Chapter VII
Later criticism of Arnold --
*Essays in Criticism, Second Series; Mixed Essays*
The Study of Poetry

In “The Study of Poetry” (1880) Arnold’s general theory of poetry comes to the fore. In this piece Arnold explores the question of activity of poetry, that is, whether in poetry or in what kind of poetry, one could find the good for the poet and for society. In this essay Arnold turns, as Mary W. Schneider highlights: not to the Poetics of Aristotle but to the Ethics (Schneider 135). This was primarily meant to serve the purpose of the introduction to Thomas H. Ward’s edited anthology English Poets. Later the essay was used as the prologue to the posthumous collection Essays in Criticism, Second Series (1888).

If we term Arnold’s The Function of Criticism at the Present Time as his critical manifesto, then we have to say that The Study of Poetry is his central document on his theories of poetry and criticism. The Study of Poetry is Arnold’s final definition of poetry; it is also his testament of practical criticism. Arnold launches the central question of this essay in the very opening sentences, which again he gleans from his own
introduction to the first volume of *The Hundred Greatest Men* (1880) and reiterates his firm and passionate belief:

The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But 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. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry (*EC* II 1).

This is in fact a strong reaffirmation of Arnold's early remarks to A.H.Clough, where he writes to him that, poetry can only survive by its contents: by becoming a complete *magister vitae* as the poetry of the ancients did. This is actually the expression of the faith of Arnold in the
supremacy of and immense scope for poetry, on which he reposed from his very early days. Like Wordsworth, whom he quotes in this essay, Arnold too believes that Poetry is "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science" and poetry is also the "breath and finer spirit of all knowledge". Science and religion, Arnold thinks have a very limited appeal, while poetry appeals as much to our emotion and imagination as to our intellect. After the introductory portion in "The Study of Poetry" Arnold very unambiguously reiterates what he actually means:

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 incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say will appear incomplete without it (EC II 2).

Many orthodox theologians and rigorous critics may not like to
endorse the views of Arnold, but the systematic disintegration of moral values during the last century has made it increasingly important to preserve the literary tradition and cultivate poetry as a bulwark against materialism, sterility, and consumerism. But Arnold has to face much resistance and accusations from critics like A. H. Warren or T. S. Eliot for this proposition to substitute poetry for religion. A. H. Warren finds Arnold a most misleading and confusing thinker for, according to him, Arnold seeking to provide a panacea and having an inadequate idea of religion, is mistaking it for art. T. S. Eliot in his well-known critique 'Matthew Arnold', published in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* criticizes the Arnoldian notion of the substitution of religion and philosophy by poetry. He thinks that nothing in the world could act as a substitute for any thing. Trenchantly Eliot comments:

For Arnold the best poetry supersedes both religion and philosophy. I have tried to indicate the results of this conjuring tricks elsewhere. The most generalized form of my own view is simply this: that nothing in this world or the next is a substitute
for anything else; and if you find that you must do without something, such as religious faith or philosophic belief, then you must just do without it (UPUC 113).

Though there are many takers of the view put forth by Warren or Eliot, curiously enough some of the literary satraps of twentieth century sided with Arnold. Among them George Santyana or Wallace Stevens are notable allies of Arnold in this regard. But the most significant stand is taken by one of the most powerful modern critics—J.A. Richards.

J.A. Richards introspection in his Science and Poetry is thoroughly imbued with the Arnoldian conception of the supreme power of poetry which would gradually replace religion. J.A. Richards even quotes the Arnoldian declaration as an epigraph to his Science and Poetry and reposes his firm faith in his ideal. He writes with clarity, that poetry is:

... capable of saving us ... it is a perfectly possible means for overcoming chaos (SP 95).
By affirming this I.A.Richards almost retells and revives Arnold’s hope for poetry, “[w]hat now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry” (EC II 2).

Rene Wellek the incomparable historian of criticism, for this avowal of Richards places him in the tradition of not only Arnold, but also Shelley and the neo-Platonists, for whom poetry has become identified with myth and religion, or rather in Richards, myth becomes deprived of its ancient claims to truth and religion, stripped of revelation, doctrine, biblical history and any claim to knowledge.

A critic of Murray Krieger’s stature is also conscious of the Arnold Richards affinity regarding the saving power of poetry. In the same critique we have cited earlier, published in the *Southern Review, The Critical Legacy of Matthew Arnold: or, The Strange Brotherhood of T.S.Eliot, I.A.Richards and Northrop Frye*, Krieger points out how apart from Eliot or Frye, Arnold also influenced I.A.Richards. Krieger too thinks Richards’ faith in the conception of Arnold about the indispensable definition of the capacity and limitations of modern culture and poetry as
its spokesman can be found behind the selection which Richards quoted for his epigraph to *Science and Poetry*. Krieger also finds Arnold to anticipate the mood of George Santyana citing his lines:

Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry (Krieger 465).

This has a distinct Arnoldian echo.

After making an elaborate discourse on the points of affinity between Arnold and Richards, Krieger establishes their essential kinship:

So long as poetry makes no cognitive claims, it can not be denied. (Shades of Sir Philip Sidney’s claim that the poet “nothing affirms, and therefore never lyeth”). Its future as “an ever surer stay” for man is assured, whatever the aggrandizement of cold scientific certainty. Indeed, the greater science’s successes, the more we will need the soothing, unchallenging, unchallengeable “emotive” accompaniments of poetry. Richards’ invention of the distinction between emotive
and referential (or between pseudo-statement and certified statement) as an absolute dichotomy is inevitable. It is true, of course that the nineteenth Arnold, trapped in an older language, still reverts to archaic phrases like "poetic truth", suggesting to the less committed of us some uncertainty in him about taking the consequences of his occasional insights as agnostic humanist (distinguished from the religious humanist on the one side and the agnostic positivist on the other). He is, we must remember, father to Irving Babbitt as well. After all, he does admit that, if poetry does not, like religion, attach its emotion to the fact, it does attach its emotion to the "idea", which must still strike us as an intellectual commodity. But Richards, systematizing the more radical of Arnold’s suggestions by rushing to take their consequences, must see such reversions as momentary lapses that may blunt the keen thrust of his pioneer daring without diverting us from its direction (Krieger 468–69).
Another contemporary critic of distinction David Daiches also asserts the Arnold - Richards kinship *a propos* the saving power of poetry. Affirming that both have made eloquent statements on the significance and value of poetry Daiches remarks:

Matthew Arnold had anticipated Richards in facing the modern implications of this question. Arnold saw - or thought he saw - the factual basis of religion threatened by modern knowledge and sought to find in poetry a source of values which could not be threatened by this new scientific knowledge. "Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is every thing; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact." So Arnold wrote in 1879, and again Richards quoted him in 1926. Both Arnold and Richards were concerned with finding for poetry (and here as earlier the term "poetry" is being used to mean imaginative literature in general)
a kind of meaning and a kind of usefulness which differentiated it clearly from science and freed it from any direct responsibility to scientific truth (Daiches 130–131).

Moving along the line of the supreme saving power of poetry Arnold makes another exalted claim for poetry. A lifelong passionate votary of poetry as he is, he very confidently asserts that poetry is a ‘criticism of life’. In his earlier Joubert lecture also he made such lofty claims for poetry. But in the ‘Study of Poetry’ very articulately Arnold says:

In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay (EC II 3).

In this passage by using the phrase ‘poetic truth’ Arnold on the one hand harks back to Coleridge who used this idea in his monumental *Biographia Literaria* and on the other hand it looks forward to the tenets of New Criticism. ‘Poetic truth’ infact insists that the value of a poem
must be judged by objective poetic criteria alone and not by anything else.

