Chapter - VI

Exploded Dream
Perhaps one of the best approaches to Arnold's poetry would be to look at it, in his own words, as a criticism of life. By criticism one should not imagine only dull and dogmatic principles. In poetry, at any rate, nothing becomes real unless textually realised. One wonders if the tension in Arnold was not due to the fact that in poetry his was a lone voice while in criticism it was the voice of a public.

Matthew Arnold, as Tillyard holds, was at once "acutely aware of the public as well as of the private and personal nature of a work of art". Some of his poems, specially the sonnets of 1867-68, are little better than versified preachings. Yet, unlike Sidney, he is not at bottom in favour of adjusting poetry to the other activities of life, or of finding some easy connection between art and ethics. His criticism of life has to fulfil some conditions fixed by "the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty" as he thought. But laws are not easy to enunciate. Or they are easy to enunciate but difficult to lay down. In fact Arnold's definition, if definition it may be called, is misleading, at the same time comprehensive. It is comprehensive in the sense that it includes both the 'intrinsic value' and the 'ulterior value' of poetry. It means, in a simple way, that poetry and human good are not in antithesis, but in Bradley's words, "poetry is one kind of human good". Poetry is then truth and beauty

1. 'Is a New History of Criticism possible?' in Essays Literary and Educational (Chatto and Windus; London; 1967), p. 157
and good in one, and together they create "an atmosphere of infinite suggestion". But this poetry is criticism not in an Arnoldian sense. Arnold's statement tallies fully with the role he gave to poetry in advancing the 'humanisation of man' as against natural science. It may be said that the notion of Two Cultures emanated from him.

But the matter of interest here is how this critic of poetry himself fares in his own poems. Arnold sat in judgment over many of his own poems; for example, 'Empedocles', 'The Scholar Gipsy', etc., but these bits of criticism seem to be more those of an urbane reader than of a professional critic. In any work of art, however spontaneous, the critical self acts as an accessory to the artistic. Any adverse judgment, therefore, by the artist on his own work may not be sufficiently critical. There can be no better example of it than Arnold's comment made in a letter to Clough about 'The Scholar Gipsy' that it "at best awakens a pleasing melancholy". He does not find 'animating' power in the poem as he finds in Homer and Shakespeare. But poetry to be a criticism of life may or may not animate. His monistic rigidity ought to be modified; animation may occur in a variety of ways. A poem, Bradley says, exists in innumerable degrees, and Arnold's comment on 'The Scholar Gipsy' takes into account only one of them.

'The Scholar Gipsy' has been placed among the elegiac poems of Arnold. It is, at one level, an elegy on the loss of the "days when wits were fresh and clear,/ And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames". But those days of dream are not
actually described as they cannot be. Part of the racial conscioussness, they have never been actualised in human history. In a sense, all Arnold's elegies are, perhaps, about exploded dreams. The theme and attitude may differ from poem to poem—pastoral, religious, moral, but these are connected by a deep undercurrent of regret and confession. Unattainable, the lost world cannot be restored but it haunts his imagination. The poet laments for the present age about which he has much to say. He could speak of the many ills of life in finding out "What wears out the life of mortal men?" (l. 142) and in contrasting the life of the gipsy scholar with that of "Light half-believers of our casual creeds" (l. 172). The scholar should fear and fly the "feverish contact" of modern man, "the infection of our mental strife". But 'The Scholar Gipsy' is not all lamentation. The elegy has two veils—the pastoral and the epic which comes towards the end as coda. One could feel the tension between the two kinds of poetry which Arnold could not face.

The three opening stanzas will remind one of the traditional pastoral setting 3—the "shepherd", the 'field' and the "folded flocks" whereas the two closing stanzas contain the epic image of "some grave Tyrian trader". If the pastoral provides a place

3. To Louis Bonnerot, as also to H.C. Duffin, this is "a pre-Raphaelite picture, inexhaustibly beautiful, of the scene, by day and night, observable from the high field's dark corner".

