THE LITERARY CRITICISM OF
MATTHEW ARNOLD AND
T. S. ELIOT

by

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ABSTRACT

Matthew Arnold's literary criticism has recently been recognized as exhibiting a "controlled oscillation" between various antithetical points of view. This thesis analyzes these points of view, shows how Arnold sometimes succeeded in reconciling these opposites, and then goes on to show that Eliot's literary criticism can be analyzed in the same way.

Eliot and Arnold are shown to be both classic and romantic critics; that is, broadly speaking, to judge both by rules and by individual impressions. These antithetical limits are partially, but not entirely synthesized. Next, analysis of Arnold's criticism leads to the conclusion that Arnold usually judged literature by the moral ideas it expressed, but that the ideas were inextricably involved with their literary form. Eliot finds judgment by idea distasteful because of his commitment to Church of England dogma, but also tends, although with less success, toward the synthesis achieved by Arnold.

Another set of antithetical viewpoints held by Arnold and Eliot are those of the disinterested critic vs. the social advocate. Again, a partial resolution is suggested. Close similarity between the two critics' views on the tradition is demonstrated, but an opposing progressive element in both men's thought is also revealed. However, the two categories are shown to be not mutually exclusive.

Finally, the style and critical method of Arnold and Eliot is analyzed and is seen to exhibit antithetical tendencies. Both critics alternate between tones of persuasiveness and exhibitions of tactlessness. Both methods reveal a combination of analysis and dogmatism, although Eliot's dogmatism is always admitted to be personal opinion. Neither Arnold nor Eliot attack a critical problem from the same viewpoint at all times; they are pragmatic critics who will try any method that seems to work best at the moment.
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INTRODUCTION

To say simply that this thesis plans to compare the literary criticism of Arnold and Eliot neither limits the topic sufficiently nor justifies it satisfactorily; therefore I shall first use Eliot's method of gradually narrowing the generalization with a series of negatives, and then go on to explain the reasons for choosing the topic thus defined. The thesis contains no biographical facts nor psychological interpretation, partly because Arnold's biographies have so thoroughly documented and interpreted his life and works already, but mostly because similar materials for Eliot's life are scanty. Moreover, the purpose of this study is not speculation on psychological motives, (a dangerous activity for the literary specialist even when ample material is available), but rather, in the tradition of Arnold and Eliot themselves, investigation of their critical essays as observable objects. Neither shall I postulate that Arnold had direct and traceable influence on Eliot. The dubiousness of any such postulates is well illustrated by the various attempts to assign certain of Arnold's ideas to Renan and Sainte-Beuve: it is possible to show that these attempts led only to the suggestion of counter-hypothesis and alternate influences. One is reminded of the ironic instructions Samuel Johnson gave
in his *Introduction to Shakespeare* to writers of editorial notes: repeat your predecessor's theory, heap scorn upon it, propose in glowing terms your new and original theory, and end with a pious hope for the preservation of scholarship and the advancement of knowledge. The reminder restrains me from entering a similar battle of influences.

Next, since this is a study of Eliot's and Arnold's literary criticism, statements from their social and religious writings will be admitted only as additional evidence, or where immediately applicable to a literary problem. Finally, my purpose being mainly to analyze and clarify, I shall judge between the two critics only when the analysis makes obvious the superiority of one position over the other.

After stating what the thesis will not do, but before going on to explain what it will attempt, it would be best to indicate why any comparison of Arnold and Eliot should be made at all. First, Eliot betrays an exceptional interest in Arnold. He pays him compliments; for example:

> Matthew Arnold was intelligent, and by so much difference as the presence of one intelligent man makes, our age is inferior to that of Arnold.²

He borrows phrases from him, and carries on a sniping campaign against him that has broken out sporadically in unexpected places. Moreover, Eliot himself has grudgingly noted his similarity to Arnold, and critics of both writers have also recognized the resemblance. Eliot prefaces his
condemnation of Arnold's supposed literary anarchism with the words,

We go to Arnold for refreshment and for the companionship of a kindred point of view to our own, but not as disciples. 

Perhaps the chilly tone of this and similar references to Arnold prompted the mock alarm with which Douglas Bush advanced his observation of the two critics' kindred viewpoint:

Mr. Eliot was born five months after the death of Matthew Arnold. Though one would hesitate to suggest a transmigration of souls, (certainly one would hesitate to suggest it to Mr. Eliot), and though fundamental differences are at least as marked as resemblances, no one else has come so close to being what Arnold was or what a twentieth century Arnold might have been.

More significantly, F. O. Matthiesson, the critic who has written what is probably the most penetrating study of T. S. Eliot to date, draws the same conclusion:

But behind any tangible debts and obscured by their sharp divergence of approach, there is to be discovered everywhere in Eliot's work his kinship to Matthew Arnold.

The similarity having been affirmed by two such eminent critics and by Eliot himself, one wonders if there is anything further an M. A. thesis can add to the comparison. In the first place, no unanalyzed generalization, made by however eminent a critic, should go unquestioned, for it is at least possible that the critic has been misled by obviously
similar tone and turns of phrase. Moreover, the analysis necessary to investigate the generalization is valuable in itself, if it clarifies the critical positions of its subjects. Such analysis cannot pretend to add anything new to Arnold scholarship, but it is the contention of this thesis that the results of Arnold scholarship can add to our understanding of Eliot. I shall attempt to show that the idea of "controlled oscillation", so helpful when applied to Arnold's position, is equally applicable to T. S. Eliot's.

One might be tempted to observe here that the thesis has limited itself out of existence. However, I think it is important to demonstrate Eliot's dialectical approach at length and in detail, if only because his critics, both sympathetic and antipathetic, have so badly misrepresented him when they have ignored his dialectics. René Wellek, for instance, extols Eliot, the systematic critic; John Crowe Ransom commends Eliot, the historical critic; and Yvor Winters throws up his hands in horror at Eliot, the inconsistent critic who "repeatedly contradicts himself on every important issue that he has touched...." In other words, Wellek emphasizes one half of Eliot's dialectic, his attempt to form his reactions to literature into a systematic order; Ransom emphasizes the other half, his attempt to see the object as it really is; and Winter objects to him using a dialectical method in the first place.

Certainly much of the fault for this confusion lies with Eliot, just as much of the fault for a similar confusion
about his ideas lay with Arnold; for neither Arnold nor Eliot is careful to set forth both sides of his argument and its synthesis in the same essay, but frequently hides one or all of the steps in unindexed periodicals. Since Arnold's works have been collected now for half a century, the consistency of his inconsistency has gradually become apparent, but since Eliot's works still lie in a fragmented state, even Paul Elmer More can suggest that there exists an "unreconciled paradox in his attitude to life and letters." If the contention of this thesis is correct that both Arnold's and Eliot's criticism can be best described as controlled oscillation between opposing limits, and the attempted syntheses of those opposites, it should be possible to describe those limits accurately and to indicate the syntheses attempted. This procedure does indeed seem to be possible, and suggests this study's method of development. That is to say, I shall demonstrate that Arnold and Eliot both hold two antithetical positions, show how the opposites were tentatively synthesized, and then repeat the process until most of the important ideas in their literary criticism have been covered. The details of the method are set out in the table of contents.

Because the critical ideas of Arnold and Eliot on even a fairly limited topic cannot be represented by a phrase, or collection of phrases, or by an extended quotation, their positions can only be correctly described by setting down all their varying viewpoints and calculating their average, often
an extended process. Since, then, it is absurd to attempt a comparison before the subject of comparison is understood, large blocks of material on each author are unavoidable. Moreover, their methods and conclusions, and particularly their ideas on the function of criticism and the tradition, are so close that no comment is required to point up their similarity even when they are separated by several thousand words.

If apology is needed, I quote the advice Matthew Arnold gave to Clough:

I do not say I discern the right way.... have we one? but such a way as the βολαν' and ρόος of man can shape out, pace Fato, that tried to discern. The β and γ do not talk of the absolutely right but of a promising method with ourselves.
CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF LITERATURE

A. Arnold

1. Arnold as Classicist

Matthew Arnold has been called a classicist, a frightened conservative, and a consistent critic, all names, whether complimentary or derogatory, that suggest order, standards, unity, and impersonality in criticism. It is certainly possible to demonstrate with some conclusiveness that Arnold believed in order, invoked standards, admired unity and insisted on impersonality. Let us proceed with such a demonstration. Arnold read de Senancour and Spinoza in his youth, and from them learned the value of orderly thought and action in subduing a world that seemed to him tumultuous. Their lesson did not leave him in later years, for he made Spinoza's Biblical criticism the basis of his own religious criticism, and in 1869 could still quote de Senancour appreciatively:

May we not say that the tendency to order forms an essential part of our propensities, our instinct, just like the tendency to self-preservation or the reproduction of the species. Is it nothing to live with the calm and security of the just?
Moreover, many of the essays in Arnold's major work of literary criticism, *Essays in Criticism, First Series*, are plans for order in creative and critical literature. In one of the essays, "The Literary Influence of Academies", he summarized his classical views with the comment that Cicero's maxim, man searches for "the discovery of an order, a law of good taste, a measure for his words and actions", applies to intellectual as well as moral matters.

Since Arnold was searching for order in intellectual matters, he upheld high and correct standards in literature. These standards can be discovered in "human nature and the nature of things at large, in the universal principles of poetic beauty as they stand written in the hearts and imaginations of all men." It is by these standards, and not by any merely pragmatic pleasure principle, that the critic must judge literature. He quotes Sainte-Beuve with approval:

> In France, the first consideration for us is not whether we are amused and pleased by a work of art or mind, nor is it whether we are touched by it. What we seek above all to learn is whether we were right in being amused by it, and in applauding it, and in being touched by it.

Arnold realized that principles of pleasure and utility too easily become the vulgar self-applause of our liberal practitioners, and therefore demands, in literature as in society as a whole, no ideal short of perfection. In other words, Arnold was not a blind rule-imposer, a conservative in
an age of expansion, but rather a classicist in an age of Romantic anarchy, a denouncer of mediocrity so that the excellent might not be lost:

Whoever talks of excellence as common and abundant is in the way to lose all right standard of excellence. And when the right standard of excellence is lost it is not likely that much which is excellent will be produced.18

Arnold was a classicist not only in his adherence to standards of excellence, but in another sense as well. He was a classicist because he preferred to take the classics of antiquity, and especially the Greek classics, for his models. Moreover, the essay in which Arnold showed this preference, the "Preface" to the 1853 edition of the Poems, suggests purely Aristotelian standards, excellent action and architectonic unity, as still-useful critical tools. Now, although Arnold tried to select excellent actions for his own poetry, in his criticism of other's work he more often demanded unity. As early as 1847, he was deploring the allegorical, "because it instantly involves you in the unnecessary, and the unnecessary in necessarily unpoetical".19 Towards the end of his career he was still praising the Greeks for their "fit details strictly combined, in view of a large general result nobly conceived," their symmetria prisca that he still insisted "is just what the English [and Americans] lack, and [can] be supplied by the study of Greek literature".20 Through much of his criticism, that on translating Homer, on the function of criticism, and on the Romantics, runs the
same theme: a work of literature must be judged not by the brilliant line, but as a whole, and must be conceived as a structure in harmony, and executed with unity of style.

Both excellent subject-matter and unified style have as their corollary another desirable quality that the ancients took for granted, but that Arnold in an age of romantic haziness found it necessary to explicate. If the author is to write of excellent actions, he must avoid writing an allegory of his own soul; and if he is to achieve unity, he must "begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness." That is to say, to attain the desirable classic ideal, the poet must remove his personality from the poem, and build the poem instead around an impersonal Idea; classic art is impersonal art. Arnold developed another argument in favour of impersonal poetry. The poet must

\[
\text{...permit the action's inherent excellences to develop themselves, without interruption from the intrusion of his personal peculiarities: most fortunate when he most entirely succeeds in effacing himself, and in enabling a noble action to subsist as it did in nature.}\]

Such inherent development of the pattern of action of course contributes to the architectonic unity of the poem, but does not, Arnold insisted, guarantee unity of style. Arnold pointed to Shakespeare as a poet who allowed the action of his plays to develop naturally, but declined to give him the title of "great artist", because great art demands "a law of pure and
flawless workmanship" that Shakespeare failed to observe. More than any other quality, the law of flawless workmanship demands precision, for without precision, as Arnold noted in his "Preface", even the most excellent action is debased:

What is not interesting is that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn, a representation which is general, indeterminate and faint, instead of being particular, precise and firm.

Moreover, this criterion is not simply a youthful paper-and-ink generalization, for Arnold applied it in his later work, where much of his adverse criticism of the eighteenth century and Romantic poets is directed against haziness, irrelevancy, and imprecision.

In summary, then, Arnold, the classicist, would insist on the existence and application of high and correct standards. These standards are best formulated from the observation of Greek art, from which the artist may learn the necessity of excellent material and structural unity. The artist, however, can achieve these necessary qualities only by avoiding haziness and personal irrelevancies, and by striving to create a precise, impersonal, and thereby unified work of art.

2. Arnold as Romantic

On the other hand, Eliot, often cited as the classical critic of the twentieth century, blames Arnold's...
critical ideas for the breakdown of literary standards in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and for the development of art-for-art's-sake aestheticism. Nothing in Arnold's classical thought as brought out thus far could support such a contention, and unless Eliot is blindly mistaken, some antithetical element must exist in Arnold's criticism. A convenient term for the antithetical element is "romanticism". If classicism can be analyzed into a demand for standards, unity and impersonality, romanticism should be analyzable into rejection of conventional standards, interest in the part rather than the whole, and concern with the personality of the artist. Again, if such analysis is just and Eliot is correct, it should be easy to demonstrate that the antithetical element of romanticism exists in Arnold's criticism.

Arnold repeatedly discounted judgment by conventional standards, and with Goethe asked, "Yes, but is it so, is it so to me?" Perhaps his most emphatic rejection of such standards appears in one of the Mixed Essays, an essay written at the height of his career as literary critic, in which he dismissed Addison's criticism of Milton because it assumes that "incidents of a certain class must awaken keen interest, sentiments of a certain kind must raise melting passion; that language of a certain strain and an action with certain qualifications, must render a poem attractive and effective." Elsewhere, he even suggested that too great a demand for
standards of "regularity, uniformity, precision, balance" led to a "silencing of poetry" in eighteenth century England. Rather than rely on conventions, Arnold turned instead to individual impression as a basis for judgment. Over the years the vocabulary may vary; a poem may "animate", "rejoice" or "fortify", but throughout the meaning is the same: the reader can detect great poetry by the feeling the poem gives to him, the feeling of joy. In a letter to Clough, Arnold criticized his own "Scholar Gipsy" because it failed to give joy:

I am glad you like the Gipsy Scholar—but what does it do for you? Homer animates, Shakespeare animates, in its poor way I think Sohrab and Rustum animates—the Gipsy Scholar at best awakens a pleasing melancholy. But this is not what we want.... What they want is something to animate and ennoble them—not merely to add zest to their melancholy and grace to their dreams--I believe a feeling of this kind is the basis of my nature and of my poetics. 

That this judgment of himself was not merely idle comment in a letter to a friend is demonstrated by his later criticism. Arnold thought that poetry could perform a great role by inspiring and fortifying the soul lost in the steel jungle of materialism. It is this use of poetry as religion-substitute, this hazy romantic optimism, that prompts Eliot's cries of ruin and anarchy. Throughout his career Arnold continued to hold that great poetry can be enjoyed because of the feeling it gives the reader, and judged on the basis of that impression.

In "Literature and Science," written in 1885, he
recommended the poetry of the greatest poets because it is able to produce this very feeling of joy:

...such is the strength and worth, in the essentials of their author's criticism of life, that art, and poetry and eloquence have a fortifying and elevating and quickening and suggestive power, capable of wonderfully helping us to relate the results of modern science to our need for conduct, our need for beauty.30

Previously, Arnold had made clear that this quickening power is not merely an accidental concomitant of the poetry, but is actually the prerequisite for the poetry's greatness. In his essay on Wordsworth he wrote:

Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties, and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.31

This quotation not only illustrates Arnold's tendency as a romantic critic to judge poetry by feeling, but also, as Eliot has pointed out, (with the asperity usual in his references to Arnold), illustrates his romantic tendency to equate the poet's feeling with the feeling of the poem. Such an equation naturally leads to another quality of romantic criticism exhibited in Arnold's work; that is, emphasis on the personality of the writer, and judgment of his writing on the basis of personality and motive. Arnold probably learned the biographical approach to criticism from Sainte-Beuve, the scientific naturalist who sought to "explain" poetry by analyzing
its author's character and experience. Arnold certainly never intended to reduce poetry to its antecedents in the mind of the poet, but he did think that those antecedents were interesting, and always worthy of the critic's attention. Harvey goes so far as to say that "Arnold penetrated into the writer's personality—and showed how literature is but the voice of the spirit. To him the value of a writer was measured by the qualities of his nature."32 Certainly much evidence can be found to support this point of view. Nearly all of Arnold's essays in criticism are at least half devoted to a biographical sketch, and Arnold himself finds the chief value of his First Series of these essays in the "admirable riches of human nature that are brought to light in the group of persons of whom they treat...."33 His criticism of the Romantic poets is strongly directed at their personalities. Keats is censured for writing vulgar letters; Shelley, for writing humorless letters and for being cruel to his wife. Burns is found lacking "the accent of high seriousness born of absolute sincerity",34 but Byron, on the other hand, is praised for his "excellence of sincerity and strength".35 Such interest in the writer's character must not be thought of as dilettantism or irrelevancy; it arises naturally from Arnold's conviction as a romantic critic that "genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul".36 If this conviction is correct, the soul and character must be great before the poetry can be great, and the character of the poet becomes the legitimate concern of the critic.
Finally, Arnold, although he made much show of demanding unity in a work of art, seldom applied this criterion in practice. Even his first major excursion into literary criticism, the *Lectures on Translating Homer*, although concerned with the unity of tone achieved by the grand style, shows no interest in the problems of architectonics that he claimed in his 1853 "Preface" were so important. The problem discussed in "Dante and Beatrice", that is, the quality of the love of the man Dante for the real Beatrice, is a problem outside the confines of literature proper, and although Arnold continued to name Dante as his teacher, comforter, and one of the greatest of all poets, nevertheless he never even mentioned the structural conception of the *Divine Comedy* that in western literature is unique in its scope. Most of the *Essays in Criticism* in all three series are studies in men rather than their works; when their works are discussed, the discussion usually ranges around an isolated quotation, and usually deals with idea rather than with form. Even the mystics, Arnold himself said, he read for their "single golden sentences", but never for their systematic exposition or description. In one of the last of his works of literary criticism, the "Study of Poetry", Arnold explained a method of judging poetry, a method he has been using already in much of his criticism. This method consists in setting the lines of poetry to be judged beside a small selection of lines that everyone agrees are great poetry, and deciding if the lines
under consideration are worthy of such comparison. Now it might be possible to judge the structural quality of a work of art by comparing it to another work of agreed structural excellence, but Arnold never suggested such a procedure. His 'touchstones' are at the most a few lines in length, and of course only a few lines at a time can be judged against them. Since this method that Arnold proposed as a useful test for great poetry does not admit of judging architectural unity, it must be concluded that Arnold did not think that architectural unity was an essential quality of great art.

Moreover, it must be concluded from the evidence presented that Matthew Arnold was not a classical critic, as is often contended by those who read his theoretical pronouncements alone, but was rather a romantic in most of his practical criticism. He ignored conventional standards, placing the standard inside each individual, and asking him to judge art by the inspiriting power it affords. This romantic interest in individual reactions carries over into an interest in the feeling and character of the artist, a feeling and character that Arnold apparently and romantically thought is communicated in the work of art. Finally, despite a theoretic insistence on classic unity, Arnold in practice judged literature by the feeling of isolated ideas, passages, or even individual lines, and failed to discuss formal techniques and effects gained only in complexly ordered wholes.
3. Synthesis

Needless to say, these two descriptions of Arnold's criticism are pure pedantry. Arnold borrowed the term 'pedantry' from Goethe to describe the popular, but mistaken process of analyzing complex problems with traditional, but inadequate categories; it is in this sense the term is used here. In his social criticism, Arnold showed that discussing social problems by referring to democracy and freedom is pedantry; discussing Arnold's critical position by referring to classicism and romanticism is pedantry of the same type. It is not accurate to say that Arnold's position falls somewhere between classicism and romanticism; it is helpful, but not entirely accurate, to say that he oscillates between the two positions. Rather, qualities into which classicism and romanticism have already been analyzed must be analyzed further until it can be shown that the qualities are not antithetical, but are indeed capable of useful synthesis. Some of these possible syntheses Arnold effected himself; others, he did not; but in either case he contributed to literary criticism by revealing that the older analysis was no longer adequate.