Recent critics like Graham Holderness read another covert meaning in the theory that poetry are 'a criticism of life'. Holderness observes that the phrase 'criticism of life' endeavours to relate the moralistic function of criticism to the formal methods of its operations. Arnold, whom Holderness considers as a 'master strategist in the formation of a hegemonic cultural discourse', here makes a calculated ploy in his critical practice. Holderness observes:

While gesturing towards aesthetic considerations, it clears the way for a further narrowing of the canon to exclude inappropriate material on formal as well as ethical grounds (Day 33-34).

Again, Arnold’s famous definition of poetry as a ‘criticism of life’ finds its resembling paradigm in the views put forth by eminent twentieth century critic Yvor Winters, speaking of whom Stanley Edgar Hyman has said in his tome *The Armed Vision* that there is much likeness of Winters’
views with Arnold but Winters is always at pains to concede it. When Winters says in his book *In Defense of Reason* that, “[a] poem (or any other work of literature) is a statement in words about a human experience” (Winters 26) or when he affirms, “[t]he poem is good in so far it makes a defensive rational experience” (Winters 7), then he is talking about ‘a criticism of life’ of sorts.

However Arnold thinks that poetry, which will act as ‘a criticism of life’ should be profound or best. True poetry should move us profoundly, should illuminate life and modify our perceptions of life:

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it (*EC* II 3).

But all these discourses that ideal poetry (poetry here recurrently symbolizes literature) should be ‘a criticism of life’ or the desire for the ‘best poetry’ is nothing but a covert manoeuvre to constrict, to narrow down, as Holderness has aptly suggested, the scope of universal
literature. This ploy is exceedingly carefully poised to involve a rigorous procedure of canon formation, conducted by the most arbitrary yardstick ever applied in any theory of literature—Arnold’s ‘touchstone method’. But before Arnold speaks about the ‘touchstone method’ he gradually eliminates other supposedly fallacious procedures of appreciating a literary work. Those are ‘historical estimate’ and ‘personal estimate’ both of which must be jettisoned to achieve a proper ‘real estimate’. Arnold warns us:

Yes; constantly, in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and personal estimate, both of which are fallacious (EC II 4).

A poem’s importance reckoned historically is not the right form of
judgement. For a poem's historical importance may indicate a course of
development of a nation's language but it does not entail that the poem
is a profound or a good one. Again, the value of a poem may be
welcomed or disliked on the basis of one's personal likes and dislikes,
but that does not necessary mean that the poem is either bad or good.
Arnold by spelling out the pitfalls of evaluating a poem on those counts
anticipates in a way the theory of 'affective fallacy' propounded by
famous New Critics, William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley.

In an essay published in 1946, W.K.Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley
defined affective fallacy as the error of evaluating a poem by its sheer
effects— especially its emotional effects— upon the reader.

The Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its
*results* (what it *is* and what it *does*), a special case of
epistemological scepticism .... It begins by trying to derive the
standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem
and ends in impressionism and relativism. The outcome... is
that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical
judgement, tends to disappear (Lodge 345).

Arnold’s warning against ‘personal estimate’ not only foretells
‘affective fallacy’ of Wimsatt and Beardsley, but also anticipates the
famous theory of ‘impersonality’ of T.S. Eliot.

Arnold’s Kantian objectivity, his ardent pleas for disinterested
evaluation of poems, which makes us beware of the fallacious ‘personal
estimate’, the faux pas is nothing short of Eliot’s theory of impersonality,
one of the bedrocks of his poetics, which tells us:

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by
particular events in his life, that the poet is in anyway
remarkable or interesting. ...

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from
emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape
from personality (SW 57–58).

Murray Krieger showing this point of affinity between Arnold and

T.S. Eliot observes:
This disinterestedness that preserves the purity of the world of ideas leads, in the domain of criticism, to Arnold’s attack on the ‘personal estimate’, surely a forerunner of Eliot’s doctrine of impersonality, the notion that poetry is “an escape from emotion” rather than “a turning loose of emotion” that in the poem there must be an absolute separation of “the man who suffers and the mind which creates” (Krieger 463).

Arnold’s warning against the pitfalls of ‘historical estimate’ entails at one level a strong affinity with certain twentieth century critical conceptions. The earlier prevalent conception that any literary study or research is a branch of historical research began to be contested by twentieth century literary criticism. Matthew Arnold here anticipated, in his distinction of value between those works deserving attention for historical reasons, because they illustrated a certain stage in the development of a national literature, and those which belong “to the class of the truly excellent”. Evidently here we encounter a theorization of
literary text more specific than the one we have so far identified as influential in modern literary study. Graham Martin, writing on this says:

Arnold conceives literary texts (primary poems) as suasive representations of moral ideas, which require of the reader something more complex than 'understanding'. But from the angle of our discussion, he illustrate an argument adopted by many twentieth century critics to the effect that the value of a literary text must be linked with its successes in articulating what is permanent in 'human nature' as distinct from what is merely transient and 'historical' (Eliot and Owens 94).

Then with a view to making us aware of a poem's real estimate
Arnold tries to formulate the definition of a true classic. One must learn to identify the true classic and the false one with a deceptive appearance of a classic, the 'apocryphal' in the canonical parlance. And in this regard Arnold introduces his famous (or 'notorious' as Graham Holderness thinks) touchstone method. Short passages, a few lines in length, abstracted from their contexts in Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton are
quoted and offered by Arnold, being single lines or decontextualised short passages of verse, display in quotation their formal properties of style, manner, diction, rhythm more obviously than they convey any intelligible 'criticism of life'. Though most of Arnold's critics are sceptic about the supposed efficacy of the lines, about the extent of 'criticism of life' they offer, a line from Dante, which embodies a central metaphysical statement, a description of sleep from Shakespeare's Henry IV, a line from Hamlet's dying speech to Horatio and a defiant speech of Milton's Satan. Holderness observes:

In each touchstone 'we' (an unspecified constituency of like-minded readers) are obliged to recognize an 'accent' of beauty and 'high seriousness'. Only the best literature can be effective as an agency of general moral improvement and 'civilization': the evaluation of 'touchstones' is the means by which 'we' recognize what is 'the best' (Day 34).

According to Arnold himself, the touchstone method with near flawless acuity can make one achieve a 'real estimate' of a piece:
These few lines, if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgements about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate (EC II 12).

Modern critics have not taken Arnold’s touchstone method too kindly, most of them criticizing it with much acerbity. Such a sympathetic critic as H.W.Garrod even ridiculed this idea. Rene Wellek is also doubtful about the efficacy of the touchstone method:

Arnold’s most celebrated proposal to use “touchstones”, “infallible touchstones”, “short passages, even single lines” as a norm for judging poetry is an obvious contradiction of the insight into unity, an atomistic principle that may be used to justify the most willful and erratic prejudices (Wellek 171).

The ‘touchstone’ method should be taken as, F.R.Leavis says:

a tip for mobilizing our sensibility; for focusing our relevant experience in a sensitive point; for reminding us vividly of what the best is like (Scrutiny 7).
The *touchstone* method should never be misinterpreted as a neatly summed up mathematical formula, Arnold warned us that it must be used with 'tact'.

There are certain parallels of Arnold's *touchstones*. Pointing out the closeness between Arnold and Eliot, Douglas Bush says, citing Eliot:

Even Eliot— who used touchstones with similar effect— admitted that "to be able to quote as Arnold could is the best evidence of taste" (Bush 116).

Throughout his critical opus Eliot cites his favourite lines repeatedly to prove his point, which can be easily termed as Arnoldian *touchstone*. In his essays included in the *Selected Essays*, particularly "Ben Jonson", "Thomas Middleton", "Tradition and the Individual Talent", "Philip Massinger" Eliot uses his examples of ideal poetry gleaning lines from those Renaissance and Jacobean playwrights. Eliot copiously uses those instances recurrently which he thought fit in different contexts, those memorable, potential lines of complexity and suggestiveness. Eminent
critic of T.S. Eliot’s criticism, Edward Lobb says in his *T.S. Eliot and the Romantic Critical Tradition*:

Many of the lines are what Arnold called ‘touchstone’, and Eliot’s use of them is often discussed with reference to Arnold’s (Lobb 127).

