Chapter IV

Essays in Criticism, First Series
Maurice de Guérin

"Maurice de Guérin" was first published in the Fraser's Magazine on January 1863 and later published in Arnold's Essays in Criticism, First series (1865).

Arnold's theoretical perception, which was generally getting matured and consistent, found its somewhat practical applications in its discourses upon the individual authors or poets in Essays in Criticism, First Series. Arnold's well-formed and decisive utterances about the theories of criticism were expressed in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" which was published in a syncretized manner in this book with his essays on poets and authors as a sort of praxis. In the perspective of Essays in Criticism, First Series as well as Arnold's critical manifesto "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" we can see Arnold increasingly in his singular role of the initiator of modern criticism. when at the outset Arnold speaks at length about the grand power of poetry, and says that, "grand power of poetry is its interpretative power" (LEC 12), he actually begins to preach his pet
theory that 'poetry is a criticism of life'. In this connection, he distinguishes between the interpretative power of science and poetry, as he will again do in his ultimate manifesto of criticism The Study of Poetry. Arnold thinks that the interpretation of poetry engenders a zestful appreciation of life, hones our perceptions about life, while science on the other hand is incapable to interpret life for it lacks the wonderful interpretative power of poetry. Arnold says that while interpreting the mysteries of the universe poetry, “awakens in us a wonderfully full, new and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them” (LEC 13). On the contrary, “the interpretations of science do not give us this intimate sense of objects as the interpretations of poetry give it; they appeal to a limited faculty, and not to the whole man” (LEC 13).

Apart from the fact that I.A.Richards spoke in his Science and Poetry in an almost similar vein, which we shall discuss in a later chapter, one is startled to find the resemblance of the pioneering New critic, John Crowe Ransom with this view of Arnold. In his “Preface” to his book The World’s Body J.C.Ransom says, “what we cannot know constitutionally as
scientists, is the world which is made of whole and indefeasible objects, and this is the world which poetry recovers for us” (WB iii). In this essay we find Arnold’s opinion that Maurice de Guérin endeavoured to bind the life of Nature and the life of man with closer proximity. And in an extremely significant observation Arnold remarks that Guérin’s mind was susceptible to various poetic impressions. In this respect what Arnold says, is almost a prognostication of T.S.Eliot’s ‘theory of impersonality’. Arnold writes here that the poet’s mind should be to a great extent passive—“a sort of human Aeolian harp, catching and rendering every rustle of Nature” (LEC 30). A poet’s mind, Arnold thinks, should be passive, shorn off any inherent emotion and then it would become an ideal receptacle for imbibing all types of poetic impressions. And then the received poetic impression could be recreated into poetry of the finest kind. Arnold’s this idea seems to foretell T.S.Eliot’s famous statement “the progress of an artist as a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” (SW 53).
Arnold's comparative faculty is at its best in Maurice de Guérin. Here Arnold dexterously compares French Maurice de Guérin with John Keats, marks their affinity in their common malady of mind "something morbid and excessive" (LEC 32). Again, apart from many shared traits, both de Guérin and Keats possessed 'natural magic' and 'moral profundity'. And Arnold thinks in this interpretative faculty of poetry, the 'natural magic' and 'moral profundity' Aeschylus and Shakespeare are at par, and there is Lucretius and Wordsworth too with them, but Shelley, though was passionately "straining after both of them" fails to achieve "natural magic in his expression" (LEC 34). Again Arnold makes a comparative study between Keats and de Guérin:

But in Keats and Guérin, in whom the faculty of naturalistic interpretation is overpoweringly predominant, the natural magic is perfect; ... Even between Keats and Guérin, however, there is a distinction to be drawn. Keats has, above all, a sense of what is pleasurable and open in the life of Nature; for him she is the Alma Paren: his expression has, therefore, more
than Guérin's, something genial, outward, and sensuous.

Guérin has, above all, a sense of what there is adorable and secret in the life of Nature; for him she is the *Magna Parenes*; his expression has, therefore, more than Keats's, something mystic, inward, and profound (*LEC* 34).