Of the triad of antitheses, (structure vs. touchstones, standards vs. impressions, and impersonality vs. personal communication), the first was never synthesized by Arnold. However, it is misleading to call insistence on architectonic order and judgment by isolated passages antithetical, because they are not mutually exclusive. Certainly
Arnold advocated a poetic ideal of unity that he did not look for in his critical practice, but his additional advocacy of touchstones would not have prevented him from looking for it if he had so chosen. As John Crowe Ransom points out in his essay on Eliot's criticism, all art must be judged by both its structure and its texture; Arnold merely emphasized the importance of structure in his theory, and the importance of texture in his practice. No doubt he would have been a more helpful critic if he had dealt with the two aspects together both in his theory and in his practice, but he was not being logically inconsistent when he wrote as he did.

There is a reason Arnold insisted on structural unity when his natural critical taste preferred to detect natural nuances. It is his concept of the function of criticism at the present time. He thought that artists of his time strove for brilliant passages at the expense of structure, and pointed out the critic's duty to redress the balance. This idea that criticism should be a weight on the light side of the balance also helps to explain why Arnold could set up external standards, but argue the necessity of individual assent at the same time. The modern spirit, as defined in the essay on Heine, rejects conventional rules and demands individual conviction; therefore the critic must counsel respect for standards to prevent all sense of excellence being lost. The process is based on the same reasoning as
the British policy of preserving the balance of power. Perhaps it is a little ironic that the champion of continental literature in England should also be the champion of the literary equivalent of the traditional English continental policy.

Arnold advocated the study of literature outside the English tradition for a very good reason: such literature provided him with an escape from the empiric dilemma. Here he could find an outside standard against which to judge his impressions of his own literature. Certainly this outside standard varied with the individual using it, but it was less likely to change from one reader to another than was a standard based only on the local and contemporary literature that would involve local and contemporary prejudices. When such a comparative method could also draw comparisons from the Classics and from the works of English literature acknowledged to be great, it could claim to be using what Arnold thought was needed: a flexible standard. It was in this standard that Arnold placed the corrective to eccentricities of personal taste, but it was a standard that did not deny the necessity of personal assent. Harvey calls the process "something like inductive method in literature."

Now an inductive method does not prevent the postulation of laws; indeed, they are the aim of the whole procedure. Nevertheless, the law-giver must never think his laws are eternal, and must be prepared to change them if
contradictory evidence comes to light. In the physical sciences, since the theorists attempt to explain only a limited number of facts, they are forced to change their basic theories only once or twice a century. Moreover, since they communicate in a specialized language and mathematical signs, the layman is not aware of the change of theory until the new theory has had time to prove itself by producing spectacular practical results. I can remember being taught about Dalton's ultimate atom just as the bomb was being dropped on Hiroshima. But the literary critic cannot limit his facts; he may analyze a work of art into various facets, but he must always put them back together or he is not criticizing the work of art. Neither should the critic speak in a specialized jargon, for his purpose is to be understood by all. Therefore the inductive critic must advance his laws, or standards, cautiously, and continually test them against the multitudinous and unruly set of facts presented by the whole of western literature.

But equally, as has been demonstrated in the presentation of Matthew Arnold as a classicist, the critic who tries to evaluate without some standards is overcome by the very multitudinousness of the facts he must deal with. Therefore he must continue to trust his standards even when they are contradicted by some of the facts, as long as no more comprehensive standard is available. A convenient term for this kind of standard might be "the hypothetical ideal". Arnold's standards of unity, impersonality, and high seriousness
are in this sense hypothetical ideals. Still, however, the inconvenient experiential facts of ineradicably memorable lines, of sensed personal communication, and of deliciously wicked satire remain. If he is not to be dishonest, the critic must take account of them, too, not only with a view to modifying his theoretical standard which at this point could only be modified out of existence, but for themselves alone simply because they exist. The critic hopes always to explain more and more of his perceptions in the terms of his hypothetical ideals, but refuses to ignore his perceptions simply because they are inexplicable, and insists on taking account of both. Such an attitude, when carried beyond the bounds of literary criticism, becomes almost a philosophy of life, a kind of dialectical idealism.

Within the bounds of literary criticism, the attitude suggests a critical method that will be illustrated in detail in a later chapter. At this point only the limits within which the dialectic works will be shown. One limit, as set up in his youth, but supported throughout his life, prevented the hypothetical ideal from reaching zero and allowing the irrational to prevail. In 1845 he wrote to Clough, "while we believe in the Universality of Passion as Passion, we will keep pure our Aesthetics by remembering its one-sidedness as doctrine." At the other end of his career, he set up his other limit by refusing to allow the rational to reach infinity. In his religious writings, when he looked for evidence of God in individual experience and found only a
"tendency", he deprived God of his essential attribute of absolute existence.

B. Eliot

Just as Matthew Arnold can be characterized as both a classicist and romanticist, so T. S. Eliot can be shown to reveal these two apparently antithetical modes of thought. Moreover Eliot reveals a classic strain very similar to Arnold's, and, surprising though it may seem, also reveals a remarkably Arnoldian strain of romanticism. The synthesis of these antithetical categories should demonstrate the close relationship of this aspect of the critical thought of Arnold and Eliot, and possibly describe this part of Eliot's thought more accurately than a one-sided presentation could do.

1. Eliot as Classicist

René Wellek describes Eliot as a modern classicist, and goes on to define modern classicism as a "tendency toward a higher and clearer conception of Reason, and a more severe and serene control of the emotions by Reason." This definition may be taken to suggest, and certainly does not clash with, the analysis of classicism found suitable to the discussion of Arnold's classicism. "Clear conceptions" and "serene control" imply an existing order; "higher conceptions" and "severe control" suggest standards of excellence; "serene control" at least echoes the calm of mind Arnold found in architectonic, and "control of the emotions by Reason" could
develop into the impersonal, as opposed to the emotion-communicating, theory of art. Since Eliot writes in a world of mass education, universal suffrage, and all-out war, he expects order to be a little harder to discover than did the Master of Arts from Oxford. Nevertheless, he still insists on order in poetry, and finds that such order at least gives a clue to the integral order of reality. As he says in a sentence that might be a paraphrase of Arnold's opinions on order,

...it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation....

Eliot defends standards on the same grounds as does Arnold, and, like Arnold, looks for them in the classics. Standards in literature are the modern world's defence against a decline into literary barbarism; the critic must measure all works of literature, past and present, against the same standard. Eliot can find his measuring stick, not indeed in the Greek classics, as Arnold did, but in the Roman classics, because he regards the Greek classics as having filtered through the Roman tradition before becoming part of the Western European tradition. Specifically, he finds the most perfect standard in Vergil's Aeneid, about which he says,

To preserve the classical standard and to measure every individual work of literature by it is to see that while our literature as a whole may contain everything, every single work in it may be defective in something. This may be a necessary
defect, a defect without which some quality would be lacking, but we must see it as a defect. He chooses the Aeneid as a standard because it is the result of a mature civilization, a maturity of intellect, language, form and manners. It was this maturity that Arnold ascribed to Athenian literature of the classic age when he called that literature "adequate", and Arnold used Athenian literature as the same kind of standard as Eliot would wish the Aeneid to be.

Eliot also requires a poem to give a sense of unity and structure. He is careful, however, not to confuse unity with uniformity, for uniformity makes structure impossible. At the same time he thinks, and here his position is identical with Arnold's, that fluctuations of style due to the author's carelessness can ruin both unity and structure. He states his position in a discussion of Shelley's longer poems:

One does not expect a poem to be equally sustained throughout; and in some of the most successful long poems there is a relation of the more tense to the more relaxed passages, which is itself part of the pattern of beauty. But good lines among bad can never give more than a regretful pleasure.

By a "good line" and a "bad line" Eliot means the artistry of the line, or the lack of it, but he means something else as well. He expects consistency of philosophy to contribute to the unity of the poem, and is disturbed by unacceptable philosophies and intrusive ideas. Bad lines may be bad lines
because they are bad philosophy. The theoretical problems this requirement poses will be discussed in the next chapter, but it should be noted here that it is an alternative requirement to Arnold's "excellent action". Where Arnold admired the Greek tragedians for their inexorable revelation of the results of actions, Eliot admires Dante for his cumulative revelation of a complete philosophy. They have chosen to admire different methods of obtaining unity, but both require that the unity be obtained.

Eliot not only demands, as Arnold does, structural unity in literature but also recommends a structural framework to the artist for the same reason that Arnold recommends one. Neither critic regards literature as communication of personal emotion, but rather as an impersonal creation to be judged on its own merits. Eliot's description of the poetic process as a piece of finely divided platinum acting as a catalyst in a chamber of sulphur dioxide and oxygen is too well known to require explanation. Moreover, Eliot himself recognized the difficulty of holding this extreme position, and in the 1928 "Preface" to the collection in which the catalyst theory was included, modified the theory, while still demanding an impersonal poem. He summarizes his argument:

We can only say that a poem in some sense, has its own life, that its parts form something different from the feeling or emotion or vision in the mind of the poet.45

Possibly he neglected his catalyst theory when he realized
that by his analogy the end-product of the process, poetry, must turn out to be $H_2SO_4$.

Even his modified position, however, implies that a study of the poet's mental processes is no help in understanding poetry. His statements of this opinion are frequent and unequivocal:

...I prefer not to define, or to test poetry by means of speculations about its origins. You cannot find a sure test for poetry by reference to its putative antecedents in the mind of the poet.47

On these grounds, he discounts the importance of Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination. Somewhat later he includes function, as well as definition and judgment of poetry, among the critical questions that cannot be solved by a theory that poetry is communication.

It is obvious that any attempt to define the function of poetry in terms of the purpose of the poet, is to involve ourselves in a labyrinth from which there is no extrication.48

It is this insistence on approaching the poem as an impersonal object that characterizes Eliot as a classicist.

Since judgment must be made on the basis of the poem and nothing else, standards of precision and conscious artistry become highly important for the classical critic. Moreover, as pointed out before, a single "bad line" can spoil the appreciation of the whole poem, and thus contravene another
classical rule, unity of impression. Therefore Eliot can rightly withhold the highest praise from a work sloppily composed, no matter how brilliant the images or well-conceived the structure. He frequently builds his critical essays around a close textual criticism of some representative lines, and even recommends the practice to other critics:

I wish that we might dispose more attention to the correctness of expression, to the clarity or obscurity, to the grammatical precision or inaccuracy, to the choice of words whether just or improper, exalted or vulgar, of our verse....

Incidentally, that Eliot habitually practises detailed textual analysis even of prose, is witnessed by the quotation itself. The idea arises from a discussion of Dryden, and it would be difficult to find a closer imitation of Dryden's style. One does not suspect conscious imitation, but rather inadvertant imitation, resulting from years of conscious and semi-conscious stylistic analysis.

In other important passages, Eliot uses "precision" to mean much more than "grammatical precision". In doing so, he raises a classical standard that Arnold did not specifically raise, but which is certainly implicit in his demand for fine artistry. Much of Eliot's work seeks to judge precision of image, that is, the suitability of the image for the emotion or situation being described. For instance, in order to point up the admirable quality of precision in Marvell's poetry, he contrasts it with some lines from Morris, and
concludes, "The emotion of Morris is not more refined or more spiritual; it is merely more vague." Although Eliot built on this evidence an indefensible theory of a dissociation of sensibility taking place in the seventeenth century, one should not be led to undervalue the evidence. As a matter of fact, Eliot himself ignores the theory rather than ignoring the evidence when he discovers this same quality of precision in Johnson's mid-eighteenth century poetry. Again, he finds, and praises, a classical precision of image, and not merely "daydreams, or a metamorphosis of our own feeble passions and lusts". In other words, since the classical critic looks for impersonal poetry, he cannot admire images that pretend to transfer a vague personal emotion, but will praise only those images that clearly represent a specific emotion that becomes significant in the context of the poem. Impersonal poetry requires precise images.

Eliot is a classical critic, then, because he believes in an integral order that can find expression in art. Since such order actually exists, the critic can set up standards by which to judge art and the best standards are to be found in the most highly ordered works, which Eliot believes to be the Roman classics. These classics suggest that a poem must be unified and impersonal. It is unified when it develops with a consistent philosophy and consistent tone, and impersonal when the poet resists trying to communicate his own emotions, and sets out instead a structure of impersonal
emotion expressed in precise images which derive their significance from their content. It is easy to see that Eliot, the classicist, holds essentially the same critical theory as does Arnold, the classicist, differing only in three respects. Eliot finds his models in Roman, rather than in Greek classics; he looks for structure in philosophy rather than in action; and he develops his theory of impersonal poetry a little further than does Arnold. Important though these variations may be, the similarities between the two classical critics are more important than the differences. Both agree on the essential demands of classical critical theory: order, adherence to standards, unity, and impersonality.

2. Eliot as Romantic

Probably no one who has read more of Arnold's literary criticism than the 1853 "Preface" would accept the analysis of Arnold as a classical critic without objecting "Yes, but..." and bringing in contradictory evidence. I doubt if so many would make the same objection to this analysis of Eliot. His writings have a tone of infallibility about them that strikes awe into his admirers and fury into the hearts of his detractors, and this infallibility seems, somehow to be the suitable tone for classical criticism. It comes as somewhat of a surprise that it is even easier to represent Eliot as a romantic critic than it is to represent Arnold as one. It is possible to demonstrate Eliot's romanticism by making use of the same categories as in the demonstration of
also, like Arnold, he ascribes an inspiriting power to that feeling. Such inspiration is possible because, in some sense, life can be equated to literature:

The ordinary life of ordinary cultivated people is a mash of literature and life. There is a right sense in which for the educated person literature is life and life is literature.

Later Eliot seems to enlarge the group that can experience this inspiration. One of the reasons he turned from writing poetry for private reading to writing poetic drama is his wish to speak to an audience composed of all classes; therefore one could assume that the "audience" mentioned in the following quotation, especially since its life is "dreary" and "sordid", might not be entirely composed of the educated and cultured specified in the former quotation. Speaking of the function of poetry in drama, he writes, "...its purpose is not to transport the audience into some imaginary world totally unlike their own, an unreal world in which poetry can be spoken." Rather, the audience should say, "I could talk in poetry, too...and their own sordid, dreary daily world be suddenly illuminated and transfigured." Certainly Eliot would never suggest, as Arnold did, that the illumination could replace religion; but nevertheless he, with Arnold, does recognize inspiration as one of the functions of poetry.

If Eliot thinks that good literature can be detected by individual experience, one would expect him to use a kind of touchstone method in his criticism. In fact, he does use
Arnold's romanticism; that is, by making use of the obverse of the classical categories. First, Eliot objects to the type of criticism that judges by abstract standards. He questions the value of the imposition of any critical standards during the early stages of literary education, and specifically discounts Leslie Stephen's a priori criticism of the villain unmasking himself in *The Changeling*. He even doubts the usefulness of the conventional distinction between tragedy and comedy. Rather, judgment must be made on the pleasure principle:

...the first purpose [of literature] must always be what it always has been - to give a peculiar kind of pleasure which has something consistent in it throughout the ages, however difficult and various our explanation of that pleasure may be.

Moreover, the experience is unique and discrete:

The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art.

Therefore, apparently, one should be able to judge art on the basis of the existence or non-existence of this peculiar pleasure before giving an opinion about a specific work of art. The quality that elicits such a response can only be felt; Eliot calls it variously "essential poetry", "the first intensity", and the "logic of imagination", but always the quality is emotionally detectable.

Not only does Eliot, the romantic critic, judge poetry by "feel", as does the romantic critic, Arnold, but
a method of this type. As Bradbrook points out in her essay on Eliot's criticism, Eliot often develops his essays around pairs of quotations in "alto-relievo", quotations which the reader must judge one against the other with only technical assistance from the critic. The excerpt that has impressed Eliot as being superior thus acts as a touchstone with which to compare the inferior. This method obviously has greater flexibility than Arnold's touchstone method, but both methods have several qualities in common. First, they both allow the individual to judge by personal experience, not by standards, and secondly, both presuppose texture rather than structural unity to be the essential quality of poetry to be judged. For these reasons the touchstone method is romantic rather than classical. Moreover, despite their theoretical pronouncements, neither Arnold nor Eliot often actually choose classical touchstones in their practical criticism. Eliot's interest lies mainly in the high-medievalism of Dante, and in early Baroque; it is to the qualities of brilliant visual imagery, precision, wit, and musicality in this poetry that Eliot refers his poetry to be judged. Such reference cannot in itself be called romantic, but neither does it indicate that classical standards had much real attraction for Eliot.

Eliot shares another kind of romanticism with Arnold: he judges literature by judging the author's personality. He looks for the pattern of the personality behind the pattern of the writer's works, and, for instance, declares Shakespeare
to be a greater poet than Ford partly because the personality pattern revealed is more interesting. He generalizes in the following passage: "A man might hypothetically compose any number of fine passages or even whole poems which would give satisfaction, and yet not be a great poet, unless we felt them to be united by one consistent and developing personality." Moreover, he often explains poetry in terms of the poet's mental processes. He approves Coleridge's approach to poetry through the mind of the poet, and the earlier critic's definitions of poetry as a "reconciliation of opposites" and as "one predominant thought or feeling". Earlier, in his essay on the metaphysical poets, he had said much the same thing himself:

...When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love or reads Spinoza, and the two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter, or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet, these experiences are always forming new wholes.

Not only is the poet "amalgamating disparate experiences", he is also depending on an initial emotion; he is "expressing emotion in the form of art." Wellek, who characterizes Eliot as a classical critic, finds this insistence that poetry must be emotional, somewhat embarrassing. He suggests that Eliot took over the notion from Remy de Gourmont and I. A. Richards without realizing that it was antithetical to his central position.
On the contrary, one can easily contend that the emotionality of poetry is central in his thought. Two of Eliot's best known critical concepts, the "objective correlative" and the "dissociation of sensibility", can only be explained by presupposing an initial emotion. Indeed, the objective correlative is only the objective embodiment of a specific emotion in poetic form. The dissociation of sensibility is the state of mind wherein emotionality is removed from thought, a state of mind that cannot produce good poetry. Eliot insists that thought must be felt, "as immediately as the odour of the rose". Again, one must note here not only the romanticism of postulating the primacy of emotion, but also of explaining poetry by reference to the state of mind of the poet. Both of these aspects are emphatically present in this pronouncement on dramatic poetry:

It is suggested, then, that a dramatic poet cannot create characters of the greatest intensity of life unless his personages in their reciprocal actions and behaviour in their story are somehow dramatizing, but in no obvious form, an action or struggle for harmony in the soul of the poet.

Matthew Arnold's equally romantic description of genuine poetry being "composed in the soul" has acquired an unmistakable echo.

3. Synthesis

Unfortunately for this whole argument in favour of the romantic Eliot, there is a disturbing counter-echo of this same phrase that makes one wonder if one is hearing clearly.
In his essay on Dryden, Eliot resumes his guerrilla warfare against Arnold with this typically irrelevant attack:

...Matthew Arnold observes, in mentioning Dryden and Pope together, that "their poetry is conceived and composed in their wits; genuine poetry is composed in the soul." Arnold was, perhaps, not altogether the detached critic when he wrote this line; he may have been stirred to a defence of his own poetry, conceived and composed in the soul of a mid-century Oxford graduate. 69

One wonders first of all what right a pre-World War I Harvard graduate has to be sarcastic about mid-century Oxford graduates. But then one wonders what right Eliot has to be sarcastic about poetry being composed in the soul when he is quite prepared to state, himself, that poetry is composed there too. Leaving aside the rather specious explanation that Eliot is piqued because Arnold attacked the Bishops of Winchester and Gloucester, one can turn instead to the concepts of controlled oscillation and the hypothetical ideal that proved useful in understanding Arnold's seemingly contradictory positions. In short, the reader gets the most benefit from Eliot's criticism when he recognizes that Eliot holds both classic and romantic positions, uses either when it is useful, and makes seemingly absolute statements that can only be interpreted in context.

At the end of the discussion of Arnold's oscillating position, it was shown that he carried the method of supposing an hypothesis to be an absolute for some purposes even into his religious writings. This wide an extension of the method
surely indicated that the method was the normal, almost the inevitable habit of his mind. That this description of Arnold's method is accurate is now widely accepted in Arnold scholarship. Evidence of the same method in Eliot's religious criticism might well indicate the pragmatic attitude of Eliot's mind, and provide a strong starting point for a discussion of oscillating hypotheses in his literary criticism.

Now despite numerous characterizations of Eliot as a blind religious dogmatist, such evidence is easy to find. My first quotation is from T. E. Hulme, but Eliot uses it to represent his own ideas. Hulme is writing of the religious conception of ultimate values:

From the nature of things these categories are not inevitable like the categories of time and space, but are equally objective. What is important, is what nobody seems to realize -- that dogmas like that of Original Sin...are the closest expression of the categories of the religious attitude.... It is not, then, that I put up with the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma.