Eliot himself remarks in his “Tradition and the Individual Talent” that, “if you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination...” (SW 55). This is Eliot’s call for practicing touchstone method.

However it is very easy to show that Arnold has chosen his touchstones less for their perfection of form or language than for their tone. Vincent Buckley rightly characterized Arnold’s tone in his touchstones as, “[a] sad magnanimity, a composed sense of the finality (not, of course, the uselessness) of human experience” (Buckley 52).

Hamlet’s dying words to Horatio:

If thou didst ever hold me in this heart,

Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,

To tell my story-

are great poetry, but they are Arnold’s touchstones only, because they reflect Arnold’s own sense of life. To set these lines beside Eliot’s favourite passage from Chapman:

Fly where men feel

The cunning axletree, or those that suffer

Under the chariot of the snowy Bear....

Lobb says:

is to see the difference between doctrinal and purely poetic standards of selection (Lobb 128).

Another level of Arnold’s impact of the touchstone method of Arnold can be seen, though dimly, in the critical theory of Allen Tate— in his idea of an ‘absolute experience in literature’. Like Arnold’s touchstone for obtaining which Arnold gives no formula, Tate’s absolute experience remains an unidentifiable entity. According to Tate’s theory of art, art springs from the irresistible need of the mind, for an absolute
experience, one which cannot be adequately satisfied in ordinary experience. Critics like Stallman objects the nebulousness of Tate's theory expresses scepticism about the way to achieve the absolute experience and questions how and when this apotheosis takes place. In this regard the affinity of Allen Tate with Arnold is evident. Like 'touchstone', 'absolute experience' claims to identify the true literature and thus reaffirms the lofty Arnoldian claim.
Milton

Arnold’s essay on Milton is the address delivered by him at St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster on 13th of February 1888, at the unveiling of the memorial window donated by George W. Childs of Philadelphia, U.S.A.

Arnold’s classical bent of mind can be seen in this essay. Arnold actually composed two essays on Milton; one the essay under review and another is “A French Critic on Milton” in Mixed essays. The influence of Milton upon Arnold is so strong that Arnold has cited his three touchstone passages from Milton.

Arnold’s Milton is not a disinterested study of the problem of style. Arnold becomes a sort of social critic. He speaks of Anglo-Saxon contagion, which has heightened materialism and undermined art and culture. Philistinism is stalking the land and that has resulted in the inadequate sense for perfection of work.

Arnold’s similarity with T.S. Eliot is apparent in this essay too. Arnold considers Milton as a classic:
We all of us recognize it as great poetry, our greatest, and Shakespeare and Milton as our poetical classics (EC II 21).

The almost identical sentiment is expressed again:

Shakespeare and Milton - he who wishes to keep his standard of excellence high, can not choose two better objects of regard and honour (EC II 35–36).

T. S. Eliot has initial reservations about Milton as expressed in his "Milton I" published in his On Poetry and Poets but partially recants his views in "Milton II" and ultimately arrives at the conclusion that:

The most instructive contrast of degree of education within the same type is that provided by Shakespeare and Milton, our two greatest poets (TCC 148).

This has an explicit Arnoldian echo, but when he says about Milton, "we must couple Milton with Dante" (TCC 148), he is undeniably influenced by Arnold. Very much like Arnold, Eliot too points out the unhealthy effect of emulating Milton’s poetic style in his "Milton II".
Thomas Gray

Arnold’s essay “Thomas Gray” was originally prefixed to the selection from Gray in Ward’s English Poets vol. IV. 1880. This paper on Gray seems to be the amplification of the seminal idea contained in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” and “The Study of Poetry”. There was a certain flare-up of poetry in the nineteenth century, only because the eighteenth century— the age of prose and reason created a certain intellectual and spiritual ambience. Gray possessed a profound poetic sensibility, yet he “is the scantiest and frailest” poetic classic of England.

If we want to assess properly the critical evaluation of Arnold’s essay on Gray we must go back to Arnold’s momentous essay “The Study of Poetry”, where he passes his critical judgment on this poet:

Gray is our poetic classic of that literature and age; the position of Gray is singular, and demands a word of notice here. He has not the volume or the power of poets who, coming in times more favourable, have attained to an independent criticism of
life. But he lived with the great poets, he lived above all, with the Greeks, through perpetually studying and enjoying them; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner. The point of view and the manner are not self-sprung in him, he caught them of others; and he had not the free and abundant use of them. ... He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic (EC II 25).

Arnold's essay "Thomas Gray" in the Essays in Criticism, Second Series, is actually a reaffirmation of what he says and expresses about Gray in "The Study of Poetry".

As we have marked in our earlier discussions that Arnold has a great penchant for classicism and in this aspect he envisages the twentieth century poet-critics like T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound et al. Arnold like his modern successors always goes back and makes an intensive search for classicism in the authors he criticizes. Thomas Gray is also no
exception. Arnold showers rich acclaim on Gray for his encyclopaedic knowledge of the classical authors like Aristotle, Isocrates and Froissart.

Though Arnold appears to have largely foreseen the modern critical theories of objectivity like the theories of formalism or the New Criticism, he sporadically makes forays into other branches of critical enquiry namely the biographical criticism and psychoanalysis obtained from biography. The dim shadow of the concept that genius is a neurosis and that art is nothing but a form of sickness of the artist can be seen in the discussion of Arnold regarding the discussion about Gray's paucity of production. It may seem remarkable that Arnold in his modus operandi as a biographical criticism has a close kinship with Allen Tate, the most radical New Critic. Allen Tate has a strong repugnance to the improper biographical approach to criticism, which is fairly normal in a formalist like Tate. Allen Tate objects to the use of biography merely to establish a pet theory about poetic creation or to prop up a performed notion about poetry. The New Critics were well aware about the possible pitfalls of indiscriminately using biographical details to make a critique on an
author. They were conscious that this sort of criticism easily degenerates into a sort of improper impressionism, which stymies the right understanding of the author under consideration. But though the works done by the mistaken biographical critics repels the critics like Tate, it would indeed be a faux pas to think that they are absolutely opposed to biographical criticism as such. Critics like Allen Tate too used biography in their criticism, but used them with discretion and astuteness. For instance, Tate in his critical work *On the Limits of Poetry* makes powerful criticism on John Keats, Emily Dickinson and in his essay on Yeats—‘Yeats's Romanticism’ basing on certain important biographical information. In these writings we find a revelation of the glimpses of these poets’ inner life, which may be taken as the biography. Arnold's likeness with Tate becomes much evident when both of them make copious use of letters of the poets under review. Another New Critic, R.P. Blackmur also draws abundantly from the biographies of poets and authors. For instance, his critiques, ‘W.B.Yeats: between Myth and Philosophy’, ‘Emily Dickinson’, ‘The Later Poetry of W.B.Yeats’ etc
contained in his book *Language as Gesture* posit biographical methods very much like Arnold. We can see Arnold’s biographical critical method in his essay Thomas Gray when he ponders heavily on the probable reasons behind Gray’s scantiness of production. Arnold, who is fascinated by the sheer poetry of Gray, writes in an amazed tenor, “[l]n a poet of such magnitude, how shall we explain his scantiness of production?” (*EC* II 43).

Arnold dwells repeatedly, with an obsessive astonishment on the meagerness of Gray’s creation in poetry. Arnold then proceeds to enquire with a clinical stance the likely reasons behind it. Pointing out a possible stumbling block to impede Gray’s free flowing of spontaneous creation, Arnold writes, alluding to Gray’s writing amply:

Knowledge, penetration, seriousness, sentiment, humour, Gray had them all; he had the equipment and endowment for the office of poet. But very soon in his life appear traces of something obstructing, something disabling; of spirits failing
and health not sound; and the evil increases with the years. He writes to West in 1737:

"Low spirits are my true and faithful companions; they get up with me, go to bed with me, make journeys and returns as I do; nay, and pay visits and will even affect to be jocose and force a feeble laugh with me; but most commonly we sit alone together, and are the prettiest insipid company in the world."