The observations evince Arnold's sharp faculty as a comparatist par excellence.
Matthew Arnold's article on Eugénie de Guérin, a sparkling and brilliant one, makes our conviction more strong that Arnold chiefly was a comparatist. Speaking about the journal of Eugénie de Guérin Arnold sarcastically comments that English critics do rarely go outside their own narrow realm of interest to find anything interesting in other literatures. Arnold says that, "the bees of our English criticism do not often roam so far afield for their honey" (LEC 84), and showers rich plaudit upon the reviewer who favourably reviewed the Journals of Eugénie de Guérin:

... and this critic deserves thanks for having flitted in his quest of blossom to foreign parts, and for having settled upon a beautiful flower found there. He had the discernment to see that Mdlle. de Guérin was well worth speaking of, and he spoke of her with feeling and appreciation (LEC 84).

The above comments are not unlikely for a man one of whose strong point in criticism is a comparative method, who coined the term "comparative literature" in English. In this essay we find almost no other
facet of Arnold's criticism but only what T.S. Eliot said "comparison and analysis". In various levels Arnold adroitly compares Eugénie de Guérin with her brother Maurice, with eminent French littérature Pascal. Citing the details point of comparison between Eugénie and Maurice Arnold says that Maurice de Guérin was exceedingly gifted in interpreting nature in finest terms. He was capable of rendering the subtlest impressions of nature uniquely. However, Arnold concedes that there can be no denying of this fact that the composition by Eugénie de Guérin is replete with grace and intelligence, imbued with the intellectual qualities of mind. But what she fails to achieve is that intimate and exact rendering of nature by her brother Maurice de Guérin. Arnold writes:

In Maurice's special talent, which was a talent for interpreting nature, for finding words which incomparably render the subtlest impressions which nature makes upon us, which bring the intimate life of nature wonderfully near to us, it seems to me that his sister was by no means his equal. She never, indeed, expresses herself without grace and intelligence; but
her words when she speaks of the life and appearances nature, are in general but intellectual signs; they are not like his brothers—symbols equivalent with the thing symbolized (LEC 86).

Again Arnold compares Eugénie de Guérin with Pascal but thinks that this comparison is right upto a certain extent. Pascal was different in disposition from Eugénie de Guérin. In his powerful active mind there was no space for ennui and he had not that serenity and sweetness of a perfect saint like man. He was, as Goethe called him, “the severe, morbid, Pascal” (LEC 89). The forlornness, the weariness, which is so much a hallmark of Eugénie de Guérin never, existed in the mind of Pascal. The insatiable, fiery mind of Pascal’s never belonged to Eugénie. Eugénie was ever in search for a placid happiness of soul. When denied this happiness she found the world futile and fatiguing, full of a pervading emptiness, reducing the meaning of life into a naught. But in one aspect she resembled Pascal. Both of them were capable in seeing the heart of the matter clearly, and Arnold writes:
she resembles Pascal, however, by the clearness and firmness
of her intelligence, going straight and instinctively to the
bottom of any matter she is dealing with, and expressing
herself about it with incomparable precision (*LEC* 89).
Heinrich Heine

"Heinrich Heine", which is written in a forceful, lapidary style, with a marked urbanity in tone, makes Arnold's status as one of the initiators of comparative studies more strong. Arnold with his keen critical faculties is as comfortable as he is in any survey of either English, French, Celtic or German or classical literature. Sir Walter Raleigh considers this essay as "perhaps the finest" (Raleigh 304) in Essays in Criticism, First Series. In "Heinrich Heine", apart from Arnold’s role as a comparatist we can find him anticipating some of the modern critical opinions on romanticism or see formative phase of typically Arnoldian culture study. This essay also documents valuable evidences of political thinking and ideologies of Arnold.

While doing any study of Matthew Arnold's criticism one must keep in mind that, one of the basic tenets of Arnold's criticism is his paramount concern for culture. The basic contention of this type of criticism is that literature is the best medium for preserving the best vehicle for dissemination of culture. The radical Arnoldian function of
criticism is to so interpret literature that the cultural values and ethos embedded in it not only becomes perceptible but also sufficiently appealing to the mind of man. At the outset Arnold stresses immensely upon the point that tradition should be sustained throughout generations and Heinrich Heine, actually bears the tradition of Goethe, the supreme poet of Germany. As we have pointed out earlier that whenever Arnold speaks of the need of preservation of 'tradition' in a sanctified way, he does it with an almost Eliotian earnestness. Arnold's recurring pleas for the worthiness of 'tradition' ever reminds us of T. S. Eliot's critical manifesto "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Without much ostentation, Arnold states with a plain statement about the Goethian legacy, "Heine is noteworthy, because he is the most important German successor and continuator of Goethe in Goethe's most important line of activity" (LEC 108). This ardent desire of Arnold that tradition should be religiously sustained for the engendering of better works by the posterity found its most unflinching modern advocate in T. S. Eliot. Though while speaking about Arnold's conception of Goethe's legacy bequeathed to
Heine we have to take into account what the modern critics, like René Wellek, have to say. Douglas Bush too points out, "Wellek and other scholars have censured Arnold for inadequate knowledge and comprehension of German romanticism, Goethe and Heine" (Bush 98).