H.C. Duffin, Arnold the Poet (Bowes and Bowes; London; 1962), p. 128
of rest to meditate, the epic 'spoils for rest' to act on speed "where the Atlantic raves". The pastoral leaves no doubt about its legitimacy in the poem. It offers a delicate Keatsian image of the ideal world which the poet longs for. With a sense of community in "the bleating of the folded flocks" and "cries of creepers in the corn", he could enjoy the beauties of Nature:

Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid.

(11. 23-28)

This Keatsian 'sensuousness of poetry' is what Arnold pleaded for in one of his letters to Clough. Here the poet sees not deep but wide, and his "eye travels down to Oxford's towers", which whisper "the last enchantments of the Middle Ages". The frequent mention of Oxford does not only increase the associative value of the poem, but contribute to its significance: an unquestioning alliance between Nature and culture. For Arnold "this queen of romance" "keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, — to beauty ...". But Arnold cannot long meditate in the screened "nook over the high, half-reaped field", specially when he was thinking of "the human actions" of his Preface (1853). The social critic in Arnold cannot allow him a long stay in the universe of the pastoral. Arnold has to fly from his meditative self and let
his imagination take a flight to the Aegaean isles, the blue Midland waters, "Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily, to the raving Atlantic". The coda has been taken to be an artificial close, unrelated to the poem. Clearly, it takes place out of Arnold's conscious effort to dispel the "pleasing melancholy". It does not grow out of the poem, its texture or substance. The 'grave' Tyrian trader and the 'merry' Grecian coaster may have their meaning in the context. The Scholar Gipsy is 'grave' while the modern man is merry (in the sense of silly), though a plunderer of peace and quiet. The Scholar's removal serves a subtle purpose which few critics have noticed. For the simile could also be seen as an evocative comment on the banishment of earth-spirit or the pastoral by a vulgar commercial age, that was Arnold's. The brilliant sub-terranean clue of which Arnold may not have been aware is that even in Greece the 'traders' have taken over. It re-inforces the passing away of the pastoral. But the importance of the simile lies also in the structure of the poem. If the Scholar gipsy is a 'truant boy' with 'glad perennial youth', he must not be fixed to any place, to any lone ale-house in the Berkshire moors, 'the Fagfield elm', 'Godstow Bridge' or 'Bagley Wood'. He has kinship also with the infinite, or the sea. The simile is then not a pendant to, but a part of, the poem.

But what part has the Scholar gipsy to play in the poem? Or, what would the critic in Arnold say about his activities? Arnold found him on Glanvil's page. The elegy is not on him, though a passage is given on his death:
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid -
Some country-moak, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited, yew-tree's shade.

( ll. 136-40 )

The unknown grave gives peace to the body that bore a questing spirit, and the spirit possesses "an immortal lot". Matthew Arnold moves on two planes which he is unable to fuse — one as a critic and the other as a poet. As a critic he knows that the Oxford scholar who joined the gipsy tribe cannot be living any more. But the poet in him asserts that the scholar gipsy is a spirit embodied and that the spirit is ever alive. This is at best a romantic sentiment rather than really real. Arnold is unable to turn the scholar into a living myth, and so he remains a symbol of a personal nostalgia. Arnold who later criticized the poem and the protagonist was not aware of the limitations of his own imagination. The discursive and directly agonised second part of the poem kills the scholar twice over; he remains a fey presence rather than a living reference. In this sense, the poem may not be taken to be a celebration of the eternal spirit of quest in man. In fact, the poem reduces itself to a fancy. Simply the poet is not critical of himself; he may be critical of the age. He knows that the spirit is best nourished in 'solitude', in 'retired grounds', in association with dew-drenched flowers. But the secret of Nature that could cure the contemporary society has not been fully realized. And even
Arnold is compelled to say farewell to his hero. He asks the scholar to fly the 'feverish contact' of modern man. But once immuned with "the spark from heaven", would the Scholar be able to impart to the world the secret of his art? The line between the escapist and the Saviour is thin in the Scholar.