It is this last sentence that is usually quoted to prove that Eliot is an uncritical dogmatist. However, taken in context, it rather indicates that Eliot is a highly critical pragmatist who finds dogma useful because it is fairly accurate. He is a pragmatist, first, because he regards moral values, and the dogmas derived from them, as "not inevitable". If values are not inevitable, they can certainly not be absolute, at least
in the Platonic and theological senses. He is also a pragmatist because he regards values and the resulting dogma as "objective". Now if the values are not inevitable, that is, not existent in the natural order of things, but at the same time are not mere personal whims, the only alternative is for them to be accepted hypotheses. This alternative is a pragmatic concept. Moreover, he is a critical pragmatist, because he realizes that the dogma is not an exact correlate of the moral value, and because he finds the sentiment that goes along with the dogma distasteful. Presumably, if he thinks like a pragmatist, and accepts the dogma despite his reservations, he must find it useful.

Conveniently, one learns the way in which he finds dogma useful in another discussion of the theory of value. Even more conveniently for this thesis, Eliot's acceptance of an idea similar to Arnold's oscillatory principle emerges in the same quotation. Eliot is criticizing I. A. Richard's psychological theory of value, and concludes:

...but we must also have a moral theory of value. The two are incompatible, but both must be held, and that is just the problem. If I believe, as I do believe, that the chief distinction of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, Mr. Richard's theory of value is inadequate; my advantage is that I can believe in my own and his too, whereas he is limited to his own.71

I am not, of course, contending that the main reason Eliot believes in God is to win arguments with I. A. Richards; but rather, I am indicating that Eliot's pragmatic habit of thought
is so strong that he thinks pragmatically even when he is dealing with concepts usually thought of as absolutes. Moreover, as pointed out in the previous discussion of Arnold, and as confirmed in this quotation, the inevitable use of inevitably uncertain hypotheses leads to an oscillatory method of thinking. Eliot may imply that he can believe in absolute God-given values and psychological values both at the same time, but logically he cannot. The moment a psychological value conflicts with an absolute value, he is logically forced to reject the psychological value. What he really means, is that given his oscillatory habit of thought, he can lock his absolute values safely up in a strong box, and, while keeping them out of sight for a moment, judge the usefulness of the psychological values on their own merits. However, as soon as the psychological values seem inapplicable, uncomfortable, or simply wrong, he needs only to open his strongbox and display his untouchable absolutes. This process is, of course, pragmatic in itself, for although it involves absolutes, the absolutes are subordinated to the thought-process. This process, as revealed in an examination of the limiting case of religion, is, as would be expected, the process of Eliot's literary criticism.

An excellent example of his use of hypothetical absolutes and the oscillation method is his definition of poetry as a "superior amusement". It is not until later that the reader learns his reason for choosing this arbitrary
and surprising description. He explains, "...if we think of anything else that poetry may seem to be, we are led into far greater difficulties." Apparent the choice is made on the grounds of usefulness. But then the claims of the apologists for poetry occur to him, and he is forced to face a set of facts that contradict his useful hypothesis. He adds that poetry "certainly has something to do with morals, and with religion, and even with politics perhaps, though we cannot say what." Like the physicist working on the nuclear bomb, he admits that the world of moral values has something to do with his job, but refuses to think about it then because it would interfere with the already sufficiently complicated problems of the moment. Eliot's superiority to most nuclear physicists lies in his ability to face the moral problems when he has finished the limited literary problem he has set for himself.

It is now possible to investigate in detail how Eliot resolves the seemingly antithetical viewpoints set out in the previous discussions of his classicism and romanticism. To start with a minor point, although in one essay he denies the usefulness of the categories of tragic and comic, in another essay he sets up a new category and standard that he calls "unity of feeling" by which to judge drama. A dramatist may thus reject the standards imposed by tragedy and comedy, a rejection that this thesis has defined as romantic, but at the same time impose a new standard on himself, a procedure defined as classic.
More important is the apparent conflict between the demand for impersonality in poetry and the interest in the poet's personality. Its resolution, however, is possible on several grounds. The first ground is that enunciated by Arnold in the "Function of Criticism at the Present Time" and repeated by Eliot in the first essays of the Sacred Wood, and in his later Milton criticism. The impersonal theory of poetry is a hypothetical ideal that is enunciated, like Arnold's Academy, in order to restore a balance. This view is supported by Ransom, who, in writing of the impersonal theory, concludes:

Its rhetorical use would seem to be to persuade the individualist poet not to assert himself too stoutly against the tradition which is bigger than he; and to persuade the reader not to value the blatant self-assertive sort of poems. 77

The second ground for resolution is logic. Despite the tendency to categorize impersonal standards as classic and personality interests as romantic, the standard and the interest are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, Eliot himself qualifies his impersonal position:

Communication will not explain poetry. I will not say that there is not always some varying degree of communication in poetry, or that poetry could exist without any communication. 78

Or, one might say, the impersonality theory has two advantages over a theory of communication as a standard for poetry: it is simpler and therefore more useable, because it limits judgment
to the poem; but, at the same time, it takes in the whole poem as a thing to be judged, something the communication theory cannot achieve. The fact that a sense of communication remains is recognized, but this fact can be discussed outside the limits of application of the standard. As has been shown in the characterization of Eliot as a romantic critic, such outside discussion is precisely what takes place. Again, the acceptance of a hypothetical absolute leads to oscillation, but this time Eliot oscillates, not between two really antithetical positions, but between two aspects of the total problem. The final resolution of the conflict lies in a correct apprehension of what Eliot means by impersonality. Impersonality is not only a quality of a poem, but an integral part of the personality of the poet; in this latter sense, impersonality and personality are not antithetical, but one is a desirable aspect of the other. Wellek summarizes Eliot's definition of impersonality as

...that of the poet, who, out of intense and personal experience, is able to express a general truth; retaining all the particularity of his experience, to make of it a general symbol.  

Eliot is, by this definition, justified in demanding that a poem stand as an impersonal object, but at the same time is right in continuing to investigate the poet's personality as an aid to his judgment.

Eliot's classic wish for order and romantic emphasis on emotion are resolvable on the same grounds: first, the
balance principle, and secondly the inapplicability of the exclusion principle. Just as his championship of the impersonal critic is a counterbalance to the biographical criticism of the nineteenth century, so is his demand for order and precision a counterpoise to vague emotionalism. But, more important, although they might be regarded as counterpoises, again, order and emotion are not mutually exclusive. Eliot, indeed, in his earlier essay on Dante, defines poetry as the ordering of emotion, a process that may occur in two different ways. To write Dante's type of poetry, the poet builds a scaffold of philosophy that marshals the emotion into orderly form; such poetry is synthetic and requires a synthesizing mind. To write Shakespeare's type of poetry, the poet analyzes a single emotion. It might be remembered here that Matthew Arnold suggested that the inevitable unfolding of action could form the orderly scaffolding for this type of poetry. Eliot calls it critical poetry and it requires a critical mind. (Again, one is reminded that Matthew Arnold called poetry a criticism of life.) In either case, the process is orderly, but involves emotions. In fact, order and emotion are both aspects of the same thing, poetry, and it is impossible to write poetry unless it is both orderly and emotional. It is simply that the critic, to handle his flow of impressions, must analyze and emphasize, and only finds it possible to deal with one of these aspects at a time.

The same argument can be applied to the problem of
unity as opposed to isolated "poetic" passages, or, in Ransom's terms, of structure as opposed to texture. The problem is a pseudo-problem, raised because critics are forced to analyze if they are to say anything beyond, "I like this poem", and because the climate of opinion calls for emphasis of one or the other terms of analysis. Despite the necessity for analysis, Eliot, in speaking of Yeats' poetic dramas, recognizes that structure and texture are interdependent.

What is necessary is a beauty which shall not be in the line or isolable passage, but woven into the dramatic texture itself, so that you can hardly say whether the lines give grandeur to the drama, or whether it is the drama which turns the words into poetry.81

As with Arnold, the judgment of isolated passages in high relief does not contradict this position; it is only one aspect of a necessary analysis.

Eliot's technique is still faced with the largest of the problems raised, the empiric dilemma. That is, how can the critic maintain critical standards and the primacy of his own impressions at the same time? But it has previously been shown that Arnold solved the same problem with his hypothetical and oscillatory technique; it might be expected that Eliot, a grudging student, but nevertheless a student of Arnold, would use the same technique when it is already habitual with him. Examples of Eliot's practical use of the technique will be quoted in the chapter on style and method, but at the moment it remains only to show that Eliot is aware of what he
is doing. Both oscillation and hypothesis are involved in
the following description of the literary critic's method:

there are these two theoretical limits of
criticism; at one of which we attempt to
answer the question, "What is poetry?" and
at the other, "Is this a good poem?"
No theoretical ingenuity will suffice to
answer the second question because no theory
can amount to much which is not founded upon
direct experience of good poetry; but on
the other hand, our direct experience of
poetry involves a good deal of generalizing
activity.82

He solves the dilemma by holding both standards and impressions
in balance, by implying that a dilemma does not really exist,
but that its terms are merely the limits of an inevitable
process.

However, it must be admitted that if Arnold and
Eliot are both dialecticians and pragmatists, they are
dialecticians and pragmatists under protest. As is obvious
from their classicism, they both strongly desire absolutes
even when they have a hard time finding any. In effect, each
creates an absolute value by agreeing to call the mid-point
of his oscillation an absolute value. Both, while alter-
nating between respect for imagination and emotion, and respect
for reason and order, verbally coalesce their limits. Arnold
proposes the value of the "imaginative reason," and Eliot,
the value of an identical "unified sensibility" of reason and
emotion. Whether their syntheses are merely verbal, or whether
their concepts have any experiential meaning, is a problem
I am not competent to solve. However, in a criticism of Eliot's theory that post-seventeenth-century English poets suffered from a dissociation of sensibility, Frank Kermode shows that complaints about apparently dissociated sensibility are on record from Greek classical times, and that Eliot's placing the dissociation in the seventeenth century reflects only Eliot's personal taste in poetry. One is reminded that we should not seek to explain poetry by its "putative antecedents in the mind of the poet." What Arnold and Eliot both seem to mean is that elements we are accustomed to call imaginative and rational interpenetrate good poetry and cannot be analyzed out. But whether the mental process that produces this result, or the reader's appreciation of the result, is actually a unique fusion of the two, is a psychological and epistemological problem that cannot be discussed in these terms. Probably Arnold and Eliot believe that they can apprehend poetic truth and beauty through a direct application and perception of imaginative reason and unified sensibility. One wonders then why they inevitably make mistakes. Because of the widespread disagreement among critics I tend to agree with Kermode that a critic's perception of unified sensibility is only a reflection of the critic's taste in poetry. But leaving this consideration aside, even if the concepts Arnold and Eliot propose have any experiential reality, they must analyze their perception before they can communicate it in their criticism. I therefore doubt the usefulness of the concepts of imaginative reason and unified sensibility as
critical tools. Although their commonsense resolution of the more specific critical problem, then, is satisfactory and useful, I would tentatively suggest that their grand synthesis is illusory.
CHAPTER II

THE RELATIONSHIP OF FORM AND IDEA

The relative importance of form and idea in literature is one of those vexed questions of criticism that will be no closer to finding an answer at the end of the chapter than it is now. As T. S. Eliot finally comes round to suggesting, whether you judge literature primarily on what it says, or primarily on how it says it, depends almost entirely on your own personal preferences. The critic wishing to solve the problem will suggest that what it says is affected by how it says it. The suggestion is undoubtedly true, but is not very helpful, because even after all influence of style has been accounted for, the story, or the message, or the theme, is still there. Unless you are Dylan Thomas, it is very difficult to express yourself in words without saying something. It is surely a peculiar canon of criticism that attempts to judge an art form that says something without judging what it says.

However, at one time or another, both Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot have written as if they believed in this kind of canon. Arnold attempted to criticize pure form only in the early stages of his career, but T. S. Eliot argued with himself in public for twenty years before he convinced himself
that judgment of idea in literature is criticism's responsibility. The characterization of Arnold as a formal critic, then, is a specious argument, and is included only for the sake of symmetry, and to show that even in Arnold, the nineteenth century moralist, there is an antithetical element. Eliot, on the other hand, is continually torn between the ideals of formal and philosophical criticism, but, like Arnold, becomes more and more concerned with ideas as time goes on.

A. Arnold

1. Arnold as Formal Critic

Matthew Arnold, in his earlier years, was basically a formal critic. In his letters to Clough, he specifically denied the idea that poetry is to be philosophical or moral. One of his earliest letters was intended to discourage Clough from writing philosophical poetry.

Yet to solve the Universe as you try to do is as irritating as Tennyson's dawdling with its painted shell is fatiguing to me to witness: and yet I own that to reconstruct the Universe is not a satisfactory attempt either. 84

Moral guidance he also considered outside the office of literature. Arnold castigated Clough as one of those "misanthropic hermits who are incapable of seeing that the Muse willingly accompanies life but that in no wise does she understand to guide it." 85 Rather, he concluded slightly later, "...an absolute propriety of form, the sole necessary of Poetry /as such, whereas
the greatest wealth and depth of matter is merely a superfluity in the Poet as such." 86

Moreover, Arnold was always concerned with form, style, and artistry throughout his career. His "Preface" of 1853 was largely a plea for the necessity of unified style; his Lectures on Translating Homer could easily be retitled Homer and the Grand Style, and his admiration of Milton stems not from his admiration of Puritanism, but from his admiration of Milton's grand style. Arnold as formal critic was able to attack Shakespeare for his careless artistry, and to criticize Byron for the "negligent ease of a man of quality" so much admired by Scott. Finally, starting with his First Series of Essays in Criticism, Arnold launched what was almost a crusade against carelessness, vulgarity, and provincialism in English prose style, a crusade he carried on almost to the end in parts of his Discourses on America.

2. Arnold as Philosophical Critic

This concern with style in prose and poetry is manifest in nearly all Arnold's criticism. But yet Eliot, although he seems to have absorbed Arnold through the pores, is moved to say, "...so far as I can recollect he never emphasizes this virtue of poetic style, this fundamental in his criticism." 87 The statement as it stands is simply untrue, although perhaps Eliot means to say that Arnold does not practise textual criticism. However, it is more probable that, even to a careful
reader like Eliot, the total impression of Arnold's criticism is one of criticism of idea, not criticism of form. A common theme in this criticism is the rejection of vague transcendentalism. Not to the works themselves, but to the philosophy behind the works of Shelley, Wordsworth, Amiel, and Tolstoy, Arnold made the same objection, an objection clearly stated in the essay on Amiel:

...and when I am presented with philosophical speculations and told that they are "on a high scale of vastness," I persist in looking closely at them and in honesty asking myself what I find to be their positive value.88

A little further on in the same essay, Arnold explained what he meant by ideas of "positive value;" they are ..."ideas of sterling value to us...ideas staunchly counteracting and reducing the power of the infinite and indeterminate, not paralyzing us with it."89 As Perkins90 points out, Arnold wanted ideas to be utilizable, to be applied to life, to relate our knowledge to our sense for conduct; ideas, especially in poetry, had to be moral ideas. Thus, in the essay on Wordsworth, Arnold could say, "A poetry of revolt / against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life, a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life".91 Here, it must be noted, Arnold directed the criticism not only at the idea, but at the poetry embodying the idea. Now, although some poetry, like Wordsworth's, can transcend its inadequate basic philosophy, nevertheless it is the function of the literary critic to detect such inadequacy,
and to take account of it in his judgment of the value of the poem.

The judgment of literature by idea led Arnold into a search for "master-thoughts", so that he could compare ideas he was uncertain of to the very best ideas. However, his search did not allow him to conclude that such ideas were timeless. One must remember that these moral ideas in literature must be utilisable, accessible, applicable to life, applicable right now, and by us. Therefore, when he observed a modern spirit abroad in the world, a spirit that irresistibly questioned accepted traditional values and institutions, he was forced to judge modern works by their appeal to this spirit. Works described as being "in the main stream" of European development were superior to works not in the main stream. By this criterion, he judged Heine to be a superior poet to the English romantics, and George Sand to be a great novelist.

Of course, this criterion has the same weakness as the criterion offered by the touchstone: the nature of the modern spirit, like the nature of the touchstone, is often determined by personal taste. Thus Arnold in his later years could ignore French realism's claim to be an evolution of the modern spirit, because the traditional morals and values that realism ignored were Arnold's own. He contrasted Flaubert's "cruelty" unfavourably with Tolstoi's "tenderness, insight and charm," and constrained George Sand's moral purpose with
the cold-blooded approach of Balzac and Daudet. Moreover, over the signature of "Old Playgoer" in the Pall Mall Gazette, he repeatedly deplored the effect the French fashion was having on English theatre. Nevertheless, however the basis on which the idea was judged varied, Arnold's critical principle remained the same. Since the idea expressed, even the idea behind poetry, is an important and inextricable part of literature, the critic's judgment of the idea must strongly influence his judgment of the whole work.

3. Synthesis

A critical concern with form, and a critical concern with idea can both, of course, operate in the same critic. Nevertheless, Matthew Arnold's view of the relationship of form and idea cannot be described simply by reading the last few paragraphs continuously. Form and idea, style and moral criticism in literature, must be viewed as parts of a functioning organism. Leavis attributes this view to Arnold in a discussion of Arnold's critical principles; he explains:

...the evaluation of poetry as "criticism of life" is inseparable from its evaluation as poetry;
...the moral judgment that concerns us as critics must be at the same time a delicately relevant response of sensibility. 92

Or perhaps A. N. Whitehead's comment expresses the same idea more neatly, in a style Matthew Arnold would appreciate:
"style is the ultimate morality of mind." 93
Arnold's early thinking about the relationship of style and content is evident in his letters to Clough. For example, in 1849 he wrote:

...there are two offices of poetry—one to add to one's store of thoughts and feelings—and another to compose and elevate the mind by a sustained tone, numerous allusions, and a grand style.94

Here the "two offices of poetry" are thought of as both essential, but still separable. But by the time he gave the Lectures on Translating Homer, he conceived of content and style as inseparable; to be poetry, the idea had to conform to the "laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth." Not only did he explain his concept of the relationship of idea and style in these lectures, but also quoted this passage from them much later, in his essay on Wordsworth:

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.95

The inseparability of moral ideas and the form in which they are expressed was such a fixed tenet of Arnold's criticism that he even applied it to the study of prose style. Here, however, the emphasis was reversed. Instead of saying that the effect of the moral idea depended on the style, he insisted that the style depended largely on the thought. For example, he criticized Addison's prose style because the
thoughts it expressed were provincial:

Addison's style cannot equal in varied cadence and subtle ease the style of a man like Plato because without range and force of thought all the resources of style, whether in cadence or in subtlety, are not and cannot be brought out. 96

Arnold's thinking about the inseparability of style and idea culminated in his last essay in literary criticism, "On the Study of Poetry." Since poetic style is able to persuade and to induce emotion, and since this style can induce moral ideas at the same time, Arnold hoped that poetry could replace religion as the support of morals. The note of impassioned sincerity is unmistakable:

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 today is its unconscious poetry. 97

Now whether one accepts the identification of religion and poetry, or whether, like Eliot, one thinks such identification is superficial, is irrelevant to this argument. The point is that Arnold found the moral idea to be 'the fact'; that is, the fact of poetry being inextricably involved with the style in which the poetry is expressed.

It is, of course, in this sense of poetry as an involution of thought in style that poetry to Matthew Arnold was a "criticism of life." Indeed, one must remember that
Arnold thought of criticism, not as theoretical analysis, but as active and effective function. Therefore the word "criticism" in his definition implied the active influence of the style-idea complex, not only on the reader's ideas, but on his behavior. If one does not like the equation of poetry and religion, then, one has the less radical alternative of equating poetry and moral influence. Arnold himself provided this alternative in the same essay, "On the Study of Poetry":

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 times go on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay.98

When the alternative is framed in this way as a prediction, one sees the naiveté of Arnold's hopes for poetry. I very much doubt if the "spirit of our race" finds more consolation in poetry than it ever did. But again, the naiveté of his hopes does not affect the validity of his critical concept. If attitudes and behaviour can be altered by the style-idea complex of great poetry, and if it is agreed that the change is for the better, undoubtedly poetry should be judged by its ability to effect the change. Even Eliot in his posture of disinterested critic admitted that poetry had something to do with morals, religion, and politics.