Critics like René Wellek thinks that Arnold links up Goethe and Heine in an extremely spacious way. Wellek says, "the essay on Heine, which has been much admired, seems to me the least satisfactory of the literary essays in the volume" (Wellek 174). According to Wellek the imperfect and indistinct knowledge of Arnold regarding German romanticism has impeded his proper appreciation of Heine and the related context.

One of the chief moving spirits of Arnold's social and literary criticism is his deepest concern for 'culture'; it finds one of its earliest articulations in this essay on Heinrich Heine.

Arnold's insists from the beginning of the essay that rich encomium should be showered on Heine for his praiseworthy role as a brilliant soldier in the 'liberation war of humanity'. Arnold writes, "he is significant because he was, if not preeminently a brave, yet a brilliant, a most
effective soldier in the liberation war of humanity" (LEC 107). This is actually an entreaty by Arnold, which ultimately leads to his theories of 'culture', which has taken the final and pontifical shape with that deep and significant study *Culture and Anarchy*.

Arnold portrays Heinrich Heine as the chief inheritor of Goethe's legacy. And Goethe was an apostle of culture, sweetness and light. "Goethe's profound, imperturbable naturalism is absolutely fatal to all routine thinking" (LEC 110). Douglas Bush comments that "Goethe's influence was not fully effectual; it was Heine who carried on 'a life and death battle with philistinism'" (Bush 97). Arnold in his essay on Heine and in his powerful study *Culture and Anarchy* established Heine's word *Philistine* in the English language, "[p]hilistine must have originally meant, in the mind of those who invented the nickname, a strong, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the chosen people, of the children of the light" (LEC 112). In a later essay on Byron, Arnold places Heine in the same berth for their unrelenting battle against philistinism.
Matthew Arnold’s one of the critical objectives was to search intensively in the realms of literature other than English and to find resources for his intellectual stimulation. Arnold, who detested the English insularity, always endeavoured his best to make the English know about the best that is known and thought of in the world.

Arnold’s essay “Joubert” is a firm step in that direction. Here we see Arnold’s faculty as a comparatist at its unsurpassing brilliance. Arnold thinks that the name of Joseph Joubert is not much circulated among the critics, littérateurs and cognoscenti of both English, and Joubert’s own French language. Yet Joubert’s extraordinary genius deserves to be acclaimed by all.

The comparative thrust of this article become self- evident with the subtitle appended as “A French Coleridge”. Arnold very adeptly draws the elaborate points of affinity between S.T. Coleridge and Joubert. The discourse of Arnold that follows bears testimony to his profound knowledge of the English and continental literatures. Arnold begins his
exhaustive narration upon the points of affinity between Coleridge and Joubert, saying, "I have likened Joubert to Coleridge; and indeed the points of resemblance between the two men are numerous" (LEC 188). Then Arnold points out the "numerous" parallels between the two great men of letters. Both of them were great talkers, possessed an impressive collection of books, both of them wrote in a desultory manner and were voracious readers of old literature. Both Coleridge and Joubert were "curious explorer of words, and of the latent significance hidden under the popular use of them" (LEC 189). Besides this there are much more points of affinity. Proceeding in his comparative study of Joubert and Coleridge, Arnold comments that though Coleridge has less delicacy and penetration than Joubert, he had more richness and power; Coleridge possessed "the stimulus of his continual effort" (LEC 189). Arnold however, concedes that both Joubert and Coleridge were men of extraordinary ardour in the search for truth.