The Scholar gipsy has something unique in his way of living. He obviously personifies the striving for a special kind of wisdom. The fact is emphasised by his association with the gypsies. But his actual participation in the gipsy lore, the secret wisdom, is never quite real or specified. The discipline remains undeciphered, and one wonders if the Scholar knows it. All that he knows is to wait for the epiphanic ('heaven-sent') moment which never comes. But the concentration on "one aim, one business, one desire" which Arnold invests him with and which the Scholar lacks cannot but make him depend on an act of grace. Actually the scholar shines as a symbol of impossible longing rather than achievement—a romantic note which Arnold himself might have hesitated to acknowledge. It would be interesting to find out—which no Arnold critic has done so far—why this insistence on heaven-sent moment is real rationally. It may be noted that the peak experiences of the Romantics were spontaneous and brief and unrepeatable. The Scholar gipsy is Arnold's hidden self come out as a kind of wish-fulfilment. Arnold had not one aim or one business, though he wished for it at heart. He had again in his temperament a secret bias towards the gipsy life. The "meditative guise of a gipsy child by the sea-shore" and the "rambling gipsies" of 'Resignation' may come to mind. The scholar gipsy may also be taken as Arnold's
prophecy about the ultimate fate of a disciplined society of learned men. Order or intellect breeds in the end a mind for chaos and cult as a means to achieve higher order and wisdom. The scholar leaves Oxford and the prescribed study to move at odd places and at odd hours with a belief in the nomadic lore. Arnold the prophet of culture has hit upon the whole philosophy of anti-culture. The protagonist of the poem is not only the hidden self of Arnold’s life swayed between rational order and anti-rational magic, but also that of modern society torn by a Frankensteinian science and an end-of-the-world psychology.

The poem’s thematic importance should not be detached from its aesthetic surface. The beauty is, of course, to be felt rather than pointed out. It is chiefly in the spell laid upon a much-loved English landscape and in the imaginative vision recreating the scholar gipsy who virtually becomes a genius of the place. It is said that the spell has made the landscape an enchanted country. The causeway and the wooden bridge and the steep slope of the Cumnor Range evoke a reverent, awful emotion. "They move us", as someone has said, "as holy relics moved the men of the Middle Ages". 4 If "strips of moon-blanced green" (1.9) suggest in a phrase a whole landscape,

- the frail-leaf’d, white anemony,
  Dark bluebells drench’d with dews of summer eves,
  And purple orchises with spotted leaves (11.37-39)

carry the Celtic magic. What is more readily acceptable is that Arnold was closer to Celtic magic without the Celtic faith. The coat, the basket, and the earthen cruse make one look round in imagination and see the harvest fields and the men at work in them. Another such image is of the boys "who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks". If part of Arnold is enraptured by the immediate country, part of it comes percolated through memories of less burdened Greek elegies. Wilson Knight observes: "Nature is either directly cultivated, or, in its genial effect, civilized, humanized". Matthew Arnold's art in presenting the Scholar beats the reader. In the spontaneity of her process, Nature takes the Scholar in stride. Yet, at the same time, he remains outside, a fugitive and elusive figure. Wilson Knight goes so far as to say that "He watches like a presiding, perhaps even a guardian, spirit". But this is too much. The scholar is more weak than firm. Or, why should he be afraid of "our feverish contact" and escape into illusion? He is a rare figure in English poetry. A Shropshire lad may remain for ever young but he has not the rich dimension of Arnold's alter-ego. The poet in Alastor is more an abstraction than a reality. In the heart of the modern waste land the ghost of the scholar - a brother of Faust, Prometheus and the Shamans - haunts, a myth at once modern and primitive. The ideal figure of the first part of the

5. Neglected Powers: (Routledge & Kegan Paul; London; 1972), p. 239
Arnold who wrote in the days of Darwin somehow overlooked the terrible in Nature.

6. ibid., p. 240
poem cannot do duty for the modern malady. So the poet advises the Scholar to flee "our mental strife". It is instructive to compare Keats' 'adieu' to the nightingale with Arnold's 'fly'; though on a different wave-length, each remains a monument of unageing imagination to tease the modern intellect. As a symbol of human aspiration and the failure of civilization, the poem remains a mark of Arnold's art precariously swaying between the ideal and the actual. An elegy, with a difference.