Since Leavis had the first word in this discussion of Arnold's view of style and content, he will also have the last. I include this statement to emphasize again that
Arnold's concept of poetry as an organic whole of form and idea is critically useful, even though the social and religious functions he hooked onto the concept may be unacceptable today. To appreciate Leavis' comment, one must remember that a poetic criticism of life must conform with the "laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty". Leavis concludes his discussion "On the Study of Poetry":

Nor should it be necessary to point out that all censure passed on him for having, in calling poetry "criticism of life", produced a bad definition is beside the mark. For it should be obvious to anyone who reads the phrase in context that Arnold intends not to define poetry, but while insisting, (a main concern of this essay), that there are different degrees of importance in poetry, to remind us of the nature of the criteria by which comparative judgments are made.99

B. Eliot

"It should be obvious" is one of those phrases, although admissible even in Attic prose, that has the sole function of establishing the omniscience of the writer. "The nature of the criteria by which comparative judgments are made" does not seem obvious to most critics, least of all to T. S. Eliot. Eliot, like Arnold, emphasizes formal criteria in his earlier criticism, and, although he gradually accepts the importance of philosophical and moral criteria, the process is slow and painful. Evidence for the painfulness of the process lies in the fact that its earlier stages appeared entirely in footnotes.100 Reason for the painfulness of the process lies, I suspect, in the fact that Eliot accepts the
theological dogma of the Anglican Church. The method of thought, as discussed previously, that he went through before he accepted is an irrelevant consideration here; the fact is, once having accepted, he must agree with the Church's orthodox philosophical and moral position. Now if the Church is always right, all poets who disagree with the Church must be wrong. Moreover, if philosophical and moral ideas are literary criteria, all the dissenting poets are not only wrong, but also bad poets. If he accepted these results, Eliot would be forced to judge the Stoic Shakespeare, the Puritan Milton, and the doubting Matthew Arnold to be bad poets. Such a judgment he is not, of course, prepared to make. But on the other hand, he is, quite sensibly, not willing to admit that the ideas expressed in a poem are irrelevant to an assessment of its values. Therefore this problem involves him in a series of contradictions, qualifications and footnotes. The solution of the problem, to Eliot, is not at all obvious.

As mentioned previously, one of the objections Eliot brings to Matthew Arnold's criticism is his failure to emphasize poetic technique. It has been shown that Eliot's objection is not justified; however, it can be justified if one assumes that Eliot means something slightly different from what he says. If one assumes that Eliot means that Arnold does not analyze the poetic technique of specific passages of specific poets, his judgment is, I believe, correct. Moreover, Eliot is a formal critic more emphatically than is Arnold, mainly because
Eliot does practise this close textual analysis. Therefore, although both Arnold and Eliot are concerned with form, and emphasize formal considerations especially in their early criticism, a real difference in their critical methods exists in this area. It is even possible to contend, as Wellek does, that the most valuable part of Eliot's criticism lies in his perceptive technical analysis. If this contention is correct, the value of T. S. Eliot's criticism must, since Arnold practised so little technical analysis, be different from the value of Arnold's criticism. However, even if one does place so high a value on his analysis, (which I do not), Eliot certainly uses other methods as well; and this thesis, in comparing his work with Arnold's, intends to consider all his criticism, and not only those parts that might be considered most valuable.

1. Eliot as Formal Critic

Because Eliot's textual analysis is an important aspect of his criticism, it will be dealt with in some detail. Eliot's concern with form is a logical outgrowth of his concept of the poem as an observable object; his emphasis on the text itself, and professed unwillingness to call on extraneous data is also a concomitant of his critical principle, to be discussed later, of disinterestedness. Since Arnold shared Eliot's desire to keep his eye on the object and achieve disinterestedness, it is odd that he too did not emphasize textual analysis. No doubt Eliot's strong technical interest in his own poetic practice is the factor that makes the difference. Nearly all
his early essays, the *Sacred Wood*, the *Selected Essays*, and also his later introductions to the poems of Kipling and Marianne Moore, are built around quotations from the text. In the Johnsonian tradition, the neglect of which he regrets, Eliot discusses such matters as freedom or metrics, pattern of rhyme, suitability of image, and precision of word. It is because he can enjoy the elegant mastery of poetic technique that Eliot admires the "poetry of the surface" of Dryden and Ben Jonson. He admits that such poetry lacks the "tentacular roots" reaching below the surface, roots that most of us have come, (partly because of Matthew Arnold's pronouncement that poetry is composed in the soul), to expect of great poetry. However, he denies that such tentacular roots are an essential requirement of poetry, and prefers to define poetry in terms of technique.

Because he defines poetry in these terms, he can easily make the distinction between poetry and prose. He says in an early essay,

> The distinction between poetry and prose must be a technical distinction; and the future refinement of both poetry and prose can only draw the distinction more clearly....whatever one writes must be definitely and by inner necessity one or the other. 102

In other words, poetry and prose must be distinguished, not by the material, or supposed composition in wits or soul, but by the poetic form. In the same essay, he goes on to give an example:
We admire Pope because he has sometimes given impeccable and inevitable verse form to the "prosaic", and so has made, (whatever the nineteenth century may have said), permanent poetry.103

However, he refutes this implied identification of verse and poetry in a much later essay on Kipling. Here he admits that Kipling's verse form is "capable and varied", and even judges it to be "great verse", but refuses to give most of it the title of poetry because it lacks intensity. Poetry, then, must apparently be written in verse form and be intense. But what is intensity? Eliot gives a clue in his description of Kipling's poetry as propaganda. He says that, while most poets intend their poems simple to be, "for Kipling the poem is something which is intended to act, and for the most part his poems are intended to elicit the same response in all readers, and only the response which they can make in common."104 He goes on to explain that most of Kipling's verse has too "intellectual" a meaning to be poetry, for poetry must make a sub-conscious appeal through its "music". This music, one finds out elsewhere,105 is created by the patterning of both sound and meaning, and this pattern may also be judged as a technique. Therefore, although even "poetry of the surface" must have a subconscious level before it can be poetry, nevertheless the critic can analyze and judge technically the means by which the subconscious response is produced. Despite a close brush with the subconscious mind, Eliot is still a formal critic.
Since Eliot thinks that poetry is to be judged by its form, it is not surprising to find that he takes great interest in the language of poetry. One of the postulates that develops out of his interest is the duty of the poet to develop language by transmuting the actual spoken language into poetry. As he states in the "Social Function of Poetry", "Literature must be judged by language; it is the duty of the poet to develop language, and this is one's own language as spoken in one's own time". An instance of his judgment by language is his praise of Donne because Donne "established a natural conversational diction instead of a conventional one." Moreover, he requires poets to accept another duty to language: precision. As might be expected from a critic, who, like Arnold, wants the poet to keep his eye on the object, he dislikes the kind of poetic language that, like Swinburne's "dissociate s from things, assuming an independent existence". He thinks that poetic language must be precise because it should be representing precise visual or auditory images. In what seems to be an embryonic statement of his theory of the objective correlative, he says, "Language in a healthy state presents the object, is so close to the object, that the two are identified." For this reason he admires the language of Dante that develops an allegory, not as a series of moral abstractions, but as a series of concrete visual images. For the same reason, Eliot criticizes Milton, in the first of his two essays on the poet, for his visual vagueness, abstractions, and sacrifice of precision for the sake of grandeur of movement.
Arnold, although he too more than once demanded precision of language in poetry, and although he crusaded for economy of language in prose, did not develop such detailed theories of poetic language, nor did he make much use of such theories in his practical criticism of poetry.

Finally, one can contend that Eliot is essentially a formal critic because he explicitly denies that the critic should be concerned with the moral function of literature. His definition of poetry as a "superior amusement" has already been cited, as has his preference for the disinterested critic, whose disinterestedness apparently implies freedom from moral bias. One of Eliot's essays on Arnold, entitled "Arnold and Pater" is evidence for this interpretation of disinterestedness; he argues that concern with the moral function of art can, by coming between the critic and the object, destroy his disinterested attitude.

2. Eliot as Philosophical Critic

This disinterested approach, this technical, formal approach, seems to serve Eliot well until he tries to explain, in his essay on Dante in the Sacred Wood, why he prefers Dante over all other poets. It is at this point he breaks out into a rash of footnotes. He then summarizes the results of the struggle in the 1928 "Preface" to the Sacred Wood:

If I ask myself...why I prefer the poetry of Dante to that of Shakespeare, I should have to say, because it seems to me to illustrate a saner attitude toward the mystery of life.
One wonders if he is beginning to adopt Arnold's moral criterion for poetry. It is possible to demonstrate that he is.

Like Arnold, Eliot objects to the poet wasting his time with abstract philosophy. Abstract philosophy is simply not the poet's business, "for the business of a poet is to express the culture in which he lives, and to which he belongs, not to express aspiration towards one which is not yet incarnate." Not only does the poet-philosopher damage his poetry by maintaining his schizophrenia, but also he develops a bad, because provincial, philosophy. Just as Arnold thought the philosophy of Wordsworth, when systematized, was provincial, so does Eliot charge Goethe, Blake and Yeats with provinciality. Instead he prefers Dante, whose formal philosophy, as adopted uncritically from Aquinas, was in the main stream of western European development. As Matthew Arnold would put it, the poet cannot be a "damned depth-hunter"; he must "adopt some idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the multitudinousness of the world", and it were best if he adopted the traditional philosophy of his own culture.

However, for the critic, it is not enough to praise the poet because the poet has chosen his contemporary traditional philosophy. Eliot feels that the critic must judge the philosophy as philosophy before he can definitively judge the poetry. In writing of the major productions of Dante and Shakespeare he says, "But it must affect our vision of them and the use we
make of them, the fact that Dante, for instance, had behind him an Aquinas, and Shakespeare behind him a Seneca."

Nevertheless, he finds it very difficult to develop a method of judging the philosophy of a poem. Sometimes he despairs of ever finding a method, and retreats back to his position as formal critic. He calls his judgment "personal prejudice":

Now it is only a personal prejudice of mine that I prefer poetry with a clear philosophical pattern, if it has the other pattern as well, to poetry like Shakespeare's. But the preference means merely a satisfaction of more of my own needs, not a judgment of superiority or even a statement that I enjoy it more as poetry.

At other times he connects philosophy with structure and states that "the structure is essential to the poetic beauty of the parts." Presumably, then, the only philosophy that Eliot, as literary critic, would disapprove under this rule would be a philosophy unsuitable for poetic structure. I find it difficult to understand why any philosophy is intrinsically unsuited to act as a poetic structure. Prometheus Unbound may be an amorphous poem that celebrates the free spirit of mankind, but that is not to say that all poems that celebrate the free spirit of mankind must be amorphous. Moreover, poetry can certainly depend more on devices other than philosophy to consolidate its structure, as Paradise Lost proves with such virtuosity. I cannot think that Eliot honestly believes he is judging structure when he is judging philosophy; he is merely trying again to find his way back to formal criticism. A few years later he gives up the attempt. In the essay,
"Arnold and Pater", he makes this statement:

The theory of art for art's sake is still valid in so far as it can be taken as an exhortation to the artist to stick to his job; it never was and never can be valid for the spectator, reader, or auditor.116

Or, presumably, for the critic. Inevitably, the critic must make value judgments beyond technical criticism, and these value judgments must sometimes be philosophical, and sometimes moral judgments. Later, in the *Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, he goes on to affirm the impossibility of putting out of one's mind one's own passionate beliefs. Neither can one avoid being offended by contrary beliefs. Since it is impossible to edit out these distasteful ideas without reducing the poem to a "mere unrelated heap of charming stanzas, the debris of poetry",117 Eliot is again forced to the conclusion that there is no such thing as *pure* poetic enjoyment.

He is, however, reluctant to judge between the poets he does not find distasteful on any basis but that of personal preference. At this point, the ideas in a poem can act only as negative criteria. Adopting a tentative position, he says,

When the doctrine, theory, belief, or "view of life" presented in the poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he can accept or deny, approve or deprecate.118

One might expect to find this a temporary, as well as a tentative
position, for it is difficult to see how one could accept a theory that was "coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience", and yet "deny" or "deprecate" it. Surely today one would be pleased to find even one theory to accept as "coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience".

It is not surprising, then, to observe Eliot judging literature more and more by philosophical and moral criteria, criteria he calls orthodox. He finds Shelley distasteful for his revolutionary ethics and atheism, and Byron admirable for his "sense of damnation". One begins to see why Eliot had been hesitant to apply the criterion of orthodoxy. Blake, Wordsworth, and Yeats he criticizes only for the provinciality of their philosophy, and Kipling he calls a pagan, but praises him for being at least anti-materialist. On the other hand, he completely rejects the vague romanticism and "gem-like flame" ethics of Swinburne, Pater, Morris, and Rossetti; the Georgians he lumps together and condemns for their even vaguer sentimentalism. He deals with the moderns in one collection of lectures, *After Strange Gods*, finds all the major figures unorthodox, and concludes with a plea to transform literature into a handmaiden of religion.

3. Synthesis

At this point, surely, everyone will agree that Eliot could not possibly be using orthodoxy as a literary criterion. No literary critic could adopt a criterion that, almost
automatically, rejected all the major literary productions of the last one hundred years. Moreover, what is one to make of the essay, the "Frontiers of Criticism", published in 1956, in which Eliot denies that literature can be judged by any systematic philosophical or moral system? In other words, accepting this description of Eliot gradually developing into a literary critic with orthodox standards involves ascribing remarkable stupidity to a man widely regarded as the most perceptive critic of the day. It also involves attributing to him, at the age of sixty-eight, a return to the principles of his youth. Yet this is what at least one eminent critic, and, I believe, most casual readers of Eliot are prepared to accept. The facts are true, but the theory of consistent development is false. It is, I think, more sensible to attribute to Eliot, when he is faced with an insoluble problem, Matthew Arnold's manoeuver of controlled oscillation. Like Arnold, Eliot is sometimes not critic, but advocate, but also, like Arnold he remembers again what it means to be a critic.

If one accepts Eliot's application of orthodoxy to literature as an extra-literary excursion, as an experiment in Anglo-Catholic advocacy, Eliot's critical position appears much more sane. It also appears similar to Matthew Arnold's critical position with Arnold's extreme pole—poetry as a replacement for religion—cut off. The explanation for the difference, however, lies in a different conception of the nature of faith; and, as previously explained, a discussion of
this conception lies beyond the scope of a literary thesis. Therefore I will try to describe Eliot's opinions on the relationship of form and idea in literature, to point out frequent similarities to Arnold's opinions, while relegating the religious advocacy of both critics to an extra-literary limbo.

Eliot describes his method himself. Like Arnold, he tries to keep systematic philosophy and theology separate from poetry. The difference lies in Arnold's attempt to find the feeling of faith in poetry, and Eliot's disavowal of the attempt. Of his effort to keep poetry separate, he says,

The poet himself, who perhaps knows more about his own inspiration than a psycho-analyst does, is now allowed to reply that poetry is poetry, and not science or religion—unless he or some of his mistaken friends produce a theory that Poetry is Pure Poetry, Pure Poetry turning out to be something else than poetry and thereby securing respect.121

Therefore he tends to judge poetry on technical grounds. Moreover, like Arnold, he believes that systematic philosophy should not form the subject-matter of poetry. He prefers Dante's use of philosophy as the framework, the "structure" of his poem, to Lucretius' use of it as subject-matter or "texture". On the other hand, he quotes his favorite philosopher, Bradley, to find an analogy to his attitude on meaning or message in poetry. Bradley says, "...metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct; but to find these reasons is no less an instinct."122 Eliot
says the same is true of our effort to find meaning or message in poetry; the meaning or message is a bad approximation of the poetry, and it should certainly not be a systematic philosophy, but nevertheless we instinctively try to formulate as rational a meaning as possible. Eliot's criticism, like Arnold's alternates between attempts to describe pure poetry, (not in the sense of Eliot's "mistaken friends"), and attempts, by finding a moral to the story, to treat poetry as a criticism of life.

He therefore tries to keep separate two sets of criteria, one for the "genuineness" of poetry, and the other for its "greatness". The critic can judge the genuineness of poetry by those technical means explained in the discussion of Eliot as a technical critic. It is this aspect of poetry that Eliot is talking about when he mentions "art qua art", and "poetry as poetry". But the "greatness" of poetry demands greatness of meaning, message and moral, a greatness the individual critic cannot pretend to judge definitively. He can judge a poem great in his personal opinion, but presumably only the opinions of generations of common readers can establish a poem's greatness. For this reason he refuses to pronounce on the value of modern poetry:

Just as every attempt to define modern poetry must be regarded as a blackboard exercise, to be erased as soon as completed, so every attempt to appraise the value of modern poetry is meaningless.123

One should remember this statement when reading After Strange Gods,
and realize that in this book Eliot is not appraising the value of modern literature, but is acting as an apologist for traditional religion.

He also distinguishes between the "thought of the poet" and "poetic thought". The thought of the poet is the poet's accepted philosophic and moral system, his framework, the Aquinas of Dante and the Seneca of Shakespeare. Presumably it is only this kind of thought that even the apologist could judge by the criterion of orthodoxy. However, the office of the poet is not to express this philosophy in didactic verse, nor yet, as pointed out previously, to make up a new philosophy of his own, but to transform his philosophic thought into poetic thought. This poetic thought is Shakespeare's "almost frightening comprehension"; it is Coleridge's "escape from systematic thought" and Shelley's "recurrent insights"; it arises from Keats' attitude toward theory as "Irrelevant to his interests and alien to his mind".

Another example is Matthew Arnold's "criticism of life", a criticism, based, not upon the thought of the poet, but upon poetic thought.

The two categories are not, of course, mutually exclusive; a poet can think as well as produce poetic thoughts. Writing of the Metaphysicals, Eliot says:

The possible interests of a poet are unlimited; the more intelligent he is the better; the more intelligent he is the more likely he is to have
interests; our only condition is that he turn them into poetry and not merely meditate on them poetically.\textsuperscript{127}

This is precisely the condition Arnold laid down to Clough.\textsuperscript{128}

Moreover, it is clear that poetic thought is at least partially outside the field the orthodox standard is competent to judge, even when the critic turns advocate. The previously quoted passage continues:

A philosophical theory which has entered into poetry /that is, has been transformed into poetic thought/ is established, for its truth and falsity in one sense cease to matter and its truth in another sense is proved.\textsuperscript{129}

Even in a much later essay, Eliot maintains the same point. There is such a thing as "aesthetic sanction...the partial justification of...views of life by the art to which they give rise".\textsuperscript{130} It is only after he has admitted the possibility of aesthetic sanction that he allows an opinion for the advocate and says, "Yet we can hardly doubt that the 'truest' philosophy is the best material for the greatest poet".\textsuperscript{131} Even this opinion is not out of harmony with Matthew Arnold's search for the best that has been thought and said in the world; the only difference is Eliot's assurance that he has found the "truest" philosophy. Arnold was still looking for it.

Although Eliot's investigations into the religious orthodoxy of literature must be placed outside the bounds of literary criticism, nevertheless the bounds within which his
literary criticism operates are still very wide. His study of the music of poetry is not only a study of sounds, but of "...a musical pattern of sounds and a musical pattern of secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and these two patterns are indissoluble and one". Moreover, judgment of the pattern cannot be dissociated from social and moral awareness, since it is primarily a device for "controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history". Eliot again expresses the opinion that form and idea are inextricably involved in the collection entitled the Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism. In the essay on Dryden, he criticizes Dryden and the early eighteenth century critics for focusing too much attention on form, and adopting no attitude toward what the poet had to say. A critic taking such a one-sided position, says Eliot, cannot describe the whole complex of poetry. Again, in the essay on Wordsworth and Coleridge, he shows that their concern with the "language of men" as the basis of poetic form was a corollary of their concern with the equalitarian social ideas of the day. The form cannot be explained without the idea, nor the idea, as expressed in poetry, without the form. Eliot approves of Dryden's word "invention" to describe the mental process by which thought, imagination, and form are fused. Matthew Arnold had another word for the same process; the "imaginative reason".

Finally, using the Arnoldian method of tentative
hypothesis, Eliot does sometimes find a way out of his
dilemma. That is, he even manages to reconcile his admiration
for unorthodox poetry with his preference for orthodoxy.
Arnold had to effect this reconciliation only to the extent
that he had to reconcile the modern spirit with tradition, but
the method, the implicit posing of the question, "What is the
use of it all?" is typically Arnold. Eliot concludes the
essay, significantly titled, "Poetry and Propaganda", with the
following compromise:

And we must remember that part of the use of
poetry for human beings is similar to their use
for philosophy. When we study philosophy as a
humane discipline we do not do so merely in
order to pick out one which we shall adopt as
"true", or either to confect a philosophy of
our own out of all philosophies.... Only by
the exercise of understanding without believing,
so far as that is possible, can we come in full
consciousness to some point where we believe
and understand.134
A. Arnold

Throughout the thesis thus far, the word "disinterestedness" has been used without explanation. This procedure is justified, I think, because Matthew Arnold's emphasis on this quality of a good critic has made the word current in modern English. However, to investigate another ambivalence in Arnold's thought, his coexistent disinterestedness and advocacy, a closer examination of its meaning is required. Certainly Arnold tried to be the disinterested critic, and it is possible to demonstrate that he succeeded.