Then while speaking about the French judgement about Coleridge
Arnold leaves indelible stamp of his intimate knowledge about French literature and criticism. He speaks at length about such giants of French literature as Racine and Chateaubriand, the impression of the English connoisseurs of French literature and some of the flaws of English judgement. Arnold with his amazing insight compares Byron with Chateaubriand. He writes:

one production of Chateaubriand's, *Rene* is akin to the most popular productions of Byron, -to the *Childe Harold* or *Manfred*, -in spirit, equal to them in power, superior to them in form (LEC 191).

Going back from these digressions to his original point of discussion Arnold again points out the differences and proximity between Coleridge and Joubert. By way of comparing them Arnold writes, “Joubert has far less smoke and turbid vehemence in him than Coleridge; he had also a far keener sense of what was absurd”(LEC 192). Again, he presents the similarity of situation between these two critics, “Joubert had around him
in France an atmosphere of literary, philosophical, and religious opinion as alien to him as that in England was to Coleridge" (LEC 193).

Making further critical assessment of Joubert and Coleridge Arnold endeavours to delineate well-balanced comparative view of these two luminaries.

Moreover, in this critique Arnold also propounds his famous theory of poetry and art, that quintessentially ideal literature is 'a criticism of life'. Speaking about the enduring values of literature of Homer and Shakespeare, Arnold classifies them as 'men of genius in literature'. But the common bond of them is that "the work of the two orders of men is at the bottom the same—*a criticism of life*" (LEC 209).

Arnold's theory of poetry, his belief that literature is a 'criticism of life' has a curious resemblance with that of the maverick modernist critic Yvor Winters. Speaking upon this, eminent critic and chronicler of criticism Stanley Edgar Hyman, in his famous book *The Armed Vision* says, Winters':
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 consistent 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).
The Literary Influences of Academies

Matthew Arnold's passion for comparative literature and criticism virtually touches the crescendo in his lecture "The Literary Influence of Academies". This brilliant essay can be compared with those of the predecessors of Arnold, who have also like him spoke sporadically of the need of establishing an 'academy' in England. Daniel Defoe, in his "Essay upon Projects", as well as Swift and Addison spoke eloquently in favour of a British Academy which should possess a sort of legislative authority upon the authors to reform their 'freaks' and 'vagaries'. Arnold, though with much dash and tour-de-force and in an organized way, spoke in the similar line. Arnold, a master comparatist as he is, turned to French intelligentsia for his intellectual succour. Substantially imbibing from Sainte-Beuve and E. Renan, he proposed to establish a British academy. Sainte-Beauve's Causeries du Lundi contains a profound account of the French academy, which made a lasting impression upon the mind of Arnold. Platitudes of Arnoldian criticism 'provincialism' and urbanity are also taken from Sainte-Beuve. Renan, the unsurpassable, sparkling critic,
in his poignant and deep critique *Essais de Morale* speaks at length about the French Academy. Arnold relentlessly assailed English insularity and provincialism, and made earnest pleas for an open attitude to life. All these are manifest from the fact that all his life he is a votary of comparative studies in literature and criticism. "The Literary Influence on Academies" can be read as a fine piece of comparative study between English and French literatures. Citing instances after instances Arnold very adeptly makes a scholarly comparative survey of these two literatures. Arnold's comparative assessment begins with his explanation why the French could have an academy, while the British had no such institutions. Arnold opines that, the French possess a sensitiveness of intellectual conscience, which has made Academy possible. The British have no intellectual conscience. The French have a quick and flexible intelligence, to which the British can lay no claim. The chief characteristics of the British are energy and honesty, while the French have openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence—qualities, which were once prerogative of ancient Athenians. Arnold writes:
Openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence were very signal characteristics of the Athenian people in ancient times; everybody will feel that. Openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence are remarkable characteristics of the French people in modern times; at any rate, they strikingly characterize them as compared with us; I think everybody, or almost everybody, will feel that (LEC 237).

Arnold thinks that the British have a large measure of energy, of which genius is an essential part.
The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

"The Function of Criticism", which is the last essay of *Essays in Criticism, First series* is actually the key to the whole Arnoldian corpus of criticism and his critical manifesto. Arnold's intellectual alacrity, his sound knowledge, saner attitude to life and his Francophilia find their most articulate expression in "The Function of Criticism". "The Function of Criticism" is not only a brilliant summing up of Arnoldian precepts but also it contains the basic tenets and principles of Arnoldian literary criticism. Arnold's ultimate envisioning of the business of criticism and the role of a critic is uttered here unequivocally.