Thyrsis, an obvious persona for Clough, fell victim to the "feverish contact" and could not stay long "with men of care". Bound "on like quest" as the Scholar Gipsy, he too sought the 'fugitive and gracious light'. But the stormy note "of men contention-tost, of men who groan", tasked his pipe "too sore", and "tired" his throat and he became mute.

Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and filled his heart.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

(11. 46-50)

Arnold took 'Thyrsis' to be a 'quiet' poem. The passage quoted will bear it out. This is partly because the poem contains little of the criticism of life in a broader sense. It has no melancholy, perhaps no regret either - a point sometimes missed. One might even say that Arnold is secretly happy to record his friend's case, which was no doubt akin to him or part of him. Both the
Scholar and Thyrsis are his masks. And may be, the criticism which Arnold manages to put in seems to vitiate the tone and spirit of the poem. Had Arnold been more critical, he might have dropped the critical comments in both poems. 'Thyrsis' is again a retreat for him to a lovely country which was made lovelier in the past by his association with Clough. The landscape has almost dispersed his grief. In both poems there is not only retreat to a lost and foiled way of life but more to a much-loved landscape which forms a part of his values. And yet, perhaps, if one thinks of Wordsworth, Arnold is not a poet of Nature. Wordsworth could create in Nature an epiphany which becomes a criticism without using critical language. This was not possible for Arnold. He admired Wordsworth but he did not share his vision. The recapturing of the past pleasure in the place chastens and provides almost a paradoxical serenity that triumphs over the obvious sadness. Another solace for him is that "Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side", and "the light we sought is shining still".

Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the mild canopy of English air
That lonely tree against the western sky.

( ll. 93-95 )

The Scholar haunts the slopes and fares on in his happy quest. Thyrsis may die but the quest is continued. So long as the forward — searching goes on, the spirit of Thyrsis is alive.

The poem is said to be permeated with the spirit of the place, and in the same way, the place is permeated with the spirit of
Thyrsis.

'Thysis' is thought to have the "accomplished and adult beauty of a male poem". But the beauty is not all adult; it has also the tenderness of youth:

This winter—eve is warm,
Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copses and briers.  
( 11. 16-18 )

The description of Oxford exhibits a feminine charm:

And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening,
Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night.  
( 11. 19-21 )

The beauty of the poem does, however, reveal an autumnal maturity with flashes of "the sweet spring-days", such as "blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways". The little criticism of life—the Arnoldian obsession—has been permeated with the quiet beauty. While speaking of the Scholar gipsy in his search for "A fugitive and gracious light", Arnold says,

This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honour, and a flattering crew,
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold.  
( 11. 203-5 )

For once Arnold strikes a near-mystical note. Another such
expression leads to the same mood:

Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear.

(11. 234-36)

But the direct criticism matters little in this poem. Arnold does not spoil the lovely setting with his mournings. He has dealt, as he has said in a letter to J.C. Shairp, with the "idyllic side" in Clough, and not "the whole prophet side." Tennyson needed the whole medieval, no doubt watered down, for his idyll; for Arnold, a contemporary, a friend, an alter-ego, was enough. Professor Lowry says, it gives but one side of Clough, the troubled side. Trilling extends the comment that it celebrates the weakness of that side. He says, "Its theme is that "Thyrsis of his own will went away" unable to "wait out the high winds of doctrine". But Arnold does not allow the idyll to be embittered by that "troubled side" or that smooth passing away of Thyrsis. The real theme is the spirit of quest in an enchanted country: "Roam on! The light we sought is shining still." In an urbane way the quest has become a part of civilisation—a heroic note mixed with tears. There may have been trouble in the soul of the poet and in the persona he chooses, but the trouble is evaporated in course of the poem.

7. Letter of April 12, 1866; Matthew Arnold (ed. Bryson), p. 763
Arnold knew also "that not enough is said about Clough in it", and in this sense, as Trilling observes, "it is in some- ways a strange commemoration". Yet he has done well as an artist connecting "Clough with that Cuminum country". Arnold and Clough were friends from their Oxford days. Arnold wrote to Mrs Clough, "Probably you hardly know how very intimate we once were".