The tone is playful, Gray was not yet twenty one. "Mine", he tells West four or five years later, "mine, you are to know, is a white Melancholy, or rather Leucocholy, for the most part; which, though it seldom laughs or dances, nor ever amounts to what one calls joy or pleasure, yet is a good easy sort of a state." *(EC II 51).*

What should account for this Coleridgean ‘work without hope’, a smothering depression of spirit or Keatsian ennui? Arnold quoting Sainte-Beuve, the French master of criticism, thinks that Gray’s melancholy was responsible for the sterility of his poetic talent.
Again with a deep discerning spirit he finds another reason for the paucity of poetic production of Gray. Reiterating what he said in the *Study of Poetry*, he says, that Gray’s age was an age of prose:

The reason, the indubitable reason as I can not but think it, I have already given elsewhere. Gray, a born poet, fell upon an age of prose. He fell upon an age whose task was such as to call forth in general men’s powers of understanding, wit and cleverness, rather than their deepest power of mind and soul (*EC II* 54).

When Arnold asserts that the poetry of Dryden and Pope and all of their school: Is conceived and composed in their wits, and that genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul (*EC II* 56–57), the romantic slant of his mind becomes perceptible.

Again in this essay we find the praxis of Arnold’s critical theory, the deft application of his ‘touchstone’ method. Arnold by employing his ‘touchstone’ method shows the poetry of Goldsmith and Dryden, two representative poets of the eighteenth century are infinitely inferior if
compared with the poetry of Shakespeare or Pindar. This can be termed in the Eliotian dictum 'compare and analysis'. For instance Arnold contrasts Goldsmith's:

No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale

with, a 'touchstone' line, Shakespeare's:

In cradle of rude, imperious surge

and: all the falseness becomes apparent (EC II 58).

It seems only very natural that Arnold should feel a sense of strong empathy with Gray. Arnold too like Gray abandoned the act of creation very early and involved himself in various other works. W. H. Auden once remarked about Arnold that Arnold himself imprisoned his gifts, so is the case with Gray, only for different reasons.
John Keats

"John Keats" was first published as the prologue to T. Humphry Ward's selection from Keats's poetry in Ward's *English Poets*, 1880. Later it was included in the *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*.

Arnold is extremely critical and even has a sense of covert revulsion against the younger Romantic poets Byron, Shelley and Keats; he strangely overlooks such a profound genius like Coleridge and pays glowing tribute to Wordsworth albeit with slight reservations against one or two aspects of Wordsworth. Among the younger Romantics Arnold places Keats in a highest position. T. S. Eliot, most among the modern critics shares Arnold's denunciation of Romantic poetry. Substantiating this point Edward Lobb comments:

In Eliot's literary criticism there are also notable similarities. ...

Arnold's indictment of the Romantic poets for not 'knowing enough', which Eliot singles out for praise in the *Sacred Wood*, is the natural consequence of such criticism (Lobb 76).
Arnold's *John Keats* is chiefly personal and biographical in the approach. "John Keats" can be divided into roughly two sections contains in the first hand an examination of the character of Keats and shows he had manliness and courage against the alleged effeminacy and sybaritic outlook to life. In the second Arnold has analysed Keats's poetic genius and showered rich acclaims upon him. Douglas Bush observes in this regard:

In this essay he (Arnold) is at pains to show ... that Keats was not a febrile aesthete but a man who had "flint and iron in him" as well as an acute and sensitive intelligence and extraordinary poetic gifts (Bush 119).

Yet Arnold's intensely personal form of judgment to Keats actually disproves his own call for an objective 'real estimate' which is supposed to augment the proper understanding of an author. Arnold's theory of 'disinterestedness' takes a backseat and his moral predilections get the priority. However, his over preoccupation with the moral question makes him opinionated towards Keats to a certain extent.
But Arnold has an ample semblance with the modern literary critics in his opinion regarding the Romantic poets. "John Keats" is no exception. In our earlier essay on Thomas Gray we have discussed by far the implications of Arnold's employing of the impressionistic biographical method in his critiques. We have seen that the New Critics are generally averse to use of biography in criticism. While they are completely aware of the perils of making biography a tool of criticism, yet they do sometimes make allowances for a judicious and intelligent use of biographical method. They do fervently oppose to the wrong way of handling biographical details, the arbitrary use of biography to evoke a reaction from the readers desired by the critic. The New Critics are of opinion that any premeditated treatment of biography is pernicious for the proper literary criticism. In "John Keats" we shall see Arnold's dual use of biography. One mode of biographical criticism is endorsed by and even pursued by the modern critics and they deprecate another approach. In his handling of intimate biographical details Arnold sometimes cites from the very personal letters of Keats written to his beloved Fanny
Brawne. Arnold commenting on the publication of these private letters by Keats says, passing a moral ruling:

... but for the publication of the *Letters to Fanny Brawne* I can see no good reason whatever. Their publication appears to me, I confess, inexcusable; they ought never to have been published. But published they are, and we have to take notice of them (*EC* II 61).

The disinterested critic can be seen no where when Arnold thinks that it is almost obligatory for him to concentrate to the intimately personal love letters of Keats to appreciate his poetry. Yet all is not wrong with Arnold's biographical approach. When Arnold discusses a meaningful aspect of Keats's life to illuminate his poetry or any attitude to life he is performing an excellent work of criticism sobered with a reasonable outlook. Arnold writes:

The truth is that "the yearning passion for the Beautiful" which was with Keats, as he himself truly says, the master passion, is not a passion of the sensuous or the sentimental man, is not a
passion of the sensuous or sentimental poet. It is an intellectual and spiritual passion. It is "connected and made one" as Keats declares that in his case it was, "with the ambition of the intellect". It is, as he again says, "the mighty abstract idea of Beauty in all things". And in his last days Keats wrote: "If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory; but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remembered". He has made himself remembered, and remembered as no merely sensuous poet could be; and he has done it by having "loved the principle of beauty in all things".

For to see things in their beauty is to see things in their truth, and Keats knew it. "What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth", he says in prose; and in immortal verse he has said the same thing—

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know". (EC II 69-70).

With his masterstroke as an outstanding critic Arnold makes his readers see the basic principle underlying the poetry of Keats's and the fountainhead of his genius in a single flash. Here Arnold suitably makes use of the letters of Keats and it serves his purpose in a right direction. One can compare Allen Tate's use of Keats's biographical details in a critique on Keats. Allen Tate writes in a similar vein explaining the nature of Keats's art. He writes On the Limits of Poetry:

Keats has just read in Burton the chapter 'Love-Melancholy' in which two Aphrodites, Urania and Pandemos appear: there is no evidence that he ever knew more about them ... there is no reason to believe that he felt the imaginative shock of reading The Symposium, and of experiencing first hand an intuition of a level of experience that the Western world, through Platonism and Christianity had been trying for two millennia to reach.... The curious thing about Keats's education is that it was almost
entirely literary; he had presumably read very little philosophy and religion. (Quoted by Chandra 177).

Tate narrates some more information about Keats's reading and education as well as to explicate the pictorial aspect of his poetry. Professor Naresh Chandra comments apropos Tate's views that: And how else could Tate have access to these information except through biography? (Chandra 178).

