opinions of those few who have taken the trouble to think..."³¹ reminds one of Arnold's similar complaint, "The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are; very inadequate ideas will always satisfy them...whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current at all..."³² This is a very clear influence of Arnold's phraseology on Eliot. Of course, such verbal influences are usually unconsciously received by Eliot, it would seem.

Influences are also evident in Eliot's style of writing. John Peter says,

Arnold's influence extends beyond matters of content to matters of style...Eliot's strictures on the prose of Churchill as 'constantly pitching the tone a little too high' are very similar to Arnold's on the prose of Macaulay; he is at one with Arnold in disliking and avoiding the practice of 'writing down' to an audience...

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Arnold, "On the Modern Element in Literature," Essays in Criticism: Third Series (Boston: The Ball Publishing Co., 1910). p. 40.

31

Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," p. 109.

32

Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," p. 21-22.

33

John Peter, op. cit., p. 254.

Arnold's influences on Eliot are much broader and deeper than those covered in this study. The scope of this study cannot include all of them, but one thing is certain, that Arnold along among the Victorians had a truly profound effect upon all aspects of Eliot's thinking. In the introduction to The Sacred Wood Eliot wrote of Arnold: "... If he were our exact contemporary, he would find all his labour to perform again."³⁴ This may very well be regarded as a broad hint at Eliot's own programme which he carried out in circumstances different from Arnold's and with tools much more effective.

In this chapter I have tried to show some of the affinities that exist between Eliot and Arnold, thereby hinting that Eliot was at least partially aware of those similarities. On this basis I have discovered Arnoldic influences in three aspects of Eliot's work, in his theories and beliefs, in his use of language, and in his style of writing. On the whole, it seems to me, that Arnold was most influential in forming Eliot's opinions as a literary critic. It is very difficult to determine the extent of this influence, but a study of this nature is useful for various reasons. This survey cuts so close to the border

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Eliot, "Introduction," The Sacred Wood, p. xi.

between the highly demonstrable and the inextricable characteristics of kindred spirits.

CONCLUSION

It is not very easy to determine the degree of influence of one writer on another. I have covered only the literary criticism while trying to see Arnold's influence on Eliot. The influences are much more visible in the later social and religious criticism of Eliot, but the scope of this study does not allow the treatment of those aspects. A study of this nature is useful, since it helps tremendously to understand the nature as well as the greatness of Eliot's genius. As Eliot has said, every new writer is indebted to his predecessors, whether he acknowledges his indebtedness or not.

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