'Thrysis' is a celebration of that friendship in a beautiful setting. But the friendship is blended with the quest. And except the mission of quest in the Scholar gipsy way, Arnold has not taken up the personal factors. Perhaps a more perceptive way of looking at the value set upon friendship is to look at the spirit of loneliness that bound the two. In 1853 Arnold wrote to Clough, "I really have clung to you in spirit more than to any other man .... I am for ever linked with you by intellectual bonds - the strongest of all". Later in the same year Clough acknowledged the nature of the tie between them in a letter to his fiancée complaining about some of his other friends:

They have all got so churchy; there is no possibility of getting on thoroughly - Matt Arnold is no churchy ..... I am very glad I have not conformed more than I have ..."

8. Letters to Clough, pp. 129-130

Both Clough and Arnold are treated as Victorian 'poets of doubts'. 10 But 'Thyris' is a creation above all doubts and disputes, in the manner of the rural idylls of Theocritus. Of course the influence of the Greek pastoral is in spirit only. For "such English-coloured verse no poet has written since Shakespeare, who chooses his field-flowers and hedge-row blossoms with the same sure and loving hand", though not with this elegiac emphasis. The poem is without doubt one of Arnold's masterpieces.

Though written after a long gap, 'Thyris' is taken to be a sequel to 'The Scholar Gipsy'. Both poems celebrate the Oxford countryside and the spirit of quest. The same strain sounds in 'Rugby Chapel' (written in between the two great elegies) not perhaps so obvious, but less wavering. One now hears a more confident tone in the poem. The reasons for this may be for landscape one has 'thoughtscape' and a hero sure of himself, Arnold's father. In a sense, the Puritan has triumphed over the poet. Dr. Arnold was not as evasive as the gyrovagans, the scholar gipsy, nor was he a failure in his mission like Clough. Arnold wrote to his mother in 1867 about the poem, "I have done something to fix the true legend about Papa". But he did more. A sad soul, Matthew Arnold found in his father a

10. Sphere History of Literature in the English Language, Vol.6 (ed. A Pollard), p. 56
11. cf. Waddell, Helen: The Wandering Scholars (Penguins; Middlesex; 1954)
curative which he discovered in a much different way in Byron and Browning. D.G. James is not the only one to notice the deep temperamental differences between Arnold and his father: "..... the image of the father we derive from the poem ('Rugby Chapel') is an image of inexhaustible energy, of a man, precise, firm, passionate, and committed, in contrast to a son who is fluid, evasive, imprecise, and hesitant of commitment." Arnold projects a similar image of his father, a type of

.... souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

( ll. 159-61 )

He believes also that "there lived/ Others like thee in the past". They all appeared "like angels" in mankind's "hour of need". Such people never think of their own salvation only but take the rest of mankind with them. In his concept of religion and culture, Arnold includes the welfare of all: "The individual is required .... to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection". The point is insufficiently known. For all his truancy, there was a social concern, which again, as Philip Hobsbaum observes, has a Wordsworthian root. 'Rugby Chapel'

12. Leon Gottfried has noted that Arnold "admired vigour and direction of leadership", and the "true background for understanding this admiration is to be found in his poetry—'Memorial Verses', the Marguerite poems, 'Rugby Chapel', etc...". p. 105


appears to be more a piece of criticism than a work of art. This is strengthened by the fact that Arnold was stirred to the composition of the poem by some remarks about his father by Fitzjames Stephen in a review of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. 15

All the same, 'Rugby Chapel' provokes poetry in Arnold. He gives it in the opening elegiac passage and in the imagery of the march of "mortal men". The image of his father as "a mighty oak" spreading a sheltering "shade" is characteristic. The opening stanza describing the autumn-evening is sheer poetry. Some stray images are linked together to describe the evening. Strangely enough, the images anticipate those of the opening lines of Eliot's 'Preludes'. The drifts of withered leaves and the lights coming out in the street occur in both poems. In 'Rugby Chapel' these create an impression of autumnal evening; in 'Preludes' these become symbols of incoherent contemporary urban existence. In his poems Arnold avoids the images of rude force and violent action. The image of the "ignorant armies clashing by night" in 'Dover Beach' has as much vigour as hopelessness, and the violence has more or less evaporated in the mystery of Fate. Arnold attempts to get out of the fetters of depression in such an image as "some grave Tyrian trader .... snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail". About 'Rugby Chapel' D.G. James has said, "The poem's imagery is too often