Arnold, as we have suggested earlier played a significant role in formation of the modern critical opinion on Keats. For instance Eliot's estimation of Keats has a remarkable Arnoldian impression. Arnold in his discourse on Keats showered rich accolade by placing him beside Shakespeare. While speaking about Keats's propensity for 'natural magic' in an unforgettable phrase Arnold evocatively said:

No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats, his perfection of loveliness. "I think," he said humbly, "I shall be among the
English poets after my death." He is; he is with Shakespeare (EC II 71).

T. S. Eliot in his *Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* talking about Keats almost reechoes the Arnoldian opinion:

But I am not so much concerned with the degree of his greatness as with its kind; and its kind is manifested more clearly in his Letters than in his poems; and in contrast with the kinds we have been reviewing, it seems to me to be much more the kind of Shakespeare (*UPUC* 100).

F. R. Leavis another major modern critic, too writes his critique on Keats in a manifest Arnoldian strain. Throughout his essay on Keats in his *Revaluation*, Leavis maintains the note, as in his comment on Keats's conception of 'Beauty' as derived from his letters, he writes in an obvious Arnoldian line:

To show from the Letters that 'Beauty' became for Keats a very subtle and embracing concept, and that in his use the term takes on meanings that it could not have possibly have for the
uninitiated, is gratuitous and irrelevant. However his use of the term may have developed as he matured, 'beauty' is the term he used; and in calling what seemed to him the supreme thing in life 'beauty', he expressed a given bent - the bent everywhere manifested in the quality of his verse, in its 'loveliness'. His concern for the beauty meant, at any rate in the first place, a concentration upon the purely delightful in experience to the exclusion of 'disagreeables'. And that 'beauty' in the Ode on a Grecian Urn expresses this bent is plain - that it should is the essence of the poem, and there is nothing in the poem to suggest otherwise (Leavis 209–210).

It seems manifest that Arnold by the virtue of his sheer critical insight and élan influenced a whole generation of modern critics in their opinion concerning John Keats.
Wordsworth

Matthew Arnold’s essay “Wordsworth” was originally prefixed as the preface to the Poems of Wordsworth chosen by Arnold himself. Wordsworth exercised profoundest influence upon Arnold and we can recall what Leon Gottfried said, in this respect. He said that Arnold never felt fatigued of admiring, criticizing, imitating and rebelling against Wordsworth. Deepest reverence and admiration of Arnold were reserved for Wordsworth, and Wordsworth was a prominent name in Arnoldian pantheon of poets—Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Senancour, Wordsworth. In a considerable number of poems too Arnold pays rich encomium and homage to Wordsworth. Notable among them are, Memorial Verses, The Youth of Nature, Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’ and Arnold compares Wordsworth with the blind prophet of Thebes, Tiresias, in The Youth of Nature:

The complaining millions of men

Darker in labour and pain;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad (APP 42).

Paying Wordsworth a glowing tribute Arnold writes:

Yet I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognizes the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Chaucer is anterior; and on other grounds, too, he can not well be brought into comparison. But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, and going through it,—Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats— I think it certain that Wordsworth’s name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all (EC II 78–79).

Arnold thinks that the poems of greatest bulk by Wordsworth: the
Prelude and the Excursion are not at all the best poems of Wordsworth.

His shorter poems are his best.

The profoundest significance of Wordsworth, Arnold thinks lies, in the noble and profound application of ideas to life. They seek the answer to the question, how to live perfectly. Arnold says:

Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

"On man, on nature, and on human life,"

which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject, of ideas "on man, on nature, and on human life" (EC II 83-84).
What Arnold stresses most here, is the fact that Wordsworth is preeminently 'moral' in his profound and noble application of ideas to life. Citing two brief passages, one from Keats and another from Shakespeare, Arnold writes:

A large sense is of course to be given to the term *moral*. Whatever bears upon the question, "how to live", comes under it... when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line-

"For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair"

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says that

"We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep,"

He utters a moral idea (*EC* II 84–85).

In the aspect of morality in art or idea or artistic creation Arnold
resembles to a great extent the maverick twentieth century critic Yvor Winters. Like Arnold, Yvor Winters is also preoccupied with the question of morality and the role played by morality in evaluation. In all his prescribed procedures of criticism, comparative evaluation, consideration of historical or biographical facts one thing remains constant that is unflinching faith on the consideration of morality. Quoting from Winters, *Anatomy of Nonsense*, Stanley Edgar Hyman writes in his monumental *The Armed Vision*:

Art is moral, he has written, and criticism must necessarily be the same... in *The Anatomy of Nonsense*, Winter writes, "according to my view, the artistic process is one of the moral evaluation of human experience" (Hyman 55-56).

From the question of ‘moral idea’ Arnold straight goes to one of his most favourite conception about poetry, that is poetry is essentially ‘a criticism of life’. Arnold has pursued this thesis in his earlier critiques "Joubert" and in "The Study of Poetry". In "The Study of Poetry", Arnold writes:
In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find its consolation and stay (EC II 3).

We have discussed how the critics like Graham Holderness points out that the idea that poetry is ‘a criticism of life’ is a rephrasing of Arnold’s strategy of attributing moralistic function to criticism. In “Wordsworth” Arnold writes:

> It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life (EC II 85).

Arnold’s insistent reiteration emphasizes the express hope of Arnold regarding the function of poetry (literature at large). Though critics like T.S. Eliot, sneeringly criticized Arnold for uttering this:

> It is in his essay on Wordsworth that occurs his famous definition: ‘Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life’. At bottom: that is a great way down; the bottom is the bottom. At the bottom of the abyss is what few ever see, and what those can
not bear to look at for long; and it is not 'a criticism of life' (UPUC 111).

But there lies a fallacy at the basic assumption of T.S. Eliot and his taunting criticism of Arnold seems untenable. Arnold actually meant that a good, healthy literature should contain profound perceptions about life, should be able to employ powerful and beautiful ideas to life. Explicating the Arnoldian intention by using the phrase, 'poetry is at bottom a criticism of life', Mohit Ray comments in his Critique, "The Legacy of Matthew Arnold":

But by using the word "at bottom" Arnold simply meant "on ultimate analysis"; on ultimate analysis poetry takes its origin from life and it illuminates life; it sharpens our perception of life (Ray 104).

Arnold’s closeness with the critical concepts of Yvor Winters becomes more manifest when we can trace that Winters reflects Arnoldian concept of 'criticism of life'. Winters’ constant stress upon the moral evaluation of
a literary piece indicates to this direction. S.E. Hyman also notices the remarkable affinity between Arnold and Winters:

The identity with Arnold is much closer, and, although winters might deny it indignantly, his central doctrine, the concept of art as “the permeation of human experience by a constant moral understanding”, seems to be no more than a rephrasing of Arnold’s concept of art as “the criticism of life” through the application of moral ideas (Hyman 62).

Arnold’s comparative faculty again resurfaces in this essay on “Wordsworth”. Arnold not only alludes to Epictetus or Voltaire but also other poets in this essay to consolidate his position on Wordsworth. Comparing Wordsworth with French litterateur of eminence Theophile Gautier, Arnold reveals the supremacy of Wordsworth:

Now, when we come across a poet like Theophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him;
but after all we do not change the truth about him,—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings... then we have a poet intent on “the best and master thing”, and who prosecutes his journey home (EC II 86-87).

Then presenting a comparative study between Wordsworth on the one hand and Burns, Heine, Keats on the other, Arnold writes that Wordsworth deals more with life, and for this reason though he lacks humour, felicity and passion.

Arnold compares like an astute comparatist between Wordsworth and Goethe, Shakespeare and Milton too. Making a study of relative merits of Goethe’s and Wordsworth’s poetry Arnold writes, “Goethe’s poetry is not inevitable... But Wordsworth’s poetry when he is at his best, is inevitable” (EC II 92).

Again Arnold shows that Wordsworth had not in his constant command any genius for style, where as Shakespeare’s:

"After life’s fitful fever,
he sleeps well"

Or Milton’s:

...though fall’n on evil days,

On evil days though fall’n,

and evil tongues–

have a “genius for style”.