At the outset, while stressing the utmost need of practicing criticism in English, Arnold recalls his Homeric lectures, where he wrote:

> Of these two literatures (of France and Germany) as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a *critical* effort; the endeavour, in all branches
of knowledge,—theology, philosophy, history, art, science,—to
see the object as in itself it really is (CT 140).

"To see the object as in itself it really is"—this is the chief Arnoldian
mantra for attaining an ideal, perfect state in criticism, a fervent plea for
objectivity in criticism. Later when we shall speak about Arnold's
discourse on 'disinterestedness', we shall see how commingled with
Arnoldian call for "To see the object as in itself it really is", 'disinterestedness' presage much later day objective criticism widely
practised by Eliot, Richards, the Formalists, the New critics and the likes.
Underlining the proper function of criticism Arnold speaks of objectivity
as the ultimate aim of criticism. As in his other critical writings, here too
Arnold advocates for 'objectivity' with unforeseen tour-de-force.

R.H. Super, the venerable editor of Arnold's prose works, observing
on "The Function of Criticism" appositely says that this essay shows: "The
fruitful interplay between criticism and the creative process" (Allott & Super
xxi). Super really drives the true point home by expressing such a
prophetic view. Arnold, indeed, in "The Function of Criticism" wants to
show, how the critical effort syncretizes with creative process engenders a perfect work of art. In this regard, Arnold denounces the Romantic poets, like Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, and even his ideal Wordsworth, stating that, all of them lacked the required critical effort, which could make their creation brilliant. Goethe excelled the Romantic poets by virtue of his all-surpassing critical endeavour, which, mingled with the creative process bore wonderful fruits of poetry. Arnold writes:

In other words, 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. Wordsworth cared little for books, and disparaged Goethe. I admire Wordsworth, as he is, so much that I can not wish him different; and it is vain, no doubt, to imagine such a man different from what he is, to suppose that he could have been different. But surely the one thing wanting to make Wordsworth and even greater poet than he is, – his thought richer, and his influence
of wider application,—was that he should have read more books, among them, no doubt, those of that Goethe whom he disparaged without reading him (LEC 262).

But Arnold finely points out that only reading would not suffice to make a sustainable work of art. For this, not only a mélange of critical and creative effort is enough, the contemporary ambience must be conducive for creation. Arnold says that both Coleridge and Shelley were voracious readers, yet they lacked the critical effort; Pindar and Sophocles had not many books and Shakespeare was not a profound reader either, yet they produced enduring classics of deep understanding about human life. The Romantics could not breathe in an atmosphere replete with ideas. They failed to imbibe and enrich their mind with fresh ideas. The indispensable factor for a great creation is the atmosphere, where the poet could live:

in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by
fresh thought, intelligent and alive. And this state of things is the true basis of the creative power's exercise (LEC 263).

Arnold's denigration of the Romantics is not wholly correct; we should take it with a grain of salt. Neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth nor Shelley lacked the critical mind alleged by Arnold. They were sound critics with incontrovertible acumen who produced notable works of criticism. In this point of castigating the Romantic poets, Arnold is at one with his modern counterparts like T.S. Eliot, J.C. Ransom, and other New Critics. We shall make a probing discussion about this affinity between Arnold and the modernists in the light of Essays in Criticism, Second series.

When Arnold spells out the ideal paths to be followed by a critic he speaks of 'disinterestedness'. 'Disinterestedness' underscores and precisely sums up the critical modus operandi of Matthew Arnold. To achieve a balanced critical reading one must maintain 'disinterestedness'. This is precisely the way to accomplish, what the modern critics term in their argot as 'objectivity'. Arnold has a striking likeness with the radical
doctrines of the modern practitioners of 'objectivity' in literary criticism.

Arnold's message is cogent and explicit:

And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. Its business is as I have said, simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas (LEC 270).

Exponents of modern criticism like T.S.Eliot, I.A.Richards,
J.C. Ransom, R.P. Blackmur, Allen Tate et al ardentely preach and practice 'objectivity' as the ideal though essentially unattainable goal in literary criticism.