15. Trilling notes that the poem is dated "November 1857" but Stephen's review of Tom Brown's School-days was written in Edinburgh Review of 1858, *Matthew Arnold*, p. 263
an imagery of despair and defeat; too much of the son's own melancholy and stoicism is imported into it." But this is far from the whole truth. The poem begins with the quiet image of the autumn-evening descending coldly and sadly when "the elms, fade into dimness apace." But it has, in the middle, the image of terror-stricken weather:

Then, on the height, comes the storm,
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.

(11. 90-93)

When the journeyman reaches "the lonely inn 'mid the rocks",

..... the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs-
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures.

(11. 110-114)

Without being an imagist, Arnold could hold up little pictures of life and make poetry of them. The prosaic passage about "the course of life/of mortal men" has a baldness but the pathetic close gives it a kind of grandeur:

Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—
Perish;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

( ll. 58-70 )

The passage is quoted in full to show how the mind of the poet
works from bare criticism to felt poetry. The eager question:

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now?

concentrates all the sentiment roused by the recounting of the
poet's own helplessness after his father's death. If one wants,
one could see a slight drama behind the poem's surface—a
genuine admiration coupled with a sense of guilt. Yet it illus-
trates well how in Arnold criticism and art blend and fuse, and
still each keeps its identity.

'A Southern Night', another elegiac poem, happens to be
more critical than 'Stanzas from Carnac', though both are
memorials to William Delafield. One may get unspoiled delight from the 'Stanzas' in which natural beauties are gleaned with a soft melancholy strain. The days of priestly procession have passed away, and the giant stones of Carnac sleep now. The church catches the westering sun's last fires, and "Sheep make the daisied aisles their fold". In one stanza beauty is lavished on beauty without stint:

From bush to bush the cuckoo flies,
The orchis red gleams everywhere,
Gold furze with broom in blossom vies,
The blue-bells perfume all the air.

(ll. 17-20)

But mere exuberance cannot long enthrall the poet. He passes on to the melancholy thought of one (his brother) who loved the breath "of fair/Cool northern fields, and grass, and flowers". It is, of course, still a quiet melancholy which a sympathetic poet relishes with a spirit of resignation. It is not that fierce Ossianic melancholy which results from the "despotism of facts". Arnold does not state the facts in the 'Stanzas' which might have constituted the criticism. But he has it in 'A Southern Night', in the images of the Indian sage, the crusading knight, the youthful troubadour and the love-lorn girl. Each image reveals an aspect of human life. But what is true for all time resides in Arnold's criticism of life in general:
We who pursue
Our business with unslackening stride,
Traverse in troops, with car-fill'd breast,
The soft Mediterranean side,
The Nile, the East,
And see all things from pole to pole,
And glance, and nod, and bustle by,
And never once possess our soul
Before we die.

(ll. 64-72)

This is the usual Arnoldian note of criticism. One notices ti.
and again his unease on the issue of soullessness of modern
living. But except to lament it in a variety of ways, he not
only misses the real truth of the romantic imagination, but also
the enduring power of Wordsworth, which he so admires. Here it
seems to be a bare statement without the accompanying emotion.
But the "lost pulse of feeling stirs" in 'The Burried life'.
The soul, says the poet, may never be possessed by the wandering
man:

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life.

(ll. 45-48)

This moving utterance is so exceptional in Arnold.
Passion over-rides thought in 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse'. The oft-quoted lines are typical:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

( ll. 185-86 )

The poet, will-less, waits forlorn and agonised on earth. The old-world ascetic faces of the Carthusian monks move him to "tearful Virgilian regret". Yet the passion of regret is not the whole of it. The passion rises and falls depending on the dramatic drifts of mood. Few of Arnold's poems have so much of drama of the mind as this, though a characteristic feature of his poetry is the frequency with which he introduces direct speech. The guide cries, "Strike leftward", the rigorous teachers whisper, "what dost thou in this living tomb?", and the long speech is supplied by Arnold himself rather than by the shy recluses. The self-question, "And what am I, that I am here?" sounds more than an aside. Here is a kind of straight crisis of identity, so rare in Arnold. The question repeats itself throughout this part of the poem. The apostrophe to Shelley and Obermann in the poem creates some little dramatic scenes. So does the passage dealing with Byron, or that with "the former men". A sense of tragedy makes again all this drama intensely and variously passionate and complex. Drama and passion and thought blend in

Say, have their sons achieved more joys?
Say, is life lighter now than then?