194
Shelley

Matthew Arnold's landmark essay "Shelley" was first published in *The Nineteenth Century* in January 1888, and later on included into his posthumous *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*.

Arnold by his piece "Shelley" has set a trend of modern criticism of Romantic Poetry in general and Shelley in particular, which was carried on successfully by his critical heirs like T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and the New Critics. The prevalent tone of this criticism is of derogation and derision. A few exceptions like Herbert Read who defended Shelley in an impassioned way and spoke out against the critical onslaughts *a la* Arnold on Shelley. If we have seen that Arnold chiefly acts as the spokesperson of the criticism of objectivity, here in a complete change of tack Arnold turns out to be a critic of impressionism. Arnold's persistent call for 'disinterestedness' peters out, his personal liking and disliking taking a front seat makes his criticism a colossal failure according to the criterion of objective criticism. Throughout the essay Arnold the moralist looms large and all the meaningful references to the poetry of Shelley
have been relegated to virtual oblivion. In his criticism of Shelley, Arnold tried to follow the naturalistic method prescribed by Sainte-Beuve, the mode of criticism that asks the critic to correlate an artist's work with his life. But in this essay Arnold lamentably betrays his dearth of 'disinterestedness' and predominance of 'personal criticism' so censured by him.

Arnold begins by contrasting Mrs. Shelley's first edition of Percy Shelley's collected poems with Dowden's *Life of Shelley*. Arnold thinks that Mrs. Shelley's introduction to the poems along with Shelley's Prefaces and excerpts from letters has enhanced the charm to a great extent. But on the contrary the biography of Dowden has done a great deal of injury to the reputation of Shelley. Like a staunch advocate Dowden has pleaded for Shelley. Moreover Dowden has gone to hysterics about Shelley. Mrs. Shelley’s warm applauds for Shelley is absolutely reasonable but Dowden’s extremely emotive adoration of Shelley, which goes to the point of adulation, has perpetrated immeasurable damage to Shelley. Arnold opines that Dowden’s too much preoccupation with the
intimate details about Shelley's private life makes the readers feel a sense of revulsion and disgust, with much acerbity of tone Arnold writes:

Professor Dowden holds a brief for Shelley; he pleads for Shelley as an advocate pleads for his client, and this strain of pleading, united with an attitude of adoration ... is unserviceable to Shelley, nay injurious to him, because it inevitably begets in many readers ... impatience and revolt (EC II 122–123).

After pontifically passing this opinion on Dowden's work, Life of Shelley Arnold himself delves in to the life of Shelley by providing a précis of his biography. Arnold has shown us painstakingly how much inordinately Dowden was preoccupied with the erotic life of Shelley, his relationship with Harriet Westbrook, Mary Godwin (the afterwards Mrs. Shelley), Claire Clairmont, and Emilia Viviani et al. But Arnold hardly resists the temptation of moral policing of which he is very fond. The episode of Shelley's alleged misconduct with and successive desertion of Harriet may not be right from the moral viewpoint but it should not be
the lookout of a literary critic who indefatigably preaches ‘disinterestedness’ in literary criticism and warns others about the perils of employing the ‘personal estimate’ in criticism. But Arnold passes the moral verdict:

And I conclude that an entirely human inflammability, joined to an inhuman want of humour and a superhuman power of self-deception, are the causes which chiefly explain Shelley’s abandonment of Harriet in the first place, and then his behaviour to her and his defence of himself afterwards (EC II 143).

So all these bear a testimony that Arnold, a profound critic as he is, is no less prying in the private life of Shelley than his whipping boy the obtrusive Professor Dowden. Then after minutely examining the numerous evidences from diverse sources Arnold says that inspite of all these unsavoury points that cropped up from the book by Dowden Shelley would remain forever a brilliant icon in our thought: still our ideal Shelley, the angelic Shelley, subsists".
At the concluding portion Arnold concedes in a round about way that he has spoken so little on Shelley’s poetry and, “Of his poetry I have not space now to speak” (EC II 147). But at the end too Arnold passes a well nigh adverse criticism of Shelley, which inaugurates a strong school of anti-romantic criticism. Arnold concludes his essay with a poetic yet mordant tenor:

It is his poetry, above everything else, which for many people establishes that he is an angel. ... But let no one suppose that a want of humour and a self-delusion such as Shelley’s have no effect upon a man’s poetry. The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley’s poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is “a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.” (EC II 147).
Several twentieth century critics like T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, J. C. Ransom, Allen Tate et al criticized Shelley almost on the Arnoldian line and decried his poetry. They did not, however, echo the Arnoldian thoughts but deprecated Shelley's poetry on various lines.

T. S. Eliot for instance, in his crucial *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* writes on Shelley considerably. Eliot dismisses Shelley almost on the same ground he dislikes Arnold, against both Eliot levels the charge of being a propagandist. Of Shelley Eliot writes:

Shelley both had views about poetry and made use of poetry for expressing views. With Shelley we are struck from the beginning by the number of things poetry is expected to do... and throughout his work, which is of no small bulk for a short life, he does not, I think, let us forget that he took his ideas seriously (*UPUC* 88–89).

Eliot considers that it is exceedingly regrettable that Shelley's ideas
failed to mature though his poetry was the poetry of a grown up. According to Eliot, Shelley's theory of poetry is a 'kinetic or revolutionary theory of poetry'.

F. R. Leavis is one of the chief exponents of Arnoldian type of criticism. Leavis writes about Shelley a good deal in his well-researched piece of critique *Shelley* published in his outstanding tome *Revaluation*. Apart from dealing with the technical nuances of Shelley's poetry Leavis almost reads between the lines of his poetry to find charged meanings and significances. Making a synergetic approach of objectivity, 'disinterestedness' and temperate outlook Leavis well nigh makes an Arnoldian approach to his subject (even if the master himself slithers some time, Leavis maintains his Arnoldian poise to make a sound appraisal, seeing the object as in itself it really is). Showing his disapproval regarding the febrile use of emotion in Shelley, Leavis writes:

Even when he is in his own way unmistakably a distinguished poet, as in Prometheus Unbound, it is impossible to go on reading him at any length with pleasure; the elusive imagery,
the high-pitched emotions, the tone and movement, the ardours, ecstasies, and despairs, are too much the same all through. The effect is of vanity and emptiness (Arnold was right) as well as monotony (Leavis 176).

Leavis’s Arnoldian aura becomes more evident when he again like Arnold censures Shelley’s ebullience of emotion:

The wrong approach to emotion, the approach from the wrong side or end is apparent here; Shelley would clearly have done well not to have indulged these habits and these likings: the viciousness and corruption are immediately recognizable (Leavis 179–80).

John Crowe Ransom the leader of the formalist New Critics, derided the Romantic poets like Shelley. Ransom avers that Romantic poetry is the poetry of frustration and heart’s desire, thus should be excluded from the domains of true poetry and meaningful criticism. Ransom very much like Eliot actually follows the trail blazed by Arnold who asserted once that the Romantic poets did not know enough and thus wants fullness. While
launching another disdainful offensive against Romantic poetry in *The Fugitive* the organ of the New Critics, Ransom says that: ... it is evident that not Byron not Keats nor Shelley ever became quite sophisticated, or grown up.

Allen Tate also deprecated the poetry of the Romantic poets like Shelley in no uncertain terms in his books like *On the Limits of Poetry*. Though in their Shelley criticism these modern critics never pursued the critical lines recommended by Arnold in his essay on *Shelley*, which is intensely personal and skewed in approach, their fundamental hypothesis is identical and common.
Byron

Arnold’s essay “Byron” was originally published as the Preface to Poetry of Byron selected and edited by Arnold himself. Byron is the champion of Arnold among the Romanticists. Arnold eulogized Wordsworth for his poetical greatness but with Byron he feels a strong bond of kinship. A considerable number of his poems bear distinct echo of Byron, namely Stagirius, Mycerinus, Tristan and Iseult. Arnold feels a curious ambivalence towards Byron. He is aware of the inadequacies suffered by Byron, of ‘slovenliness and tunelessness of much of Byron’s production’. He thinks Byron’s:

... most crying faults as a man - his vulgarity, his affectation - as akin to the fault of commonness, of want of art, in his workmanship as a poet (ECII 105).