1. Arnold as Disinterested Critic

In one of his earlier works of criticism, "Last Words on Homer", Arnold describes the disinterested critic:

The critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible and elastic spirit imaginable; he should be, indeed, the "ondoyant et divers" the undulating and diverse being of Montaigne.\textsuperscript{135}

He thought the undulating and diverse critic to be preferable to the critic with a strong individual personality because he
believed that "the great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and let humanity decide".\(^{136}\) In other words, the purpose of the critic is not to impose his judgment on the reader, but to supply common readers with material so that they can judge for themselves. Arnold quoted Amiel with complete approval:

The true critic supplies all the world with a basis. He represents the public judgment; that is to say, the public reason, the touchstone, the scales, the crucible, which tests the merit of each man and the merit of each work.\(^{137}\)

Moreover, Arnold recommended not only that the individual critic should be disinterested, but also that the literary review should be "an organ for the free play of the mind".\(^{138}\) He deplored the tendency of periodicals to become spokesmen for this or that party or interest, and set up the ideal of a literary review "having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world".\(^{139}\)

Neither was the concept of disinterestedness a theoretical dream; Arnold was able to detect its functioning or malfunctioning in others, and to practise it himself. E. K. Brown, by no means entirely sympathetic to Arnold, says of Essays in Criticism, First Series:

By the kind of personages he recommends to his readers, as by the kind that he censures in his calculated asides, Arnold is speaking throughout the volume for the full excellence of disinterestedness.\(^{140}\)
Arnold also knew what disinterestedness is not. He denied any validity to the "personal estimate" that is based on individual preferences, and doubted the value of the "historical estimate". He distrusted the kind of historical investigation that declared medieval French romans to be great literature because they were the best literature of their time. However, he did admit that historical criticism could be valuable if it helps us to appreciate more the true classic, "enabling us to have a clearer sense of what is truly excellent". Now although the personal estimate is never valid, it is sometimes helpful because it may point up idiosyncracies of the writer being criticized. So also can historical criticism be helpful if it makes the work more enjoyable. But for systematic criticism, Arnold had no sympathy; such judgment is "the most worthless of all". He continued,

...the systematic judgment is altogether unprofitable. Its author has not really his eye upon the professed object of his criticism at all, but upon something else which he wants to prove by means of that object.... All that he tells us is that he is no genuine critic, but a man with a system, an advocate.

Perhaps it is because Arnold disliked historical and systematic criticism that Tillotson can accuse him to having no historical sense. However, Tillotson goes on to say something that Arnold would consider more important, that he had a sense of his own time. Since Arnold considered that a sense of his own time is just what a disinterested critic should possess, one may take Tillotson's remark as supporting
the contention that Arnold actually was a disinterested critic. Tillotson describes his criticism as follows:

\[\text{He tells the contemporary truth as a barometer does. Or rather, as a seasoned sailor, since for the detection of these conditions of opinion there are no mechanical shortcuts, the weather-wise work by instinct.}^\text{143}\]

However, Arnold's sensitive instinct is not his only claim to being a disinterested critic. As was pointed out in a previous chapter, Arnold insisted upon literary standards largely because they were a bulwark against the kind of personal and national idiosyncrasy he called provinciality. This provinciality is, of course, incompatible with disinterestedness. Moreover, he did not simply accept standards, but rather employed the great works of European literature, from the ancient classics to George Sand, as comparative standards for English works. The standard was not rigid, but the sum of the best that has been known and thought in the world; and, Arnold continued, "to get anywhere near this standard, every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own...."^\text{144} Now whether Arnold could be said to "possess" Greek, Latin, French and German literature is a problem for the specialist, but certainly he was widely read in those languages, and was familiar with Italian as well. Moreover, like Eliot, he refused to judge contemporary literature, partly because he did not have enough comparative data. As he commented on another critic's Guide to English Literature, "No man can
trust himself to speak of his own contemporaries with the same sureness of judgment and the same proportion as of times and men gone by." Arnold, then, by another of his own criteria, was a disinterested critic.

2. Arnold as Advocate

Despite the plausibility of this description of him as the disinterested critic, Tillotson maintains that Arnold was, in Arnold's own words, both critic and advocate, and E. K. Brown takes a whole book documenting Arnold's failure to achieve disinterestedness. It is also possible to document the failure. Eliot, as one might expect, is convinced that Arnold was not critic, but advocate; he says in his introduction to the *Sacred Wood*, "...Arnold was not occupied so much in establishing a criticism as in attacking the uncritical." Brown agrees, describing *Essays in Criticism*, as not literary, but disguised social criticism, disguised because Arnold, as good propagandist, wanted to hide his social purpose. Finally, Tillotson cites Arnold's lack of historical perspective, not, as I have done, as evidence for Arnold's disinterestedness, but as evidence for Arnold's desire to write contemporary propaganda.

Arnold's literary criticism certainly provides evidence for these critics' viewpoint. The "Preface" to the 1853 *Poems* was written, not by a disinterested critic, but by a critic interested in persuading young writers wallowing in
romanticism to return to classical ideals. The Lectures on Celtic Literature was a plea, not essentially for the understanding of Celtic literature, but for the understanding of the contemporary Welsh and Irish. It was written to redress a balance. Arnold thought the English too self-satisfied with their "strong sense and sturdy morality", and suggested they might learn something from the lightness and flexibility of the Celts. Essays in Criticism, First Series continued the same theme, pointing out the virtues of French and German attitudes to literature and society to the provincial British Philistine.

In his later criticism, Arnold was not advocating quite the same thing, but still he was advocate. With the increasing influence of the "Goddess Lubricity," not only in the French, but also in the English theater and letters, Arnold proceeded to redress the balance on the other side. "Strictness of conscience" replaced "spontenity of consciousness"149 as the recommended ideal. Instead of choosing subjects that illustrated the attractiveness of a flexible sensibility, Arnold chose subjects like Keats and Shelley who illustrated certain moral lessons. In his later years, Arnold turned on his master, Sainte-Beuve, and criticized him for stopping short at disinterested curiosity, and avoiding the larger moral application of his knowledge.

In other words, Arnold was not a disinterested critic;
rather, he was interested in disinterestedness. He advocated disinterestedness when that side of the balance was too light, but found another quality to advocate when the job was done. Moreover, he was never simply engaged on a disinterested search for the best that has been known and thought in the world, but on a campaign to make the best, as he saw it, prevail. Because he was primarily an instructor, a missionary, an advocate, he kept his eye on the audience and not on the object; thus he never achieved his aim of disinterestedness.

3. Synthesis

Both these arguments, the one supporting Arnold as critic, the other criticizing Arnold as advocate, are based on the premise of medieval rationalism, that general ideas described by words have an objective existence. Both arguments presuppose that a quality called disinterestedness absolutely exists. Unless one is a latter-day medieval rationalist, the presupposition is nonsense. Certainly Arnold did not believe in the absolute existence of disinterestedness, but thought of it as a relative idea. As he explained in the "Function of Criticism at the Present Time",

It is the business of the critical power...in all branches of knowledge...to see the object as it really is.... It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison to that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail.150

It is obvious that the critic’s ideas must necessarily be a
a function of the social and intellectual milieu of his
times. It is idle to accuse the critic of lacking in
disinterestedness because his society influences his ideas,
when such influence is the necessary prerequisite of his having
any ideas at all. It is equally idle to accuse the critic of
trying to influence his society, when, again, such influence
is the inevitable result of his writing. One might just as
well make it perfectly clear what influence one would like to
have. Again, it is a question, in Eliot's terms, of establishing
a fixity that limits the flux. The critic must be disinterestedly
curious and range over as wide a field of knowledge as possible,
until he finds an idea worthy of being labelled "the best". He
must then keep this hypothetical ideal before his own eyes
and before his reader's eyes at all times, both because it
is a standard of comparison, and because it is the best. But
the disinterested critic searches on for another "best",
another best relative to the state of the ever-changing society.
Since the society is always changing, the critic must sooner
or later alter his hypothetical ideal, his idea of the best.
Therefore the critic's disinterestedness cannot be judged by
his consistency, or inconsistency, his aloofness from or
involvement in his society. It can only be judged by the
usefulness of the hypothetical ideal that results from the
disinterested search. Perhaps it was that the moral earnestness
and religious reflectiveness of the later Arnold were the "best"
that could be offered to the generation that had absorbed John
Stuart Mill.
There are two other approaches to the problem of Arnold's disinterestedness and advocacy, but one of them points in the direction of the conclusion already drawn. It is possible to regard disinterestedness and advocacy as polar opposites. That is, true to the long critical tradition, Arnold saw it was the critic's duty both to clarify and to instruct; to clarify and let the reader judge for himself, the critic had to be disinterested, but to instruct, the critic had to be a propagandist. But these two functions are not only opposites that interfere with each other, they are also polar opposites that are involved with and imply each other. It is impossible to clarify even the simplest concept unless one adopts some sort of attitude towards it, (even disinterestedness is an adopted attitude); but similarly, it is impossible to instruct unless one clarifies what is being taught. Therefore Arnold did both, but tried to do one at a time, thus solving the problem by means of a controlled oscillation. However, awareness of polar opposites suggests that synthesis is possible, and Arnold achieved that synthesis in his famous definition of the function of criticism as "as disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world". But this synthesis also involves the hypothetical ideal dealt with previously; therefore this theoretical approach to Arnold's criticism leads to the same conclusion as the first.

The final approach lets me conclude this section on a
practical note. Tillotson\textsuperscript{152} reminds us that no matter how interested Arnold became in practical morality, he was more disinterested than most of his audience. Again, Arnold did not regard disinterestedness as some kind of mystic entity, but only as freedom from personal crochets and prejudices, freedom from demands of party and interest, and freedom from provinciality. This kind of disinterestedness was attainable and practical. Tillotson summarizes:

Arnold meant merely that practical ends at that time and in this island would best be served by calling attention to something, /the virtue of disinterestedness/, which the armies clashing by night had, since they were ignorant armies, lost sight of, and which, when remembered, would affect the fight.\textsuperscript{153}

I do not think this is "merely" what Arnold meant; I think he meant what has been set out in the several paragraphs preceding. However, it is certainly part of what he meant. As Herodotus would say, the reader is free to choose whichever explanation he thinks best.

B. Eliot

T. S. Eliot's disinterestedness, his advocacy, and the relationship between the two, are all so similar to Arnold's positions that it is easy even to misrepresent them in exactly the same way. Eliot, like Arnold, can be described as a disinterested critic, as an interested propagandist, or, more accurately, as a perceptive critic who inevitably partakes of the nature of both. Eliot will be revealed first as a
disinterested critic. The process may seem somewhat like unmasking the counterfeit madman in the *Changeling* and revealing him to be a murderer, when really his only crime is the seduction of the mad-house keeper's wife. However, both procedures have their value, for they help reveal the truth in the end.

1. Eliot as Disinterested Critic

Eliot's declaration of disinterestedness is very similar to that of Matthew Arnold. Describing the perfect critic, he states, "a literary critic should have no emotions except those immediately provoked by a work of art." In the same essay, he continues the theme, using both Arnold's diction and Arnold's ideas:

> The end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all accidents of personal emotion are removed; thus we aim to see the object as it really is and find a meaning for the words of Arnold.

Since the critic's function is to further this aim, he must not interpose his own feelings between the reader and the work of art. Therefore the critic who betrays his repressed creative wish in his critical essays is unsatisfactory, as is the critic who, by writing in indefinite abstractions, betrays awareness of only his own emotions. Neither of these critics possesses the quality both Eliot and Arnold demand, "free intelligence". If the critic applies free intelligence in his criticism, he should be able to induce the same quality in the reader of
literature. For example, Eliot concludes the introduction to his selection of Kipling's verse with the hope that "if it assists the reader to approach Kipling's verse with a fresh mind, and to regard it in a new light, and to read it as if for the first time, it will have served its purpose".156

Eliot also believes, with Arnold, that the policy of a literary review should be one of disinterestedness. Moreover, unlike Arnold, Eliot had the opportunity of putting the policy into effect, an opportunity readers of Criterion would agree was not lost. On the final pages of the first issue of Criterion, Eliot declares:

To maintain the autonomy, and the disinterestedness, of every human activity, and to perceive it in relation to every other, requires a considerable discipline. It is the function of a literary review to maintain the autonomy and disinterestedness of literature and at the same time to exhibit the relations of literature—not to "life" as something contrasted to literature, but to all other activities, which, together with literature, are the components of life.157

The disinterestedness of the critic, (and of the literary review), has a positive as well as a negative aspect. Not only must the critic remove his own peculiar emotions and prejudices before he can contemplate the object, but also he must trust the common reader to do the same thing. He must not judge for him, but let him judge for himself. As has been demonstrated, Eliot's method of quotation in alto-relievo puts just that burden of judgment upon the reader. Eliot's theory here agrees with his practice, and with Arnold's theory that
the critic should keep himself out of the way. Again describing the perfect critic, Eliot says, "...in matters of great importance, the critic must not coerce, and he must not make judgments of worse or better. He must simply elucidate." But judgment is not the principal aim of the reader, any more than it should be the main aim of the critic; only the scholar has a right to judge. The reader's aim is, of course, enjoyment; since the critic is there to help the reader, he must then help the reader to enjoy literature. Eliot summarizes:

The scholar can teach us where we should bestow our admiration and respect; the practitioner, the poet-critic, should be able, when he is the right poet talking about the right poet, to make an old masterpiece actual, give it contemporary importance, and persuade his audience that it is interesting, exciting, enjoyable, and active.

As was pointed out in the discussion of Arnold, however, helping the reader to enjoy a work of art involves two inter-related processes: he cannot enjoy literature unless he also understands it. Eliot agrees by stating, "The critic accordingly is a literary critic if his primary interest, in writing criticism, is to help his readers to understand and enjoy." Although Eliot believes that the critic must let the reader judge for himself, he cannot think that the common reader's judgment, even over a period of time, will necessarily be correct. As he says, the "reason is that time, alas, does
not necessarily bring detachment. It may merely substitute for a set of prejudices favorable to the poet, another set unfavorable to him. However, Eliot agrees that no critic can presume entirely to ignore the common judgment, as he found out when he tried to denigrate Milton. Moreover, even if judgment does not approach infallibility with time, nevertheless the judgment of time is indicative. For this reason, among others already discussed, Eliot finds judgment of contemporary literature without the useful indicator of time, an impossible task.

However, it is possible for the disinterested critic, when dealing with literature of another time, to cancel out many of the prejudices both favorable and unfavorable to the poet, by increasing his, and the reader's historical knowledge. Eliot is not recommending that the critic fall into the error of making an "historical estimate," but rather that he should bring to bear relevant historical information that will improve the understanding, and thereby increase the enjoyment of literature. Unlike Arnold, who gave only a mild sanction to the procedure, Eliot actually does use the helpful results of scholarly historical research in his criticism. It is this method that leads John Crowe Ransom to describe Eliot, misleadingly, but not inaccurately, as an historical critic.

Again, however, such a description must not encourage us to think of Eliot as a dispenser of historical estimates, for Eliot, as disinterested critic, is just as suspicious of
critics who keep their eye on the system and not on the object as was Matthew Arnold. He says of these systematic critics:

Critics are often interested—but not quite in the nominal subject, often in something a little beside the point; they are often learned—but not quite to the point either. 163

In various essays, he describes the systems that can lead critics off "a little beside the point". One of these systems, related to the misapplied creative urge previously mentioned, is the kind of systematic romanticism represented by George Wyndham. It is a curiosity, "not to penetrate the real world, but to complete the varied features of the world he made for himself". 164 Another fallacious system is that represented by the Road to Xanadu, that attempts to explain a work of art by its origins. Eliot agrees that the attempt is fascinating, but insists that it is not criticism. Besides, he says, one of them is quite enough. Another systematic approach to literature that Eliot disallows is that which treats a work as if it were a tangled ball of twine to be unravelled. Disentangling and tracing themes in Finnegans Wake may be an amusing puzzle, but it is not criticism. Moreover, it is misleading, because it suggests to the reader that aesthetic pleasure is the same as the pleasure one gets from solving an acrostic.

Even the "new" critics, who interpret literature with their eyes on the object, are systematic critics, for
they systematically keep their eyes on the object. The interpretations they produce, are, indeed interpretations of the work as an observable object, but such interpretations, because they are not helpful, are not required of the disinterested critic. After being subjected to the eight levels of meaning in, for instance, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", one reads Eliot's words with relief. He concludes, "I suspect, in fact, that a good deal of the value of an interpretation is - that it should be my own interpretation."165

Such a statement should not lead us to think that Eliot approaches a poem with no guidance at all. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, Eliot keeps in mind certain flexible standards founded on the tradition of European literature and on the classics. Eliot's wide and semi-popular reputation as a reader of obscure works in numerous languages helps support the contention that at least his standards are based on an extensive knowledge of the tradition. A glance at the titles of his Selected Essays points in the same direction. But however one judges his literary background, it must be admitted that Eliot uses this background in the same way as Arnold does, as a prerequisite to disinterestedness, As he makes quite clear in his "What is a Classic?", the only way to avoid provincial gaucherie and the personal estimate is through a knowledge of the main stream of European literature. This path to disinterestedness is also, of course, Matthew Arnold's.
Disinterestedness presupposes another quality, a quality that even his unsympathetic critics have granted to Arnold: critical tact. Not only does Eliot possess this critical tact himself, but also he recognizes and admires it in others. For example, after dismissing Coleridge's experiment in basing aesthetics on a metaphysical foundation, he says of Coleridge's practical criticism, "...what is best in his criticism seems to come from his own delicacy and subtlety of insight as he reflected upon his own experience of writing poetry". Eliot's own tact may or may not have been developed in his own experience of writing poetry, but certainly he also possesses that "subtlety of insight" he admires in Coleridge. Examples are inadequate to prove any such contention, but it seems fairly well agreed that the revival of interest in Donne and the Metaphysicals, and in the Jacobean tragedians can be attributed at least partially to Eliot. Since his reputation as a critic has survived despite the scathing attacks on his critical principles, some delicate sensibility must be obvious to the common reader. It is on the value of Eliot's critical tact that Wellek and I for once agree, although for entirely different reasons. Wellek concludes his extensive analysis of Eliot's criticism by declaring, in effect, that Eliot, as disinterested critic, is the critic we want:

Eliot is a much more satisfactory critic when he forgets about sincerity, the mare's nest of 'belief', and the whole question of the antecedents of the work of art in the mind of the poet and
turns his attention resolutely to the work of art itself as a describable object, a symbolic world which is amenable to analysis and judgment.\textsuperscript{167}

That is, I agree with Wellek if he is not, in this passage, attempting to turn Eliot into a new critic who \textit{systematically} keeps his eye on the object. As Eliot has made quite clear, even the disinterested critic, and especially the disinterested critic, must take his eye off the object long enough to be aware of the world of literature and reality around him.

2. Eliot as Advocate

The trouble arises, of course, as soon as he takes his eyes off the object, and lets them light again on the "mare's nest of belief," and on other mare's nests as well. It is easy to catch Eliot with his eye off the object, and thus to describe him, with Arnold, as not critic, but advocate. But where Arnold advocated humanism, Eliot takes the stand for anti-humanism, a difference most easily explained by their idea of the function of criticism at the present time. If humanism was what the inflexible English needed in the 1860's, anti-humanism, says Eliot, is what the overly-tolerant British need now. No doubt there are psychological reasons for the difference, too, but we are not going into those.

Also like Arnold, Eliot writes much of his early criticism, not for the common reader, but for the specialized improvement of contemporary poetry. Such selected interests
lead Eliot to disparage Milton because a study of his complex grand style would tend to make the student poet's style undesirably complex. On the other hand, he recommends a study of Donne because Donne succeeded in turning the real language of his day into a conversational poetic style. Although Arnold too wrote criticism for the benefit of young poets, he does neglect a theme frequently developed by Eliot. As Eliot says, he "overlooks the capital importance of criticism in the work of creation itself".168 Eliot, however, insists that the writer must be his own severest critic, not only when revising an already composed passage, but also during the actual process of "invention". He admits that much of his own formal criticism started out as "a by-product of my own private poetry workshop or a prolongation of the thinking that went into the formation of my own verse".169 Moreover the writer is forced "to ask himself such questions as 'what is poetry for?'; not merely 'what am I to say?' but rather 'how and to whom am I to say it?'"170 In other words, much creative activity is conscious or unconscious criticism. In fact, Eliot has so increased the subject-matter of criticism that one suspects he has arrived, by a more circuitous route, at Arnold's definition of poetry as a criticism of life.

Eliot is advocate in another cause, a cause he shares with Arnold. Both critics are so concerned with the social problems of their age, that they let the concern show even in their writings on literary criticism. For instance,
Eliot observes that Valery's poetic theory imposes a strain on the poet and maintains that the strain justifies the poet's discarding the theory. He then uses the observation as a jumping off point for this further remark.

...it may be maintained that the infinite elaboration of scientific discovery and invention, and of political and social machinery may reach a point at which there will be an irresistible revulsion of humanity, and a readiness to accept the most primitive hardships rather than carry any longer the burden of modern civilization. 171

The thought-association is apparent, but surely the thought itself is irrelevant in a literary essay. One can only suppose that Eliot has for a moment ceased to be a literary critic, and has let his alter-ego, the social critic, show through the mask. The social critic takes over entirely in his little essay on Marie Lloyd, a music-hall comedienne. He piously observes that by "giving expression to the life of the lower class audience", 172 and by embodying "virtues genuinely respected in private life", 173 Marie Lloyd had exhibited a "moral superiority" over other entertainers of her day. He then goes on to moralize on the emptiness and boredom of middle-class life, and the brittleness and boredom of the aristocratic world. This use of any subject matter as an excuse for a social sermon is already Arnoldian enough, but the Arnoldian strain is even more unmistakeable in the conclusion. One cannot forget that one of Arnold's favorite themes was the dullness of the Philistine, the vulgarity of
the Barbarian, the general lack of anything interesting in modern life.