( ll. 129-30 )
A striking dilemma does not escape notice. Arnold who is so concerned with modern predicament because of its loss of values is at heart anti-modern — a point that brings him close to Eliot again. Some of the passages in the poem are highly artistic in image and sentiment. In them critical attitude collapses in a sort of romantic nostalgia, as in

We are like children rear'd in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall,
Forgotten in a forest glade,
And secret from the eyes of all.

(11. 169-72)

The problem-ridden Arnold is the happiest when the problems are forgotten — but never for long, a pattern that may be found in other poems as well. Yet in this place "Of reverie, of shade, of prayer" he could not get rid of his criticism of life. Rather the criticism takes a new turn. All his hopes of human perfection are suspended in this practical and pessimistic view of things. The old pangs still remain; the sufferings of man have not lessened a bit. Arnold was no believer in the idea of progress. He makes here a prayer that the "out-dated stings" of the restlessness, the pain, and the fret be taken away from life. Arnold's melancholy is, therefore, not "a pass'd mode"; it is too deep-seated to be absent for long. The grand spectacle of suffering does not allow him rest. Yet a social critic of his stature cannot be too long a pessimist. He cherishes a fond wish for a happy future of mankind. With a broken bleeding heart he beacons a new world.
Years, hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity.

( ll. 157-60 )

It sounds almost like a humanist hymn that expresses a tentative belief in progress. Here Arnold prepares us for what Obermann will tell him later: "Yet tell/ Hope to a world new-made". This transition from despair to hope and from hope to melancholy reveals the critic-artist duality in Arnold. The critic comes out of, as it were, the cocoon of artistic melancholy and calls for action through the image of the passing troops and gathering hunters. But one wonders how far the troops and the hunters are a perfect co-relative of his true mind. As Trilling has observed, Arnold "cannot quite reconcile himself to the new, nor quite forget the yearning for the old". 17 Between the two worlds, he waits not only "forlorn" but also self-divided "to see the future born".

Standing among the sepulchres of the Carthusians, Arnold does not only, and naturally, make a criticism of life, but also in conformity with this criticism, he manages to introduce an estimate of such literary figures as Byron, Shelley, and Obermann — a pattern observed before. But the grouping in this poem has not to do with literary criticism in the narrower sense.

17. Matthew Arnold, p. 107
Arnold is not now ranking poets but rather spirits or personalities. As also E.D.H. Johnson points out, "Together they form a trio of defeated voices crying in the wilderness." Yet one must note the despairing voices differing from one another. Arnold makes the point clear in short simple sentences. All three were suffering souls, as Byron bore a "bleeding heart," Shelley had "lovely wail", and Senancour was "sad". But Senancour withdrew from the scene of conflict:

..... thou hidd'st thy head
From the fierce tempest of thine age
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
Or chalets near the Alpine snow.

( ll. 147-50 )

Byron and Shelley, specially Byron, faced it fair and square. It has often been said of Byron that "Europe made his woe her own". He had an "exaggerated European reputation" which Arnold refers to in his essay on Byron. Arnold himself was much concerned with the mind of Europe, and he praised his father for being so European in the historic sense. There is no doubt that Arnold "prized Byron in part as an important ally in his lifelong struggle to bring England and the Continent closer together and to release England from his dogged and inflexible insularity".