Yet in his inmost heart Arnold is a votary of Byron, who waged intrepid wars against philistinism, their common enemy. Arnold even exalts Byron, as the: ‘greatest natural force, the greatest elementary
power' in English poetry since Shakespeare. René Wellek superbly summarizes:

His admiration has mainly political motives: Byron is an enemy of cant and philistinism, a great fighter in the war for the liberation of mankind. Byron, Arnold feels strongly, is fundamentally sincere inspite of all his theatrical preludings. While he admits Byron's ill success in creating characters and actions and in making artistic wholes, he admires him also as a poet for his "wonderful power of vividly conceiving a single incident, a single situation (Wellek 178).

Throughout the essay Arnold plays the role of an adept comparative critic. He presents Byron in an overall comparative perspective. In this critique unremittingly Arnold does what was later termed in his famous essay "The Function of Criticism" as, "comparison and analysis". Arnold has compared the views of the critics, who have applauded Byron bountifully, with those who have lukewarm views on the poet. He has compared Byron with Wordsworth, Leopardi, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley.
If we discuss a representative part of this piece on Byron we shall be able to perceive how powerfully and skillfully Arnold compares. The part is a reconnaissance of the relative worth of Byron, Leopardi and Wordsworth. With exceptional animation and insight he reveals here the delectable points of each of the poets. Conceding that Leopardi is a finer artist, possessing a superior cultural finesse than Wordsworth, Arnold adds that albeit Wordsworth exceeds Leopardi on account of his greater poetry for it could transmit joy universally. But Byron surpasses even Wordsworth:

We will take three poets, among the most considerable of our century: Leopardi, Byron, Wordsworth. ... Leopardi is at many points the poetic superior of Wordsworth too. He has a far wider culture than Wordsworth, more mental lucidity, more freedom from illusions as to the real character of the established fact and of reigning conventions; above all this Italian, with his pure and sure touch, with his fineness of perception, is far more of the artist. ... Where then, is Wordsworth's superiority? for the worth of what he has given us
in poetry I hold to be greater, on the whole, than the worth of what Leopardi has given us. It is in Wordsworth’s sound and profound sense

“Of joy in widest commonalty spread”. (ECII 111–113).

Then Arnold just like a master comparatist tests the efficacy of the poetry of Leopardi and Wordsworth through employing his favourite ‘touchstone’ method and concludes that:

Neither Leopardi nor Wordsworth are of the same order with the great poets who made such verse as...

“In la sua volontade e nostra pace”

or as

“... Men must endure

Their going hence, even as their coming hither;

Ripeness is all.” (ECII 113).

Arnold then goes into a long panegyric, illustrating the poetic worth of Byron, whose “poetic value is also greater”. Then making a brief and sweeping assessment of Byron’s poetry Arnold declares Byron to be
superior to the “stricken Leopardi” and even to Wordsworth in certain important considerations. At the final section of this essay Arnold summarily passes authoritative verdict on most of the other Romantic peers of Byron or Wordsworth. We may or may not concur with Arnold’s judgement but we must relish the tour-de-force and Johnsonian bravado of the tenor:

But these two, Wordsworth and Byron, stand, it seems to me, first and pre-eminent in actual performance, a glorious pair, among the English poets of this century. Keats had probably, indeed, a more consummate poetic gift than either of them; ... I for my part can never even think of equaling with them any other of their contemporaries; -- either Coleridge, poet and philosopher wrecked in the mist of opium; or Shelley, beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain. Wordsworth and Byron stand out by themselves (ECII 120).

Arnold’s influence upon the twentieth century literary critics chiefly
T. S. Eliot seems more palpable when one closely follows the predominant note of his criticism of the Romantic poets. Generally both of them never hold the Romanticists in a high esteem and there is a curious paradigm of likeness between Arnold and Eliot on their opinions pertaining to Byron. Both Arnold and Eliot do not exalt Byron as a very great poet. Both of the critics are aware of the limitations of Byron, his certain slapdash stances and flaws. But none of them refuses him the seat of a good poet. Eliot on the one hand conscious of his what he terms ‘defective sensibility’:

The imperceptiveness of Byron to the English word—so that he has to use a great many words before we become aware of him—indicates for practical purposes defective sensibility (OPP 201).

But Eliot too like Arnold admits the merits of Byron. Eliot discovers that, “at a lower intensity he gets a surprising range of effect” (OPP 201).

Arnold in this essay as in his previous discourse on Heinrich Heine expressed his abhorrence and sense of revulsion against the sordid narrowness of the philistines in England and everywhere. And for the
precise reason that both Byron and Heine stood out valiantly against the philistine meanness made them a sort of hero for Arnold. So Arnold's culture study is also implicitly hinted in the essay on Byron.
Count Leo Tolstoi

Arnold’s 1887 essay “Count Leo Tolstoi”, is extremely important as a historical as well as a critical document. It is a solitary piece of criticism by Arnold on a novelist. Arnold’s critical output, otherwise, prolific is extremely sparse on the issue concerning novel. It is really striking that Arnold has written so little about novel while in an age of novel. His contemporaries were eminent novelists, Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Disraeli, and the Bronte Sisters et al.

But Arnold’s essay on Tolstoy is virtually the first exposition of the novelist to the English readers. Tolstoy in his turn admired Arnold highly for his beautiful prose.

Replete with a powerful, comparative insight Arnold rejects the French realistic romance of Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary, which reveals the intimate life of provincial Rouen. On the other hand he exalts Tolstoy’s Anna Karenine (generally spelt as Karenina) for its moral cleanliness and rare naturalness. Pointing out this Rene Wellek says:
The contrast between the French "bitterness, cruelty, and lubricity" illustrated by Madame Bovary and the wholesomely clean moralism of Tolstoy is always in Arnold’s mind (Wellek 177).

Despite Arnold's Tschetschen suffering from the fact that Arnold read Anna Karenina in French translation and his critical opinions are largely borrowed, the importance of his essay is momentous. Arnold's alacrity of mind as a critic can be seen in his healthy curiosity about a new literature. It is delightful to note that Arnold's critical insight prophesied the advent of the Russian novel. To quote Douglas Bush:

As he sees things, French fiction, since Madame Bovary, has grown scientific, hard and unattractive; the famous English novelists have left no comparable successors; and the Russian novel has come to the fore. Its distinctive qualities are fully exemplified in Anna Karenina (Bush 123).

In this essay Arnold primarily tries to relate Anna Karenina with post
conversion Tolstoi, Arnold’s religious strain is too clear in this essay. Then Arnold proceeds to make an indebt study of Anna Karenina. Praising Anna Karenina as a ‘piece of life’ Arnold writes:

But the truth is we are not to take Anna Karenina as a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life. A piece of life it is. The author has not invented and combined it, he has seen it; it has all happened before his inward eye, and it was in this wise that it happened. Levine’s shirts were packed up, and he was late for his wedding in consequence; Warinka and Serge Ivanitch met a Levine’s country-house and went out together; Serge was very near proposing, but did not. The author saw all happening so saw it, and therefore relates it; and what his novel in this way loses in art it gains in reality.