Some social and moral criticism must, of course, enter into even purely literary essays. For instance, Eliot is justified in attempting to explain the pervading sadness of Baudelaire's poetry. (His explanation is, incidentally, not only an explanation for the sadness pervading much of Arnold's poetry as well as Baudelaire's, but also the explicit theme of one of his poems, the "New Sirens".) Commenting on Baudelaire, Eliot states:

Indeed, in much romantic poetry the sadness is due to the exploitation of the fact that no human relations are adequate to human desires, but also to the disbelief in any further object for human desires than that which, being human, fails to satisfy them.174

Such an observation can be made with the eye on the object. But when Eliot goes on to turn the essay into a plea for the necessity of the apprehension of Good and Evil in our moribund society, he ceases to be disinterested. When he can comment, "...it is better in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing, at least we exist",175 one can see a connection with Baudelaire, but suspects that Eliot is invading the Existentialists' ground of social criticism.

As has been pointed out previously, Eliot's criticism tends to the anti-humanist position rather than to Arnold's humanist faith. Eliot specifically rejects Arnold's "theory
of positive ethic based on human experiment, on the needs and capacities of the human as human, without reference to revelation or to supernatural authority or aid". Rather, as everybody knows, he places his faith in supernatural authority as made manifest in the Church of England. But, nevertheless, Eliot is in sympathy with Arnold's battle against the inflexibility and crudeness of the Philistine. It might be an extra-literary battle, but in his essay on Bradley, Eliot shows it in a flattering light. Borrowing a phrase from Arnold's haunting eulogy of Oxford, Eliot describes the battle as a "Lost Cause," but a cause lost only because what it is attacking is being continually superseded. Then, and this rarely happens, Eliot brings his poetic gift to the aid of his prose, and momentarily matches Arnold in defence of the Lost Cause. Unconsciously, (I suspect), linking himself with Arnold, he concludes in painful measures reminiscent of "Ash Wednesday", "...we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph". But however he phrases it, in fighting any battle, he has lost the cause of disinterestedness, and has taken up the challenge, not as critic but as advocate.

3. Synthesis

However, as with Arnold, it is more accurate to say that he is both critic and advocate, sometimes alternately, sometimes both at the same time. And, again like Arnold, he
does not take up these positions simply because he is inconsistent, but rather because the critical and persuasive faculties are organically related one to the other. Critical disinterestedness is not an absolute quality of mind to be reached, but a hypothetical limit to be approached. Eliot recommends the historical approach to literature of the past because it helps the reader towards disinterestedness, but realizes, despite honest attempts at unprejudiced understanding, that all appreciation of art rests on "particular responses to particular situations". He goes on to explain his theory of disinterestedness, which is essentially one of pushing back the undeniable limits as far as they will go:

Amongst all these demands from poetry and responses to it, there is always some permanent elements in common just as there are standards of good and bad writing independent of what anyone of us happens to like and dislike; but every effort to formulate the common element is limited by the limitations of particular men in particular places and at particular times, and these limitations become manifest in the perspective of history.

Again, Eliot is setting up a hypothetical ideal, a fixity in the midst of flux, a standard of the best that has been thought and known in the world that the mind must set up if it is to make sense of the world around it.

But it is not enough for the critic even to aim at disinterestedness; he has another duty calling him back the other way. As a scholar, he can be concerned with the masterpiece as it really is, but as a poet, or as a total individual,
he must ask, "But what is the use of the masterpiece?". This question involves him in social criticism, both contemporary and historical. As Eliot puts into the mouth of "B", one of the characters in a "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", "You can never draw the line between aesthetic criticism and moral and social criticism". He solves the problem by placing a limit at this end of the scale also, a limit placed arbitrarily, but not inflexibly:

...there is a philosophic borderline which you must not transgress too far or too often, if you wish to preserve your standing as critics, and are not prepared to present yourself as a philosopher, metaphysician, sociologist, or psychologist instead.

The critic must stay within his critical limits, for in straying outside them, he imposes on himself another discipline, another system, that prevents him continuing the disinterested search that is the other duty of the critic. If, as Eliot implies in "Experiment in Criticism", Arnold and his humanist followers, Irving Babbitt and Julien Benda, are justified in their concern with the "larger and darker problems which...lie behind the specific problems of literature" then Eliot is justified in his anti-humanist concern with the same problems. However, to remain critic, Eliot must remember his own rule, that "the task of criticism will be accordingly, not only to expand its borders, but to clarify its center, and the insistency of the latter need grows with the former".

Like Arnold, then, Eliot concludes that criticism
must have a dual function, even though the two duties seem inconsistent. Just as Arnold thought that the critic must both clarify and instruct, Eliot, in one of his Johnsonian moments, pronounces the function of criticism to be "the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste", where "elucidation" implies disinterested analysis, and where the "correction of taste" implies moral and social, as well as aesthetic instruction. As I concluded in the discussion of Arnold's dual position, these two aspects of criticism are only seemingly inconsistent; in reality, they are both essential elements in the same process. Again, it is impossible to take a disinterested approach to literature unless one has some standards, and it is impossible to have standards unless one is interested in something outside of literature. We might then retain the word "disinterested" to describe the attitude that keeps the two elements consciously separate, the attitude of Arnold and Eliot.
Popular philosophy often supposes that thinkers who see an anarchic universe also advise a hedonistic life for man. It is also presumed that perceivers of a controlled universe would also wish to control man. Actually, both types of thinkers draw the opposite conclusions. Those who see the universe as anarchic, feel the need for a strong and necessarily arbitrary control, whereas those who perceive implicit order only need to let that order as manifest in man work itself out. Even Herakleitos, (whom everyone remembers as the man who could not step twice in the same river), apparently the first philosopher to see the world as flux, recognized that man's mind must invent an order for itself. Thomas Hobbes, who had one of the most disorderly world views in the history of philosophy, wanted to impose the Leviathan on mankind. On the other hand, Spinoza, who simply knew the universe to be of one substance, imposed only absolute freedom on man's already free will. Now if Arnold's and Eliot's thought continues along its customarily ambivalent lines, we will expect them to advise both freedom and control, both change and tradition. It is possible to demonstrate, not only this ambivalence, but also the satisfactory compromise.
the two critics make between the two antithetical strands of their thought.

A. Arnold

1. Arnold as Traditional Critic

All undergraduates know Matthew Arnold as the critic who emphasized the importance of the tradition in English literature. His first published critical work, the "Preface" to the Poems of 1853, includes a plea for the preservation of this tradition:

...let us not bewilder our successors: let us transmit to them the practice of Poetry, with its boundaries and wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again perhaps, at some future time, be produced, not yet fallen into oblivion through our neglect, not yet condemned and cancelled by the influence of their eternal enemy, Caprice.

The "Literary Influence of Academies" goes on to develop the idea of centrality in tradition, a centrality that can be preserved through established literary academies. Knowing that Arnold wished to preserve standards in literature, one might, of course, expect just this development. Harvey, writing on the concept of centrality, makes this comment, "The basis of this idea is that there is a standard of the best in literature by which the literary production of a nation must be judged if it is to be great." Unless some central authority existed, Arnold saw that provinciality and even eccentricity of idea and style would prevail. On the other
hand, if a writer could refer to some central ideal, he could achieve a desirable urbanity of style, and avoid those philosophical crotchets so dear to the freedom-loving Englishman. Later, he visualized an even wider influence for the central authority, an "Amphictyonic Court of final appeal". He borrowed the idea of "real glory" from Renan, and suggested that it should be won only in the eyes of a confederation of the best European opinion. He justified his idea by saying,

The world is forwarded by having its attention fixed on the best things; and here is a tribunal, free from all suspicion of national and provincial partiality, putting a stamp on the best things and recommending them for honour and acceptance.

Again, Arnold was recommending that tradition be preserved by a central authority, in order to avoid the vulgar provincialism that, with Goethe, he called *das Gemeine*.

Arnold also saw that a literary tradition maintained by a central authority could help improve the level of "journeyman work", the ordinary prose and minor verse that makes up so great a part of everyday reading. The centralized authority could have such influence, not only directly, but also through stimulating a current of ideas that would pervade all sections of society. Arnold conceived this idea of a centralizing, anti-provincial current very early; as he wrote to Clough,
It is this—this wide and deep-spread intelligence that makes the French seem to themselves in the van of Europe... the final expression up to the present time of European opinion, without fantastic individual admixture was current there: not emergent here and there in a great writer, -- but the atmosphere of the commonplace man as well as the Genius.189

Lacking a central authority, it is the critic's function to perceive the centralizing current, and to recommend works that conform with it. While commending Heine because he was in the main stream, Arnold wrote, "To ascertain the master-current in the literature of an epoch and to distinguish this from all minor currents is one of the critic's highest functions."190 The master-current should be strong, not merely because it gives direction to the reader, but mainly because it gives material to the writer. Developing the idea that T. S. Eliot later put forth as the best relationship between philosophy and the artist, Arnold wrote:

The elements with which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time. At any rate we may lay it down as certain that in modern literature no manifestation of the creative power not working with them can be very important or fruitful. And I say current at the time not merely accessible at the time, for creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas, that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius is the work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere.... 191

Again, perception of the master-current is essential if the critic is to preserve tradition, and preservation of tradition
is essential if the writer is to write anything other than provincial eccentricities.

One can go a step further, and suggest that Arnold wished to avoid historical as well as geographical provinciality; he wanted to see, not only life, but also literature, steadily and whole. Arnold insisted that only a clear sense of tradition can help us avoid this type of provinciality, and it is partially for this reason that he recommended the study of the great classics of literature. These classics could then become "points de repere" to which we could refer and compare our reading. Arnold extended the idea in a preface to Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, but the idea must not be considered simply part of an occasional piece. These *points de repere* form the master-current that in turn forms our literary tradition, and it is our literary tradition that keeps our literature from disappearing in a wave of undifferentiated mediocrity. Arnold made just this point in his essay on Milton, an essay that is often dismissed as eulogy, but is magnificent eulogy nevertheless. Setting Milton up, in effect, as one of his *points de repere*, Arnold concluded,

All the Anglo-Saxon contagion, all the flood of Anglo-Saxon commonness, beats vainly against the great style but cannot shake it, and has to accept its triumph. But it triumphs in Milton, in one of our own race, tongue, faith, and morals.

We do not share our provinciality with Milton because we are of the same race, tongue, faith, and morals; but rather, because
we share these things, Milton is able to lift us beyond provinciality into the great style, and the great central tradition of European literature.

2. Arnold as Progressive Critic

A discussion of Matthew Arnold's traditionalism proceeds quite smoothly until the question is raised, "But how does traditionalism provide for change?" Unless some provision for change of tradition is made, one has visions of Akensides writing of graveyards and Tennysons writing of gardens on and on into an endless future. Needless to say, Arnold did recognize the necessity of change, and did not think of tradition in terms of copying at all. Rather, he termed stylistic copying "decadence", and explained to Clough,

One does not always remember that one of the signs of Decadence of a literature, one of the factors of its decadent condition indeed, is this—that new authors attach themselves to the poetic expression the founders of a literature have flowered into, which may be learned by a sensitive person to the neglect of an inward poetic life.194

It is because Arnold emphasized the "inward poetic life" that he can be characterized, not only as a traditionalist, but also as a prophet of change.

Arnold understood that living the inward poetic life committed the poet to change because he understood that the material of the poetic life is the actual life of the age. Since the actual life of the age changes from the life of the
past age whether we want it to or not, the poetry must change as well. Arnold realized this necessity in an early letter to Clough:

...in a man style is the saying in the best way what you have to say. The what you have to say depends on your age.... The poet's matter being the hitherto experience of the world, and his own increases with every century.195

The passage implies, moreover, that tradition is a factor determining change, but that the change is essential.

Since Arnold believed that social change is a factor affecting literary change, a brief glance at his ideas on social progress is justified. There is nothing to indicate that Arnold regretted the passing of the older, presumably more stable order; he wished only to salvage some of its values. Certainly he thought change was inevitable; the questioning modern spirit that asked, "But is it so? is it so to me?"196 simply existed; there was nothing he could do to eliminate it. Moreover, most of his writing indicates he would not have chosen to eliminate the modern spirit even if he could. He wrote to Clough:

I am more and more convinced that the world tends to become more comfortable for the mass, and more uncomfortable for those of any natural gift or distinction--and it is well perhaps that it should be so--for hitherto the gifted have astonished and delighted the world, but not trained or inspired, or in any real way changed it--and the world might do worse than to dismiss too high pretensions and settle down on what it can see and handle and appreciate.197
Later, in his formal social essays, Arnold repeated the same liberal ideas. He saw that his age, as an age of expansion, was making the equality of all men a reality. He approved of equality, not only because the tendency to seek it is natural but also because it enables more men to become civilized. Since Arnold defined civilization as the "humanization of man in society", the more men that could be humanized, the more civilized the society could be. Neither in his literary criticism, nor in his social thinking, then, was Arnold a hide-bound traditionalist, but rather a man who recognized both the necessity and the desirability of change.

3. Synthesis

However, Arnold is misrepresented if he is represented as either a traditionalist or an advocate of change. As usual, his thought was ambivalent. Arnold demonstrated this ambivalence in his differing attitudes to Johnson and Joubert. He praised Joubert, with reservations, for maintaining his traditional ideals in the years of rapid change before the French Revolution. On the other hand, he criticized Johnson, again with reservations, for being a "conservative in an age of expansion"; that is, for maintaining in precisely the same years, his traditional ideals. Arnold recognized both the dangers and advantages of the traditionalist position, and tried not to work within the pedantic categories of stability and progress, but rather to see things as they really were.

In other words, Arnold felt that the claims of the
tradition must be weighed separately in each separate case. The tradition is an essential, but not the only factor that affects judgment, whether the issue be literary or social. Again, I will introduce some evidence for this statement from Arnold's social criticism, partially justified by reasons advanced previously, and partially by Amiel's statement, quoted by Arnold, that society is an "improvised work of art", a "form of poetry". If Amiel's description is at all relevant, the way Arnold thought about society as a "form of poetry" should have some connection with his thought about actual poetic forms. Moreover, many of Arnold's ideas about the social tradition are so similar to Eliot's on the same subject that they act as circumstantial evidence supporting the thesis of the similarity of their literary ideas.

Arnold pictured a society containing within itself elements of stability derived from tradition, and elements of change implicit in the nature of things. Such a picture is a common one among dialectical philosophers, but Arnold's is more interesting than Coleridge's and Hegel's, because it is not deduced from an a priori theory of opposites, but induced from his own social experience. Arnold personally felt that people should come to some terms with their tradition; he wrote to Clough:

As to conformity, I only recommend it in so far as it frees us from the unnatural and unhealthy attitude of contradiction and opposites--the Qual der Negation as Goethe calls it. Only
positive convictions and feelings are worth anything—and the glow of this one can never feel so long as one is pugnacious and out of temper. This is my firm belief.

Arnold knew that he had to accept something in order to have the positive convictions that alone are worth anything, and the obvious "something" was his own tradition. The same principle applies to acceptance of the European literary tradition, for it is obvious that no writer can create a literature out of nothing, and he might just as well accept the broadest tradition immediately at hand.

The effort to balance the stable and the dynamic, the traditional and the experimental, is apparent in Arnold's formal social criticism as well. The one statement of Joubert's with which Arnold seriously disagreed was Joubert's dogmatic, "...let us have justice, and then we shall have enough liberty". Arnold immediately rejected this Platonic presumption of static justice, and returned the common-sense reply of the dynamic Englishman. A little tartly, but a little ruefully, too, he replied, "...such is the imperfection of human governments that almost always in order to get justice, one must first get liberty". Similarly, he reviewed Renan's proposals to restore stable aristocratic government in the old tradition, but ended by reminding us that a whole new tradition of dynamic change has grown up since the decay of the old one that would make the restoration of the old impossible. One rather wishes Eliot had paid more attention to this essay of Arnold's; we
might have been spared the **Definition of a Culture** and his disciple's Southern Agrarianism.

In Amiel and Falkland, Arnold found thinkers who placed the point of balance between the stable and the changing closer to his own balancing-point. He approved Amiel's neat epigrams, such as, "A society lives on its faith and develops itself by science", and, "Liberal communities are impossible with an anti-liberal religion and impossible with the absence of religion". The balance seems to fall half-way between stability and change. We get the same impression when Arnold quotes Clarendon in order to hold Falkland up for admiration as the moderate statesman in an age of fanatic temperaments. Falkland allowed for change in Church government when the change could accomplish a public good, but he did not advocate wholesale change for its own sake. As Clarendon described him, "...he was never in the least degree swayed or moved by the objections which were made against that government in the Church, holding them most ridiculous, or affected to the other which those men, (the Puritans), fancied to themselves". In summary, he held it to be the "part of the statesman... rather to use than to destroy [his tradition]". One has only to rephrase this statement to apply it accurately to Matthew Arnold as literary critic: he held it to be the duty of the poet and critic toward their tradition rather to use than to destroy it.

Arnold's attitude towards even religion exhibited
this same ambivalence. Like Falkland, Arnold never proposed change for its own sake in religious institutions, and traditions, but only those changes he thought necessary to preserve as much of the tradition as possible. Just as *Culture and Anarchy* was an attempt to find a substitute, in a cultured majority, for an outmoded governing class, so *Literature and Dogma* was an attempt to find a substitute in a scientifically acceptable moral tendency for an outmoded God. The motivation was not revolutionary, but conservative; the changes were the minimum ones required to preserve what was valuable in the social and religious tradition. As Willey summarizes Arnold's religious criticism:

> Because he was a critic and an educational reformer, Arnold wishes to restate the creed in modern terms, but because he was also a poet he saw that even greater than the need for restatement was the need to conserve and preserve from destruction, all the beauty and the power of the tradition. 207

When he weighed any social question Arnold did seem to have balanced the claims of tradition and change more or less equally. However, part of his charm is that his faith in progressive change was a little more equal than his faith in tradition. Whether due to a better digestion, a better endocrine balance, or a better world, Arnold was more optimistic than is Eliot; Arnold still had the faith that if we keep changing, we will keep getting closer to the truth. Unfortunately, the clearest demonstration of this faith is found in Arnold's quotation of somebody else, but then Arnold had a habit of
expressing himself in other people's words, and, moreover, the faith is manifest to any sympathetic reader of his works. I think Arnold spoke his own thoughts about the Church's presumed possession of divine revelation, merely using Amiel's words, when he wrote, "Pious fiction is still fiction. Truth has superior rights. The world must adapt itself to truth, not truth to the world." 208

Having seen that Arnold took a balanced attitude towards tradition and change in society and religion, it is easy to see that he took the same balanced attitude towards the literary tradition. In his "Preface" to the Poems of 1853, he declared the Qual der Negation to be as inappropriate to the poet as to the citizen, but found his positive values, not in an ersatz critical system, but in the Greeks. Since the Greek tradition is also part of the Western European tradition, this maneuver allowed Arnold to find guidance from his literary antecedents without being bound by the immediate past or by the present. In Arnold's words, "the poet...will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretentions of his age; he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them." 209 Here the Ancients are a source of balance, calm and delight.

Another way of resolving the dichotomy between tradition and change is to regard the tradition as the stable element, and the writer as the dynamic factor. In the "Function of Criticism at the Present Time", Arnold achieved this resolution,
and thus formed the basis for most of Eliot's later thought about the tradition. Regarding the tradition as an atmosphere breathed by the writer, and the writer as the creating and modifying power, Arnold wrote,

...for the creation of a master-work of literature, two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment: the creative power has, for its happy exercise, appointed elements, and those elements are not in its own control.210

Just as a state disintegrates when its members no longer accept in common, certain premises, and just as man's moral condition decays when he no longer takes for granted certain values, so literature degenerates when a literary tradition is no longer current, strong and active. Therefore it is the function of the poet to hand down his tradition intact, but not unchanged, and it is the function of the critic to make the tradition current; that is, to make the master-stream of literary thought available to all.

B. Eliot

Arnold's emphasis on the importance of the tradition makes him appear at times the "frightened conservative" that liberal critics accuse him of being. However, we must always remember that Arnold was writing of the function of criticism at the present time, and its function at the present time was to resuscitate a dying tradition. According to Eliot, Arnold only partially succeeded in his aim, but nevertheless he was correct in his choice of object. Moreover, Eliot goes on,
"...what makes Arnold seem all the more remarkable is, that if he were our exact contemporary, he would find all his labour to perform again". Eliot takes it on himself to perform this labour, and in doing so, shows his most obvious debt to Arnold. Like Arnold, Eliot feels that he must emphasize the importance of the tradition because most writers have forgotten what that importance is; like Arnold, therefore, he can easily be misrepresented as a hide-bound traditionalist. The misrepresentation has, however, some value, because it represents one side of Eliot's ambivalent thought. Moreover, as one side of his criticism, it is similar to the same side of Arnold's criticism, and thus emphasizes the similarity of the two writers' critical positions. Finally, since the picture of Eliot as traditionalist is a common misrepresentation, it is useful to set it out in full before showing, in the light of other evidence, its inadequacies.