18. Gottfried, Leon Matthew Arnold and the Romantics, p. 86
20. Gottfried, Leon Matthew Arnold and the Romantics, p. 85
The phrase "haughty scorn" may remind one of "fiery life" in 'Memorial Verses' and of "The World-famous son of fire" in 'Haworth Churchyard'. The well-known passage on Shelley is taken to be a summary of all Arnold's later views about him. Shelley's poetry appears to him to be sad, evanescent, lovely, musical and ineffectual. He admits Shelley's lyricism and his "claim to recognition as a prophet-teacher". The "sad" and "stern" page of Senancour indicates his melancholy, intellectuality and "severe sincerity". Here a final question perturbs one a little — of the three, Byron, Shelley and Senancour, to whom was Arnold closest, if at all? And if he was not close to any, why the lament or the criticism? But this poem has such a strange quality in its frequent change of mood and movements that such criticism is not allowed to assume any magnitude.

In 'Stanzas in Memory of the Author of Obermann' Senancour is grouped with Wordsworth and Goethe, all "The children of the Second Birth". But while Wordsworth has "sweet calm" and Goethe "wide/And luminous view", Obermann has but icy despair to offer to mankind. It is typical of Arnold and his self-division that while the critical self appreciates the sweet calm and luminous view, the artist in him is drawn to despair. The poet of 'The Forsaken Merman', 'Empedocles on Etna', 'Tristram and Isseult' has surely something in him which drives him to this despairing self. This Virgilian sense of "the doubtful doom of human kind" gives out the true strain of Arnold's art. There is no effective way, he knows too well, to come out of this abyss of despair. Indeed he feels, like Obermann, "We in some unknown Power's
employ/Move on a rigorous line". But Obermann is not without his pleasures and moments of joy:

Balms floating on thy mountain-air,
And healing sights to see.

( ll. 111-12 )

Arnold could also share, in Nature rather than in society, the same pleasure even in his philosophical despair and personal sorrow. The Alpine scenery during the day had its visible and unabated charm, and "on the air of night" Obermann

Heard accents of eternal tongue
Through the pine-branches play.

( ll. 125-26 )

Nature only could sustain the spirit of a sober gaiety so effectively eroded by contemporary society. One is struck by the subtle rejection of the scientific world behind this adoration of Nature.

In this sense, the 'Stanzas in Memory of the Author of Obermann' stands superior to 'Obermann Once More'. The latter poem is more critical than artistic. Obermann's vision constitutes a major part of the poem. Characteristically, at the end Arnold adds, "The vision ended". But the vision did not bring any happiness to Arnold. The older poet sticks him with lack of hope and sustained faith. Obermann asks him to employ the "energies of his firmer manhood" to help attain
One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again.

(11. 323-24)

He knows like the Arnold of the 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse',

But now the old is out of date,
The new is not yet born.

(11. 245-46)

It was almost Arnold's fate to be sandwiched between the two; and an optimistic future is conspicuously absent. Arnold himself seems to enjoy the see-saw between energy and enervation. If he upholds the energy, he celebrates the pathos of loss. Obermann sought and found repose in the pastoral huts among Alpine snows. It was not possible for Arnold to retire like him and forget the Time-Spirit: "The millions suffer still, and grieve", and they have need of joy, "joy whose grounds are true". Obermann's urge has behind it the "ground-tone/ Of human agony". But to generate that artistic emotion, Obermann has made a survey of the human civilization through two thousand years — the pagan and the Roman worlds, the East, and Christ, and the French Revolution. This historical survey may well seem to be the work of a critic. Some of the passages on Christ are obviously an exception:

Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
In the lorn Syrian town;
And on his grave, with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.

(11. 173-76)

This critical survey from Achilles down to Obermann concludes that the world is yet a vale of tears, that "the world lies forlorn", a position fully exploited by the Existentialists. But even in the midst of Nature, it was impossible for Arnold to forget his obligation to society, and the Nature-poet in him frequently blends or mixes with the social critic. Therefore the master of his wandering youth pushes him forward to propagate the message of hope. Of course, this is Arnold's own admonition to himself, and an indication that he should take up the role of an intellectual deliverer in order to fulfil his responsibility to the race. In fact, the poet should become more of an intellectual deliverer of his time. *Culture and Anarchy* appears to be the first performance in that direction. Whatever social and political factors may govern Arnold's ideas at the time, 'Obermann Once More' remains little more than a personal allegory: the Artist exhorted to become a Critic.