T.S. Eliot’s call for 'objectivity' is very clear. In his memorable "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot says, “honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry" (SW 53). And again at the concluding portion of his essay he remarks that, an ideal critic's job is: "To divert interest from the poet to the poetry" (SW 59). All this earnest pleading for 'objectivity' is nothing but an advocacy for Arnoldian 'disinterestedness'.

I.A. Richards, the avantgarde critic of 'objectivity' whom John Crowe Ransom hails in his The New Criticism (1941) as the initiator of 'the new criticism', also repeatedly pleads for objectivity in his critical oeuvres. Apart from his Science and Poetry where his discipleship of Arnold is evident (we shall discuss this point at a later stage) his principles of objectivity in literary criticism show the impact of Arnoldian doctrine of 'disinterestedness' upon him. I.A. Richards in his Practical Criticism
speaks volumes for objectivity and here he documents the results of a
unique experiment done, very much in the line of objectivity in criticism.
Commenting on this book Stanley Edgar Hyman declares:

It was the beginning of objective criticism, the first organized
attempt to stop theorizing about what people get when they
read a poem and to find out. Its ultimate aim is no less lofty a
one than the general improvement of literary appreciation
(Hyman 315).

New Criticism's preoccupation with 'objectivity', which is in fact a
form of Arnoldian 'disinterestedness', is now a common knowledge.
'Objectivity' forms the foundation of New Critical approaches. Referring
to this, K.M.Newton says that the primary interest of New Critics "was in
the literary text as object, not in the intention of the author or the
psychology of the reader" (Newton 15). Explicating the actions of the New
Critics again Newton writes:

The New Critics believed that their critical approach was objective
and that it led to true knowledge of literary texts. It was the text as
object that for them was central and they rejected or downgraded critical criteria based on such factors as authorial intention, historical context, or audience response as directing attention away from the text as object (Newton 25).

John Crowe Ransom rejected the criticism of his predecessors as "shapeless miscellany" and expressed his hope that New Criticism as a kind of collaborative effort would be 'as definitive as the New Physics or as the New Logic'. Commenting on this Mohit K. Ray in his critique 'Objectivity in Literary Criticism' says:

... as indicated by Ransom, what binds the New Critics together, is their serious concern for literary criticism, their conviction that literary criticism should be literary and their imitation of science in the critical approach (Ray 2).

When Ransom writes in The New Criticism, "a beautiful poem is an objective discourse what we approve containing objective detail what we like" (NC 54), he was uttering an objective conception of criticism where we can trace the influence of Arnoldian doctrine of 'to see the object as in
it really is" and the definition of criticism as a 'disinterested' endeavor.

Another stalwart of New Criticism Allen Tate’s theory as enunciated in *Tension in Poetry* has a keen resemblance with the assumptions of Ransom. Ransom’s disciple and a foremost New Critic Cleanth Brooks also has his theories of 'objectivity' of literary criticism which has a distinct Arnoldian aura. In a groundbreaking essay in "The Kenyon Review" Cleanth Brooks, writes: "that literary criticism is a description and an evaluation of its object"(The Kenyon Review xii pp.72–81).

R.P.Blackmur too believed in close reading as the dominant mode of literary analysis and his anthology of essays, *The Double Agent* and *The Expense of Greatness* became ideals of New Criticism. M.H.Abrams points out in his *The Mirror and the Lamp* that:

In the second chapter of *Theory of Literature*, entitled 'The Nature of Literature' Wellek and Warren speak of, "highly complex organization of a stratified character with multiple meanings and relationships" (Wellek and Warren 27).

In addition to that, we are told in the twelfth chapter, "The mode of Existence of a Literary work of Art" that, a literary work, "appears as an object of knowledge *sui generis* which has a special ontological status" (Wellek and Warren 156).

All these steadily point to a sound theory of 'objectivity' in criticism, propounded by Wellek and Warren. In this regard we can recall Professor Mohit K. Ray:

René Wellek and Austin Warren insisted that there is a hard core to all readings and claimed that our best access to the common centre is through close study of the work's formal structure (Ray 3).

All these things religiously practiced by the modernists and the New Critics, aim to attain 'objectivity' in literary criticism, which is 'disinterestedness' in another form. The call for close reading of the text...
and the desire to discard all the extrinsic factors like authorial intention, sociological or historical consideration or anything else outside the text, point to the ideas propounded by Matthew Arnold in his *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* and elsewhere. When Arnold shows the impeding factors of his contemporary criticism and when he offers the remedy, he in fact anticipates the New criticism:

For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing...*(LEC 270)*.