1. Eliot as Traditional Critic

Both Arnold and Eliot turned to the main-stream of European literature as a source for their values because they believed there is a certain permanence in human nature that is best expressed in this central tradition. Arnold found a kinship with the Greeks, but Eliot says that theoretically the kinship can be found anywhere along our tradition. In Eliot's words, "...if one can really penetrate the life of another age, one is penetrating the life of one's own". Then he goes on to illustrate his generalization:
Ezra Pound has grasped certain things in Provence and Italy which are permanent in human nature. He is much more modern, in my opinion, when he deals with Italy and Provence than when he deals with modern life.  

Although the poet can use the material of any age, classic Greek or medieval Provencal, he must always remember that these are merely materials to express what is permanent in human nature. Before he can clearly realize this permanence, he must grasp the whole tradition. Both the critic, (because the critic helps create the poet's cultural atmosphere), and the poet must try "to see literature not as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time, to see the best work of our time and the best work of twenty-five hundred years ago with the same eyes." To Eliot, as to Arnold, the question of the modernity of literature is irrelevant. We must ask rather, whether a work reflects the permanent elements of human nature; and, if it does, it should form part of our literary tradition.  

To avoid provinciality, minor writers have a duty to perform, and literary form has a function. Echoing Arnold's idea that secondary writers can both strengthen and profit from the tradition, Eliot says,  

The continuity of a literature is essential to its greatness; it is very largely the function of secondary writers to preserve this continuity and to provide a body of writing which is not necessarily read by posterity, but which plays a great part in forming the link between those writers who continue to be read.  

Like Arnold, too, he notes that the French have a higher standard
of journeyman work than do the English, and deplores the English tendency to praise themselves for their untutored genius, and to disparage the French for their consistently high standards. One of the reasons Eliot thinks that minor writers should preserve the tradition is his conviction of the importance of literary form. A traditionally accepted form can do much of the writer's thinking for him by not forcing him to choose among many forms, thus leaving his mind free for creative thought. Furthermore, careful development of a new form by minor writers conscious of their duty to the future tradition can transform the national sensibility, and enable the creative genius to do original work within the newly-developed tradition. If Kyd and Greene, for example, had not developed the five-act structure and dramatic blank verse into an automatically accepted tradition, Marlowe and Shakespeare could not have produced masterpieces in that form. Indeed, the process is much like the development of Eliot's thought out of Arnold's: Arnold set the basic idea of the minor writer's duty and function within the tradition, and Eliot applied it specifically to the problem of traditional form.

Not only does the minor creative writer have a function; so also does the critic. A critic must read widely, not to gain a quantity of unrelated knowledge, but to form a structure of perceptions. Eliot emphasizes that this formation "is not a superstructure on top of perceptions, but perceptions
form themselves as a structure" in the appreciative mind. When the structure becomes a superstructure, the critic encourages that dissociation of sensibility, that dissociation of idea and emotion, that, according to Eliot, has beset the English tradition since the seventeenth century. Eliot would like the critic to encourage the absorption of ideas, and thus facilitate the return of a unified tradition. Such absorption is essential, for, as pointed out previously, ideas cannot be transformed directly from systematic philosophy into art. Rather, like traditional form, they must simply be accepted by the artist. The stoicism Shakespeare derived from Seneca was, as Eliot points out, suitable material for poetry because "the element of Seneca was the most completely absorbed and transmogrified, and because it was already the most diffused throughout Shakespeare's world". Again, as Arnold had said many times previously, it is the function of the critic and the minor poet to further the diffusion of both form and idea, thus, in the words of Eliot, encouraging a "temper of the age", a "preparedness" from which great literature can grow.

Another concept Eliot shares with Arnold is that of the master-current of literature; and, like Arnold, he traces the stream back to the ancient classics, and forward again, through not just English literature, but through all western European literature. Unlike Arnold, however, he emphasizes the Roman element over the Greek. In What is a Classic?
he writes, "The blood-stream of European literature is Latin and Greek—not as two systems of circulation, but one, for it is through Rome that our parentage to Greece must be traced." Nevertheless, the central concept of a main stream of European literature is the same as Arnold's, and Eliot uses the concept as Arnold does, as an instrument of praise or blame. He praises Marvell's poetry as "the product of European, that is to say, Latin, culture", and blames Hopkins for standing a little aside from the main current. He concludes,

But from the struggle of our time to concentrate, not to dissipate, to renew our association with traditional wisdom; to re-establish a vital connection between the individual and the race..., from all this Hopkins is a little apart, and in this Hopkins has very little aid to offer.

Finally, he can judge, not only the minor poet, but even the great poet, on the basis of his service to the central tradition, for he can say,

Surely the great poet is, among other things, one who not merely restores a tradition which has been in abeyance, but one who in his poetry, retwines as many straying ends of tradition as possible.

As an additional argument to prove Eliot a traditionalist, it is possible to cite his traditional attitude toward religion. Again, this attitude is only circumstantial evidence, but its application even to religion is indication of the strength of the habit. Like Arnold, the aspect of religion Eliot is most concerned to save is the established religious tradition. Ransom
paraphrases Eliot's frequent pronouncements on the importance of an established tradition in these words: "The understanding of the thing comes with the practice, the continuance in the traditional discipline; and that is what tradition is for." Arnold would agree; but, remembering that the dogma within the tradition was and is becoming unacceptable to more and more people, he would also agree with Ransom's critical comment, "...I think it is a good argument if it will work. But I suggest that the argument from tradition will not work now as it used to." Unlike Arnold, Eliot finds the idea that "truth has superior rights" meaningless, and is thrown back on a faith in tradition, the same faith that underlies his literary criticism.

2. Eliot as Progressive Critic

It is true that the antithetical element to faith in tradition, that is, recognition of the necessity of change, is not as strong in Eliot as it is in Arnold; nevertheless, it is strong enough to make the characterization of Eliot as traditional critic misleading. One has only to remember the revolutionary form of his own poetry, and several characteristics of his criticism already discussed to realize that Eliot is not a traditionalist in the traditional sense. Rather, he is concerned with tradition because he recognizes the necessity of change, and wants to regulate the change by means of the tradition. He contends that "one function of criticism is to
act as a kind of cog regulating the rate of change of literary
taste", and postulates that failure of this function results in an avant-garde entirely without regulation, and completely out of touch with a conservative public that is, in turn, entirely without recognition of the necessity of change. This function of criticism, then, is not a reactionary one inhibiting progress, but a progressive one encouraging change.

Another aspect of Eliot's criticism that has already been discussed and that does not fit the traditional mold, is his insistence that the poet must speak for the spirit of his age. Like Arnold, who asked, with Goethe, "But is it so, is it so to me?" Eliot admits that the poet must tell the truth as he sees it, and declares that "in verse, one can only deal with actuality". It is probably for this reason that Eliot suspends judgment on contemporaries; it is not until the critic is sufficiently removed in time to observe objectively that he can judge whether or not the poet's actuality is an actuality that has any meaning to the rest of the world. In any case, not only must the poets of the past develop new forms with which to express changing ideas in a changing language, but also the poets of today must continue the same task. It is just this task Eliot attempted in his own poetry.

3. Synthesis

It is idle to contend that the traditional critic and the progressive critic are inconsistent with one another.
Eliot makes it perfectly clear that he agrees with Arnold's idea of tradition as a changing organism in itself; change and tradition are not interfering opposites, but both are aspects of the same thing, which one might call Tradition with a capital "T". Eliot is calling our attention to this Tradition when he says,

\[ \text{The poet is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.} \]

And it is the feel of this Tradition he is talking about when he mentions the "feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe...has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order". Furthermore, he recognizes that, since the order is simultaneous, any addition to it in the present will modify the whole of the order, so that in one sense, the present and the future can change the nature of the past. One begins to have intimations of "Burnt Norton". As a matter of fact, Eliot is quite aware of the apparently paradoxical nature of his attitude toward the Tradition, and attempts to clear up the paradox in a statement concerning what he considers to be the error of Romantic faith. In an essay on Shelley and Keats, he explains,

It is not a wilful paradox to assert that the greatness of each of these writers is indissolubly attached to his practice of the error / or his own specific variation of the error. Their place in history, their importance for their own and subsequent generations, is involved in it; this is not
purely a personal matter. They would not have been as great as they were but for the limitations which prevented them from becoming greater than they were.229

In other words, "in verse, one can only deal with actuality"; but such poetic honesty does not prevent the poet, and the critic too, from trying to turn actuality into the great Tradition.

Arnold insisted in the "Function of Criticism at the Present Time" that the critic's job is to make the Tradition actual and current for the benefit of the poet, and Eliot agrees. For instance, he is very close to Arnold when he says, "The important critic is the person who is absorbed in the present problems of art, and who wishes to bring the forces of the past to bear upon the solution of these problems."230

He concludes with Arnold's basic idea, but includes his own differing attitude to historical criticism when he says that the critic needs to be able not only to saturate himself in the spirit and the fashion of a time—the local flavour—but also to separate himself suddenly from it in appreciation of the highest creative work. Finally, he starts with Arnold's idea, refers it to the critical function of the poet, and develops it in terms of his own particular interests in language and precision of feeling:

Living, the poet is carrying on that struggle for the maintenance of a living language, for the maintenance of its strength, its subtlety, for the preservation of quality of feeling, which
must be kept up in every generation; dead, he provides standards for those who take up the struggle after him.  

Not only the repetition of "maintenance" and "preservation" in this passage, but also his later works of social and religious criticism, make one suspect that Eliot prefers to emphasize the stable over the dynamic elements of the Tradition. Unlike Arnold, who hoped that if things changed, they might get better, Eliot tends to turn to a stable past tradition before he can find anything to hope for. Nevertheless, I would prefer not to decide questions of emphasis, and only conclude that both Arnold and Eliot found change within the Tradition, and thought of them as elements to be balanced, not opposed.
CHAPTER V

STYLE AND METHOD

The pervasive ambivalence in the critical thought of Arnold and Eliot carries over even into their style and method, and not only is the expected ambivalence obvious; so also is the similarity between the two writers. Since it is not important to develop the thought of either writer completely when discussing their style and method, I shall instead emphasize the similarities of their styles by juxtaposing similar quotations from each critic. Some of Eliot's echoes of Arnold are so close that one is almost tempted to postulate direct influence; but this kind of evidence only shows that Eliot has read Arnold so carefully he has absorbed his style; it does not indicate that Eliot has learned any particular critical idea from Arnold, nor even that he has learned the same ambivalent attitude to literature. However, it must not be forgotten throughout the detailed comparison of the two styles, that the underlying ambivalence still exists. The persuasiveness of tone accords well with an advocate's purpose, but the disinterested critic can allow himself a supercilious comment even at the risk of alienating his reader. Finally, one would expect analysis and comparison from the critic with an ideal of flexibility, but is not surprised at dogmatism from the critic who insists on the necessity of standards.
A. Persuasiveness and Superciliousness

1. Persuasiveness

Several of Arnold's critics have pointed out that much of his interest for us today lies in the persuasiveness and charm of his style. Garrod delights in Arnold's "finely adjusted pose", and expresses the opinion that his "best hope of permanent fame in criticism is that he is so extraordinarily enjoyable". Brown describes Arnold's method as "suggestive and insinuating", and continues, "Arnold knows what he wishes the reader to believe; he proposes, if possible, to alter the reader's habits of mind so that he will become open to conviction". Furthermore, one can be sure that his pose and purpose were deliberate, because he explicitly admitted them in both his private and public writings. In his letters, he spoke of

the precious truth that everything turns upon one's exercising the power of persuasion, of charm...; without this all fury, energy, reasoning power, acquirement, are thrown away and only render their owner more miserable. Even in one's ridicule one must preserve a sweetness and good-humour.

In his formal essays and lectures he also wrote of persuasion as "the true mode of intellectual action", and condemned the "attacking Philistinism by storm". Rather, he suggested "such gradual means as the slow approaches of culture...", and the application of sweetness and light.
Arnold employed three main techniques in order to achieve this persuasiveness and charm: disarming modesty, repeated catchwords, and poetic interludes. Tillotson has drawn attention to Arnold's repeated deprecations of his own logic and learning, his references to himself as an "unlearned belles-lettres trifle", and to his own "well-known incapacity for abstruse thought". Even at the end of his career, in the essay, "Literature and Science", he was still apologetically referring to "the smallness of my own acquaintance with the disciplines of natural science", and being "fearful of doing these disciplines an injustice". Arnold's catch-words and catch-phrases are almost too well-known to enumerate; the persuasiveness of his pedagogic technique is well attested by their passage into common speech. Not all the phrases are his: the "grand style" is from Reynolds, "Reason and the will of God" from Bishop Wilson, and "sweetness and light", of course, from Swift, but it is Arnold, who, to use another of his phrases, made them current. A special kind of repeated catchword is the Name: Arnold set up special categories of his own, and then sanctioned them permanently by giving them a Name. Thus we have Attic, Asiatic and Corinthian prose, the Simpletons and Savages, who are "profoundly inadequate and profoundly unedifying"; and the famous Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace. Another variation of the same technique is, as pointed out by Harvey, the repeated expression that summarizes the theme of the essay. Keats is summarized with, "He is with
Shakespeare", Gray, with, "He never spoke out", and the message of "Literature and Science" is condensed into the necessity of a "sense for conduct, for beauty, for social manners, for knowledge". Sometimes, too, Arnold remembered he was a poet, and used the third technique, the poetic interlude; again, the eulogy on Oxford, home of lost causes, is too well known to quote, but it is not the only poem in Arnold's prose, Regretting the loss of men of Falkland's "lucidity of mind and largeness of temper", Arnold concluded,

But, 0 lime trees of Tew and quiet Oxfordshire fieldbanks where the first violets are even now raising their heads!—how often, ere that day arrive for Englishmen, shall your renewal be seen.243

A final passage, illustrates Arnold's occasional, but effective, use of poetic prose. Irritated by the criticisms of churchmen and theologians who objected to his excursions in religious matters, Arnold replied with the words,

Those who ask nothing better than to remain silent on such topics, who have quite their own sphere to speak of them, who cannot touch them without being reminded that they survive those who touched them with a far different power, you compel, in the mere interest of letters, of intelligence, of general culture, to proclaim truths which it was your function to have made familiar. And, when you have thus forced the very stones to cry out, and the dumb to speak, you call them singular because they know these truths, and arrogant because they declare them.244

Since Eliot uses these same techniques, it seems odd at first glance that critics have not described him as charmingly
persuasive. However, in Eliot, the antithetical element of superciliousness is much stronger than in Arnold, and although the technique is often the same, the effect is frequently different. His protestations that he has "no gift whatever for abstruse thinking", and a "mind too heavy and concrete for any flight of abstruse reasoning", ring a little false when one remembers that his Harvard theses had as their subjects Bradley's epistemology and Leibniz's Monads. Moreover, going out of his way to describe himself as a "minor poet" does seem a little unnecessary. Occasionally, however, his modesty does seem quite sincere, as in his apology for attempting to criticize Ben Jonson:

If I trusted Ben Jonson's opinions with complete respect, I should condemn myself for speaking or writing at all; for he says roundly, "to judge of poets is only the faculty of poets; and not of all poets, but the best." Nevertheless, though I am not a good enough poet to judge of Jonson, I have already tried to do so, and cannot now make matters worse.

Occasionally, too, the self-denigration is so amusing that we forgive the superciliousness, and catch an echo of Arnold's charm. Modestly trying to excuse the notes at the end of the Wasteland that many readers have thought to be ostentatiously learned, Eliot explains that he originally put them in to fill up a few blank pages. Then he goes on,

I have sometimes thought of getting rid of these notes; but now they can never be unstuck. They have had almost greater popularity than the poem itself--anyone who bought my book of poems, and
found the notes to *The Wasteland* were not in it, would demand his money back.\(^{249}\)

In conclusion, he regrets sending "so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail".\(^{250}\)

Eliot's use of catchwords and catch-phrases is similar to Arnold's in two ways: first, like Arnold, he gives names to categories of his own inventions, and secondly, he copies Arnold's best phrases directly. These copyings are of two types: those identical to Arnold's in diction and meaning, and those only reminiscent of Arnold's phrasing. Of the first type are "provincial",\(^{251}\) "main current",\(^{252}\) "second-order minds",\(^{253}\) "Liberal Practitioners",\(^{254}\) "Dissidence of Dissent",\(^{255}\) "adequate literature",\(^{256}\) "disinterested exercise of intelligence",\(^{257}\) and "the object as it really is".\(^{258}\) Variations on Arnold's phrases, (most of the original phrases have already been mentioned previously in the thesis, and the similarity of Eliot's is obvious), include "the human will to see things as they are not",\(^{259}\) "writing...so that our attention is directed to the object and not to the medium",\(^{260}\) "literary perfection",\(^{261}\) "a mind naturally of the creative order",\(^{262}\) "work of absolutely the finest quality",\(^{263}\) "unmistakable tone",\(^{264}\) "not what comes natural or easy to us, but what is right",\(^{265}\) and "to see literature steadily and see it whole".\(^{266}\) A slightly different, but still echoic effect is achieved when Eliot uses a slightly altered Arnoldian phrase in a typically Arnoldian series of parallels. In this way, Eliot picks up Arnold's
"see things as they really are", and produces, "impersonal ideas which obscure what we really are and feel, what we really want, and what really excites our interest". He also remembers Arnold's definition of poetry as "the best words in the best order", and reworks it into his own definition of poetry as "excellent words in excellent arrangement and excellent meter". None of these phrases, however, accomplish quite the same pedagogic result as when Arnold used them; Arnold repeated and repeated; Eliot seldom employs the same phrase twice in the same essay. Nevertheless, he is drawing on Arnold's earlier pedagogic accomplishments through the reader's partial recall, in much the same way as he accuses Arnold of drawing on earlier religious habits to support his new religion of poetry.

His other stylistic similarity with Arnold is one of technique, not simply one of phrase. Eliot not only uses Arnold's Names, such as Philistine and Liberal Practitioner; he also invents Names of his own. Non-acceptance of the "principle of unquestioned authority outside the individual", and a preference for the authority of the "inner voice" he calls "Whiggery". Another useful Name is that which he applies to E. M. Foerster, a "Heretic", "a person who seizes upon a truth and pushes it to the point at which it becomes a falsehood". To cite a final example, he also gives Names to the three possible attitudes toward education, the Liberal, the Radical, and the Orthodox; Eliot, of course, adopts the last, and carries this categorical attitude over into his
2. Superciliousness

Eliot's lyric interludes are rare. Except for the phrase quoted earlier,\textsuperscript{271} and possibly his descriptions of the poetic process, Eliot does not allow his poetry to intrude into his prose; possibly the two are kept separate in conformance with his belief, mentioned previously, that the future development of poetry and prose depends upon a consciousness of their separateness. However, the two writers exhibit the expected similarity again in their common possession of an element antithetical to their persuasiveness: superciliousness. On one hand, Arnold usually manages to blend the two elements together to achieve, in Garrod's phrase, a "supercilious airy amiability...the air of a man of the world".\textsuperscript{272} Sometimes his pen slips, however, and his assumption of superiority becomes irritating. On the other hand, Eliot, being less interested in persuasion in the first place, becomes irritingly superior more often. Nevertheless, whatever we may think of the tactfulness of an irony that is achieved through the writer's assumption of immeasurable superiority, both Arnold and Eliot often achieve a urbane humour by means of that irony.