For this is the result which, by the extraordinary fineness of perception, and by his sincere fidelity to it, the author achieves; he works in us a sense of the absolute reality of his personages and their doings (EC II 152).
Here we can find Arnold's close likeness with leading twentieth century critic of fiction the neo-Aristotelian Wayne C. Booth. Booth challenges a certain body of critical opinion which deriving from the precept and practice of Flaubert, Henry James, and other modern masters of fiction condemns such novelists as Dickens and George Eliot for their authorial omniscience and intrusiveness. Booth contends that absolute objectivity is unattainable in literature. Asserting that subjectivism and omniscient approach by the novelist is very natural, Booth says:

It should be unnecessary here to show that no author can ever attain to this kind of objectivity. Most of us today would like Sartre, renounce the analogy with science even if we could admit that science is objective in this sense (Lodge 566).

Arnold's comparative method again can be seen after his discursive discourse on Anna Karenina. Arnold compares French and Russian novel in a balanced manner. But Arnold's partiality can be seen in his inclination to Tolstoy:
But there are two things in which the Russian novel—Count Tolstoi's novel at any rate—is very advantageously distinguished from the type of novel now so much in request in France. In the first place, there is no fine sentiment, at once tiresome and false. ... The other thing is yet more important. Our Russian novelist deals abundantly with criminal passion and adultery, but he does not seem to feel himself owing any service to the goddess Lubricity, or bound to put in touches at this goddesses dictation. Much in Anna Karenine is painful, much is unpleasant, but nothing is of a nature to trouble the senses or to please those who wish their senses troubled. This taint is wholly absent. In the French novels where it is so abundantly present its baneful effects do not end with itself (EC II 160).

Arnold's distaste for the French realistic novel is very evident. Arnold
is also charmed by the streak of sweet reasonableness of Tolstoy’s that runs through *Anna Karenine*. In this essay we see Arnold in the role of a bold, authoritative judicial critic.
Amiel

Henry Frederic Amiel, the Swiss Professor whose posthumous *journal* was to become one of the 'classics' of the nineteenth century. After his demise his *Journal Intime* or private diary, to which he had confided his deep and intimate feelings during thirty years was found to abound with delicately expressed thoughts and dreams, blending German pessimism with Buddhist philosophy and with a flavour of French pungency and acuteness. Mrs. Augusta Ward, Arnold’s niece made the very admirable English translation.

Arnold’s comparative approach finds an eloquent expression here. Enthralled by Amiel’s felicity of writing Arnold compares him with E. P. de Senancour’s *Obermann*. But Arnold thinks Amiel is good, but some critics do overpraise his prose. And such a profound aficionado of *Obermann* as Arnold is, he would never acknowledge that Amiel had ever got the exquisite magic of Senancour’s. To prove this point Arnold applies a sort of *touchstone* method as well as a comparative method placing Amiel and Senancour side by side:
M. Scherer and Mrs. Humphry Ward give Amiel's journal very decidedly the preference over the letters of an old friend of mine, Obermann. The quotations made from Amiel's journal by his critics failed, I say, to enable me quite to understand this high praise... Obermann has been mentioned: it seems to me that we have only to place a passage from Senancour beside a passage from Amiel, to perceive the difference between a feeling for nature which gives magic to style and one which does not (EC II 176-178).

Then Arnold quotes two exquisite passages, one from Amiel and one from Senancour's Obermann, both excludes palpable poetry. Then Arnold comments decisively:

No translation can render adequately the cadence of diction, the "dying fall" of reveries like those of Senancour or Rousseau. But even in a translation we must surely perceive that the magic of style is with Senancour's feeling for nature, not Amiel's; and in the original this is far more manifest still (EC II 179).
Arnold’s judgement may or may not be partial, lopsided, but what he says he says convincingly and with a Johnsonian magisterial élan. Arnold even comments on philosophical concept of Amiel and his inclination to the Nirvana of Buddhism, Amiel used a phrase, ‘the coloured air-bubble’ to depict life’s evanescence. Arnold compares it with Shelley’s inimitable:

Life like a dome of many coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of eternity
Until death tramples it to fragments.

Arnold says Shelley’s lines:

has value as a splendid image nobly introduced in a beautiful and impassioned poem. But Amiel’s ‘coloured air bubble’, as a positive piece of “speculative intuition”, has no value whatever (ECII 183).

Though René Wellek opined that Arnold’s essay on Amiel is surprisingly unsympathetic, the indelible impression of Arnold’s
fine comparative method and what Douglas Bush terms judicial criticism is apparent here.
A French Critic on Milton

"M. Scherer is a solid embodiment of Mr. Matthew Arnold's ideal critic"—Henry James.

Matthew Arnold who is the master of an animated prose and a racy style again makes the essay on E. Scherer, entitled "A French Critic on Milton" an indelible proof. An excellent comparatist, Arnold begins by contrasting the criticism of Milton by Lord Macaulay and Scherer, and reaches the conclusion that, Macaulay would disappoint those who desire true criticism. The din made by the sheer plethora of rhetoric reduces every other conceivable critical elements into a modicum. Moreover, Macaulay’s “Essay on Milton” has a specific an avowed purpose, that is to show Milton in the light of Puritanism. But Arnold thinks:

A reader who only wants rhetoric, a reader wants a panegyric on Milton, a panegyric on the Puritans, will find what he wants.

A reader who wants criticism will be disappointed (ME 166).

We have seen that 'objectivity' is one of the chief points of Arnold's criticism. in this essay too Arnold pleads for the objectivity in judging a literary piece. Reaffirming his call for 'disinterestedness' Arnold says that
Macaulay’s Essay on Milton is bound to disappoint a ‘disinterested’ reader, “But a ‘disinterested’ reader, whose object is not to hear Puritanism and Milton glorified, but to get at the truth about them, will surely be dissatisfied” (*ME* 168).

A faithful votary of disinterestedness i.e. objectivity in criticism, Arnold discards other methods of criticism, namely, Criticism based on convention. For this reason Arnold even dismisses the beautiful critique of Addison or Milton, which was based on convention. Stressing time and again the point of ‘disinterestedness’, Arnold rejects too the Milton criticism of Dr. Johnson. Dr. Johnson’s criticism was not teeming with rhetoric, neither it was based on convention. Yet Dr. Johnson lacked the required objectivity, the ‘disinterestedness’ of mind. Arnold says on Dr. Johnson:

He was neither sufficiently disinterested nor sufficiently flexible, nor sufficiently receptive, to be a satisfying critic of a poet like Milton (*ME* 174).

Then what can be termed as a clear, unambiguous anticipation of
modern critics like T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards, or the new critics, all who preached objectivity in criticism, Arnold says:

A completely disinterested judgement about a man like Milton is easier to a foreign critic than to an Englishman. From conventional obligation to admire "our great epic poet" a foreigner is free. Nor has he any bias for or against Milton because he was a Puritan, - in his political and ecclesiastical doctrines to one of our great English parties a delight, to other a bugbear (ME 174).

In this concept about criticism, the need to preserve objectivity is implied. These attributes to a foreign is nothing but a sine- qua -non for the later day New Critics. An ideal critic should possess disinterestedness and must not have any bias against or for the author under review; moreover he should not be interested about the religion or political leanings of the author. This is what exactly the New Critics preach.

M.H. Abrams in a bid to define the New Criticism, in detail, sums up their critical formula, which is akin to Arnold:
It (the New Criticism) opposed the prevailing interest of scholars, critics and teachers of that era in the biographies of authors, the social context of literature, and literary history by insisting that the proper concern of literary criticism is not with the external circumstances or effects or historical position of a work, but with a detailed consideration of the work itself as an independent entity (CLT 180).

Then Arnold announces the entrance of M. Edmond Scherer, the powerful French critic, well versed in French, German and English literature: well-informed, intelligent, disinterested, open-minded, sympathetic (ME 174). And Arnold places M. Scherer, at par with his idol Sainte-Beuve. After making a thorough survey of Scherer’s views on Milton’s poetical works, Arnold exalts him as a lofty and magnificent critic and acclaims his ‘critical sagacity’ highly.