According to Arnold the ideal critic's 'disinterestedness' should not be clouded by any hidden agenda of any sorts.

There are certain parallels to Arnold's *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*. All of them bear the same Arnoldian title—they are T.S. Eliot's "The Function of Criticism", Allen Tate's "The Present Function
of Criticism", and Northrop Frye's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time".

The affinity of these critics with Arnold lies not only in their deliberately projected Arnoldian title but also at a much profounder level. Professor Mohit K. Ray in his paper *The Legacy of Matthew Arnold* points out very deftly the points of affinity between T.S.Eliot and Matthew Arnold and remarks:

> And so Arnold's famous manifesto, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1865) is paralleled by Eliot's "The Function of Criticism", in which Eliot repeats Arnold's censure of the Englishman's extreme individualism and antipathy to criticism (Ray 105).

> Moreover T.S.Eliot rephrases some other Arnoldian doctrines in this essay. But it is strange that though Eliot reiterates what his predecessor said, he is accusing Arnold in an unjustified way. Speaking about the role played by criticism or critical perceptions behind any creative activity Eliot writes:
Matthew Arnold distinguishes far too bluntly, it seems to me, between the two activities: he overlooks the capital importance of criticism in the work of creation itself. Probably, indeed, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; ... I maintain even that the criticism employed by a trained and skilled writer on his own work is the most vital, the highest kind of criticism; and that some creative writers are superior to others solely because their critical faculty is superior (Lodge 81).

This is nothing but a rephrasing of Arnold's plea that good creative writing requires a sound critical effort. As we have cited him earlier, that the so-called lack of critical effort marred the poetic profundity of some of the romantics and the presence of a healthy critical effort helped Goethe's poetry to excel.

David Lodge in an essay “Literary Criticism and Literary Creation” very efficiently sums up the interrelation between Arnold's and Eliot's “The Function of Criticism”, he says that T.S.Eliot while writing his own “Function of Criticism” essay with Arnold's very much in mind, used
criticism in a more restricted and more familiar sense, to mean the elucidation of works of art and creation of taste.

Allen Tate’s essay “The Present Function of Criticism” has also keen proximity to Arnold’s essay. Allen Tate opens his essay “The Present Function of Criticism” with an invective against ‘historical’, ‘sociological’ and ‘psychological’ criticisms, which according to him are nothing but a denigration of the spirit of literature. Arnold also makes fervent plea for ‘disinterestedness’ and asks not to consider any factor that can impede a proper appreciation of literature. We have previously illustrated this point by quoting relevant portions from Arnold’s essay. Though not an identical photocopy of Arnold’s theories propounded in “The Function of Criticism”, Tate’s severe critique against historical sociological method of criticism is very close to Arnold’s thought.

Northrop Frye’s “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” is also suffused with Arnoldian echoes. In this essay Frye considers it the responsibility of the critic to systematize the previously unorganized study of literature. As the shaper of intellectual tradition, the critic must
organize the material within a critical framework that follows the natural contours of literature. Frye's affinity with Arnold is manifest in this essay when in an exact Arnoldian tone he writes that, art is a continuously emancipating factor in society, and the critic, whose job it is to get as many people in contact with the best that has been and is being thought and said, is at least ideally, the pioneer of education and the shaper of cultural tradition.

This an absolute echo of Arnold's idea of a perfect critic's job, to know and to disseminate: "the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas" (LEC 270).

Again when Frye says: "poetry is a disinterested use of words" he intact retells Arnold's theory of disinterestedness. But Frye is more clearly reminiscent of Arnold's theory of disinterestedness in criticism when he castigates 'subjective and regressive dilettantism, interesting in its place, but not real work' which should not and cannot replace true criticism.

Frye has also words of acclaim reserved for Arnold in his essay: If I
have shown up Arnold in a poor light, I should say that he is the only one I know who suggests that criticism can be; like history and philosophy, a total attitude to experience.

“The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” is one of the most significant pronouncements by Matthew Arnold. “The Function of Criticism” is his critical manifesto where he stresses the value of criticism in creating a climate conducive to the production of good new writing. This essay in its turn influenced much modern criticism and helped the modern critics to formulate a sound function of criticism.