Arnold sometimes assumed the elevated pose of leader of the English people. From this height he could advise,
Might not these divine English gifts \_ strong sense and sturdy morality_/, and the English language in which they are preached, have a better chance of making their way among the poor Celtic heathen if the English apostle delivered his message a little more agreeably? 273

Another method, the assumption of omniscience, communicates the same ironic tone. Arnold explained why he disliked Wordsworthian philosophy and Wordsworthians by describing a hypothetical meeting of a Wordsworthian Society, (incidentally disguising himself as the "child of Nature;" and thus achieving another level of irony):

One can hear \_dull, moral lines of Wordsworth's poetry_/ being quoted at a Social Science Congress; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial/towns; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe! 274

An even more improbable disguise for Matthew Arnold, but still a superior disguise, was that of a transcendentalist arguing with a portly Benthamite jeweller on a train going up to London. Utilitarianism probably began its decline as an active political philosophy the day the first Englishman read that the jeweller was "on a pious pilgrimage to obtain from Mr. Bentham's executors a secret bone of his great dissected master." 275

In the same essay, Arnold turned his irony upon an
individual, a certain Mr. Wright. It was these sallies against individual, and contemporary Englishmen, as opposed to Englishmen in general, that leave Arnold open to the charge of supercilious tactlessness. Nevertheless, some of them are very funny. Apparently Wright had complained that Arnold had described him as having "no proper reason for existing"; Arnold replied he had not said that at all; he had only described Mr. Wright's translation of the Iliad as having no proper reason for existing. Despite this extenuating consideration, he apologized, but then went on to say,

Mr. Wright, however, would perhaps be more indulgent to my vivacity, if he considered that we are none of us very likely to be lively much longer. My vivacity is but the last sparkle of flame before we are all in the dark, the last glimpse of colour before we all go into drab—the drab of the earnest, prosaic, practical, austerely literal future. Yes, the world will soon be the Philistines'! And then, with every voice not of thunder, silenced, and the whole world filled and ennobled every morning by the magnificent roaring of the young lions of the Daily Telegram, we shall all yawn in one another's faces with the dissmallest, the most unimpeachable gravity. 276

But he was wrong; years later, years of the daily influence of the Daily Telegram, he gave in to the temptation to describe the earnest biographer of Shelley with the words, "In one respect Professor Dowden resembles Providence: his ways are inscrutable." 277 Even his disapproval of the Goddess Lubricity did not quite suppress his vivacity. Alongside the famous expression of disapproval, "What a set! what a world!" Arnold
slipped in the little comment, "If Shelley is left much alone with Miss Clairmont, he evidently makes Mary uneasy; nay, he makes Professor Dowden himself uneasy." Indeed, one must admit that Arnold's "vivacity" did occasionally overstep the bounds of urbane persuasiveness, but one is glad it did.

Arnold's assumption of superiority has given at least one critic the impression of a kindly schoolmaster talking to a class of idiot children; Eliot's similar assumption has a similar result. However, Eliot, the schoolmaster, is not the kindly man with whiskers, but the one with thin lips and a sharp nose. Ezra Pound, who has more reason to be sympathetic to Eliot than have most commentators, describes the effect:

...Mr. Eliot, after enduring decennial fogs in Britain, practically always writes as if for very feeble and brittle mentalities, from whom he can expect neither resilience nor any faculty for seeing the main import instead of the details or surfaces.

Like Arnold, Eliot can be sarcastic about the ignorant masses, (his readers), or the individual who happens to come under his gimlet eye at the moment. Unlike the more optimistic Arnold, however, he does not seem to expect a sympathetic hearing from his stupid readers, an attitude that results in an airy flippancy that is more acid than Arnold's "vivacity". At the end of an essay in which he had employed vague abstractions with abandon, he comments,
But if anyone complains that I have not defined truth, or fact, or reality, I can only say apologetically that it was no part of my purpose to do so, but only to find a scheme into which, whatever they are, they will fit, if they exist.280

The same tone of an instructor skeptical of achieving any results appears in his later essays as well. In "Religion without Humanism", an essay characterized, considering its subject, by remarkable lightness of tone, he begins,

I take it that the reader thinks he knows what /humanism/ means, and that he will understand that I am putting before him the difference between what I think he thinks it means and what I think I think it means.281

Such a tone is certainly different from Arnold's usually persuasive intent, but is not so very different from Arnold's antithetical streak of superciliousness.

The writer receiving the largest number of Eliot's individually-aimed shafts is Arnold himself. Eliot lets these fly from the most awkward and unexpected vantage points, as, for instance, from a discussion of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Eliot contends that readers would appreciate Elizabethan dramatists more fully if they would read all the plays of each playwright, and search for a plan of development in each. Then he remarks that they all "have more or less faint or distinct patterns". The utmost ingenuity is required to introduce Arnold at this point, but Eliot manages it; he continues, in parentheses:
I was tempted to use the word "secret" as an alternative to "pattern"; but then I remembered the unlucky example of Matthew Arnold, who said much about the "secret of Jesus", a secret which having been revealed only and finally to Arnold himself, turned out to be a pretty poor secret after all.282

The jabs at Arnold continue, possibly unconsciously, even when Eliot is making a jab at someone else. Castigating a critic for having dared to avoid a problem, Eliot concludes à bravura:

Shakespeare is so great a dramatist, so great a poet, that even Mr. Archer should have removed his shoes, instead of evading the question of the relationship of poetry and drama/ rather than ask Shakespeare to abide it. Shakespeare would have abidden it if Mr. William Archer had chosen to ask it.283

Not only are we reminded of Arnold's sonnet, but also of the unfortunate Mr. Wright who had dared to defend himself against the charge of having no proper reason to exist. Sometimes Eliot succeeds in forgetting Arnold, however, and concentrates his irony on another person. He disguises as praise for Sybil Thorndyke's acting in John Middleton Murray's translation of Euripides, the comment that she was successful in her "struggle against the translator's verse".284 On the other hand, his irony can be open, and quite as unpleasant as anything Arnold directed against Francis Newman in the Homer lectures; after quoting a critical passage from E. M. Foerster, he comments,

With all respect to Mr. Foerster's sound literary criticism and his usual brilliance of statement which one cannot fail to admire,
the passage I have just quoted seems to me a composition of ignorance, prejudice, confused thinking and bad writing.

Since this quotation from Eliot is taken from an essay entitled "Second Thoughts about Humanism", one shudders to think what his first thoughts must have been. I think it must be concluded that the element of superciliousness is stronger in Eliot than in Arnold, not necessarily because Eliot can produce more biting irony, but because he does not take so much trouble to be charming.

B. Analysis, Comparison, and Dogmatism

1. Analysis and Comparison

Possibly it is their charm and amusing superciliousness that make Arnold's and Eliot's criticism easy to read, but it is their analytic and comparative method that makes it useful to read. The key to their method is found in Eliot's acknowledgment of his debt to Remy de Gourmont, and particularly to de Gourmont's idea that the critic's method is one of analysis and comparison. Garnet Rees has isolated a passage from *La Culture des Idées* that describes the method Eliot actually did adopt, and that might well have determined, or at least influenced, the development of that method. De Gourmont wrote,

*Il s'agit d'imaginer des rapports nouveaux entre les vieilles idées, les vieilles images, ou de séparer les vieilles idées, les vieilles images unies par la tradition, de les considerer*
Since this description of critical method is also a description of hypothesis formation, and since we have seen Eliot and Arnold working with tentative hypotheses, we could expect it to apply to Eliot even if Eliot had not acknowledged de Gourmont's influence, and we can also expect it to apply to Arnold. For we must note that the method is not one of comparison and analysis alone, but that it also proposes the "equivocal formation of new ties"; that is, the development of hypotheses, the statement of generalizations. As will be shown, the description does not apply to Arnold as well as it does to Eliot, because Arnold often seems to generalize first, and present evidence afterwards; whereas Eliot more correctly gives his evidence first, and generalizes on the basis of that evidence. Nevertheless, both critics exhibit the essential characteristics of the method: both analyze, both compare, and both generalize tentatively.

Much of Arnold's analysis is implicit; that is, it is performed before the essay begins. As Harvey says,

...his mode of criticism was essentially selective...; it set out to disengage certain, and not all of the points of his subject. His was not a complete inventory of them, but a choice description of the unmistakably excellent in them.287
However, Arnold also admired the explicitly analytical technique, and used it brilliantly himself, especially in his earlier essays. In the essay on Heine, for example, he isolated the qualities of "delicacy, tenderness and inexhaustible resource", qualities that at first seem vague, but that Arnold made precise by quoting precise examples of each quality. Probably the most analytical of Arnold's works is his first major essay in criticism, the Lectures on Translating Homer. In these lectures, he analyzed the verse forms of the principal English Homeric translations: couplets, hexameters, blank verse, and ballad form, and pointed out the effects of each. Then he analyzed the characteristics of the grand style: rapidity, directness, simplicity, and nobleness, and proceeded to demonstrate that English hexameters best reproduce these characteristics. This procedure sounds rather simple, but it must be remembered that each step of the analysis required further analysis, comparison, and illustration that was complex and yet perfectly clear. It has been remarked, and I think rightly, that these lectures are Arnold's most impressively "architectonic" work.

However, as has been pointed out previously, after this early work Arnold seldom analyzed the text for poetic technique. Rather, he depended on extensive quotations linked by comments that isolated the quality that Arnold wished to emphasize; that is, the analysis was implicit in the selection of the quotation. But he also depended upon the related
technique of comparison, a dependence that is attested by
the common knowledge of the link between Matthew Arnold and
his touchstone method. Arnold, as everyone knows, suggested
a number of very brief selections of poetry, some of them only
one line long, which he thought all would agree were of "the
best", and which were to be used as comparative touchstones
for other poetry. It will be noted that this extreme extension
of the comparative method, not advanced until the end of his
career, does not depend on analysis at all; the touchstones
are simply accepted as being "poetic". However, throughout
most of his essays he did employ the comparative method in a
more sophisticated way along with analysis; after all, the
simplified touchstone method was intended for other people.
For example, when he proposed that Keats' *Isabella* was inferior
to Boccaccio's version of the story, he was not saying it was
generally inferior, but that it was inferior in a particular
quality: directness of action. To cite an instance on a
larger scale, when he compared Joubert and Coleridge, he did
not say, "Joubert and Coleridge are much alike; go and see
for yourself", but rather isolated particular qualities of
each man's work, and illustrated their similarities by reference
to Coleridge, and quotation from Joubert. A few examples
prove nothing; but I think that a careful study, (beyond the
scope of this thesis), of Arnold's comparisons would show they
are not as naïve as they first appear, but are rather deceptively
effortless. All the thinking has gone on behind the scenes.
Possibly it is because Arnold did do his thinking before he started writing that he tended to state his hypothesis at the beginning, and support it in the rest of the essay. Not all his essays obey this rule: the Homer lectures are entirely inductive, and the essay on Heine starts out with one generalization and develops another as it goes along. The latter essay begins with generalization on the existence and nature of the modern spirit, then brings in evidence for the contention; but at the same time it brings in evidence for a new hypothesis about the existence and nature of a kind of ironic faith. However, the usual pattern is that of "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment". It opens with a humorous description of the bookshelves of the British Museum, (surely a remarkable achievement), and some ironic remarks about theologians, all put in to mislead people into thinking they are going to be, not instructed, but entertained. Then Arnold presents half his hypothesis, to the effect that the religion of the ancients was always gay, and afterwards gives his evidence, in the form of a hymn to Adonis. Next he presents the other half of his theory, to the effect that medieval religion was always sorrowful, and afterwards gives his evidence, in the form of a hymn of St. Francis'. Arnold works out the hypothesis beforehand, or, more likely, thinks of it in a flash; he does not develop the theory, he merely illustrates it. Therefore, unless the generalization is as obviously unacceptable as this one is, it is very hard to judge it, and we are forced to rely on Arnold's admittedly intelligent
perception, and admittedly sensitive tact.

Eliot also proceeds by analysis, comparison, and generalization. He is consciously analytic, often telling his reader at the beginning what he is about to analyze; for example, the purpose of his essay on Ben Jonson is stated to be to "subject the term [rhetoric] to closer dissection". Most of his analysis is on this small scale, a much smaller scale than Arnold adopted in the Homer lectures, but Eliot also recommends larger analyses, and occasionally attempts them himself. Speaking of the former neglect of the Metaphysical poets due to earlier habits of critical thought, Eliot comments,

> It would be a fruitful work and one requiring a substantial book, to break up the classification of Johnson, (for there has been none since), and exhibit these poets in all their difference of kind and degree, from the massive music of Donne to the faint pleasing tinkle of Aurelian Townshend.

Eliot has not attempted this task, but he has analyzed the effect of Dante's images, made systematic studies of the Jacobean dramatists, and has traced the Senecan influence in Shakespeare's plays. However, most of Eliot's critics think that Eliot's most valuable work is his small-scale analysis, his careful study of the text, particularly its technical aspects. For instance, although the studies of the Jacobean dramatists have a kind of unity of time, place, and genre, the whole sheds very little light on the parts. Rather, Eliot analyzes one
dramatist's blank verse technique, another's rhetoric, and another's characterization; he concludes by deciding that the dramatist is good in one way, and bad in another, not by assigning him a place in an order. And if we hear very little of the dramatist in general, we hear even less of Jacobean drama in general. Even when Eliot develops his essay by explicating a text like the one following, he does not pick up its obvious lead and make generalizations about the nature of Jacobean drama and the nature of the age. This is his text:

Massinger, in his grasp of stagecraft, his flexible metre, his desire in the sphere of ethics to exploit both vice and virtue, is typical of an age which had much culture, but which, without being exactly corrupt, lacked moral fibre. 292

When an explication of even this text results in a commentary on Massinger's plays alone, the habit of small-scale analysis must be very strong. Indeed, as will be pointed out shortly, Eliot does make generalizations about his subject's work, but again, they are small-scale generalizations resulting from his small-scale analyses. That is to say, Eliot is emphatically not the critic that Arnold wanted; he is not the critic who will tell us where to find the best that has been known and thought in the world.

Keeping in mind that Eliot's objects of comparison were more closely defined objects than Arnold's, one can say that their comparative methods were similar, but that Eliot's judgments are less bold. John Crowe Ransom comments,
Eliot might be said to be a practitioner of Arnold's "touchstone" method of judging poetry, though with infinite refinements; he cites, not the same handful of resounding lines for every purpose, but lines similar to the given lines, with an easy perception of which lines are best.

The comment is unfair to Arnold, because he did not use the same handful of resounding lines for every purpose, but also employed lines similar to the given lines in much of his criticism. As pointed out previously, the difference is not so much in the quality and quantity of the touchstones, but in the degree of analysis. Ransom is more satisfactory when he goes on to describe Eliot's comparative method in more detail:

Eliot has nothing like a formula ready in advance; he looks at the poem against its nearest background to see what sort of criticism it needs; he comes up presently with a set of judgments which are comparative in the first instance, but critical in the end.

To use the essay on Massinger as an example again, although Eliot does not explicitly compare and contrast Massinger as a dramatist to Shakespeare as a dramatist, he does compare certain aspects of their art. Using a series of contrasted quotations, Eliot demonstrates, not that Shakespeare is a better poet and dramatist than Massinger, but that Massinger lacks a "feeling for things", and has experienced a "decay of the senses". Arnold would have compared the two poets in the same way, but would have been more willing to jump to the conclusion that Shakespeare was the better poet, too. The judgment is obvious
in this case, but could not have Eliot usefully attempted a general critical comparison of the Jacobean dramatists among themselves, and against the larger background of English literature? Since life is still short and art longer than ever, it seems a pity that Eliot should have excused himself from this kind of task.

Nevertheless, as Ransom says, Eliot's judgments are "critical in the end", or more precisely, are limited generalizations that contain strong elements of praise and blame. For example, he arrives at a critical generalization about Swinburne's poetry in the following manner: first, he analyses the essential quality of Swinburne's verse as dif-fuseness; then he objects to the quality being called musical, because its effect is different from the excerpts of Campion's and Shelley's poetry, which the common reader will admit are musical, and to which he explicitly contrasts Swinburne's poetry. Next Eliot presents his limited generalization, saying that what Swinburne gives "is not images and ideas and music, it is one thing with a curious mixture of suggestions of all three".295 Finally, he concludes that language so used is "morbid", and is therefore, presumably, not a good thing; but he never actually says it is not a good thing, and he never tells us what he thinks of Swinburne's poetry in general. However, Eliot would certainly protest that it was no part of his purpose to do so, and that he could not be blamed for not doing what he did not intend to do. This pattern of analysis,
comparison, and generalization is repeated in most of his literary essays. In some of them, such as the "Introduction" to Marianne Moore's *Selected Poems*, the patterns of analysis and comparison is repeated several times before any generalization is reached, but, although admitting of various degrees of complexity, essentially the method of development remains the same. That is to say, it is Matthew Arnold's pattern, (one would hesitate to say "secret"), but within the pattern, the analysis is finer, the comparisons closer, and the generalizations much more limited.

2. Dogmatism

Perhaps it is because Arnold is more willing to make broad generalizations than is Eliot that Arnold is more often guilty of dogmatism. I use the term not in Eliot's favourable sense, but in the sense of "opinion intended to be accepted as fact without sufficient evidence", and, as such, antithetical to the scientific method of analysis and comparison. Despite the common contention that Eliot is a dogmatic critic, I was able to find almost no evidence to support it. Eliot sometimes advances a personal opinion at a critical point in the argument, but he makes it perfectly clear it is a personal opinion; he repeatedly makes it clear that his argument from orthodoxy can be accepted only by the orthodox. He sometimes seems to be dogmatic about Milton, but he is not dogmatic; he is just mistaken. He quotes evidence for the statements he makes about Milton, but, in my judgment, the evidence does not
support the statements. Indeed, it must be admitted that Eliot has a blind spot about Milton, but blind spots are not dogmatism, and, in order to avoid a preferential judgment, I must draw attention to Arnold's even larger blind spot for the whole eighteenth century, and a dogmatic blind spot as well. For undoubtedly Arnold was addicted to making unsupported generalizations; many of them we accept uncritically, but doubtful ones appear often enough to keep us on our guard. However, two examples, one from his first essay and one from his last, must suffice. In the "Preface" to his Poems, of 1853 he stated,

An allegory of the state of one's own mind, the highest problem of an art which imitates actions! No, assuredly, it is not, it can never be so: no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim.296

In the first place, Arnold was depending on the authority of Aristotle, not on evidence, when he defined poetry as an art which imitates actions; secondly, he was hiding behind the dogmatic adverb "assuredly" an ignorance, (shared by all of us), of human motivation and finally, he was on most uncertain ground when he said that "no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim". Eliot sees an allegory of Dante's mind in the Divine Comedy, (although whether Dante thought of its aim as allegorical is a different question), and most of us, including Eliot, are at least tempted to see Shakespeare's state of mind in Hamlet. The other quotation also illustrates Arnold's tendency to treat the most contro-
versial questions of aesthetics in the same cavalier fashion. In the "Study of Poetry", considering the Scotland of Burns, he wrote, "...for in itself it is not a beautiful world, and no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet to deal with a beautiful world". So many questions arise out of this statement that we can only conclude we cannot deny it because we do not know what it means. Of the two antithetical elements, the analytic and the dogmatic, I would suggest that the analytic is stronger in Eliot; the dogmatic stronger in Arnold. And I would suggest further that the analytic tendency in Eliot constrains him to make limited generalizations, whereas the absence of a fear of being dogmatic allows Arnold make bold generalizations. Both have their value: Eliot inspires a careful reading, and Arnold, a wider acquaintance with the best that has been known and thought in the world.
Conclusion

I have traced the conflict and partial resolution of certain antithetical ideas in the criticism of Arnold and Eliot; ideas on the nature of literature and the function of criticism, the conflict of which is reflected in their style and method. The similarity of Eliot's ability to hold contradictory opinions in suspension to Arnold's ability to perform the same trick has, I believe, been demonstrated. Furthermore, I think that the treatment of these antithetical opinions as hypothetical ideals help to explain inconsistencies in Arnold's and Eliot's criticism that are otherwise misleading and baffling. I also think that their views of classicism in literature, disinterestedness in criticism, and the tradition in both literature and criticism are almost identical; their use of irony and the comparative method is similar as well. However, I would not wish to disguise differences in their concepts of the function of ideas in literature, a difference that must be explained by Eliot's faithfulness to religious orthodoxy.

Nevertheless, one is never on firm ground when attempting to describe the thought of hypothetical thinkers, and again, I cannot help but think that even Eliot's dogmatism is hypothetical. This report of a conversation that took place in the 1940's should warn the reader that nothing Eliot says should be interpreted as the final word. When asked what he thought of the interpretation of *Sweeney Agonistes* in a
certain production, he replied that it wasn't his interpretation, but that it was probably right. When his questioner continued in bewilderment, "But if the two meanings are contradictory, is not one right and the other wrong?" his answer was that of the confirmed pragmatist, "Not necessarily do you think? Why is either wrong?" 

Arnold repeatedly confirmed his pragmatism, too, although he insisted on preserving Truth behind the veil. He stated his purpose in the "Preface" to his first Essays in Criticism, and kept to that purpose, despite the demands uncertainty puts on the spirit, until the end of his literary career:

To try and approach truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, not to persist in pressing forward, on any one side, with violence and self-will--it is only thus, it seems to me, that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious Goddess, whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline.

Both Arnold and Eliot realize that the critic must go "about, and about" in order to reach an ephemeral literary "Truth", and it is this realization that makes Eliot "what a twentieth century Arnold might have been".
Note

References to the writings of Matthew Arnold are made to the fifteen volume standard edition unless otherwise indicated. The complete reference Works of Matthew Arnold (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1903), is abbreviated throughout as Works, followed by the appropriate volume number.

Repeated references to other works and collections of Arnold's writing are abbreviated throughout as follows:


Repeated references to collections of Eliot's essays are abbreviated throughout as follows:

- **ASG** After Strange Gods, a Primer of Modern Heresy ("The Page-Barbour Lectures delivered at the University of Virginia", London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1934).
- **EAM** Essays Ancient and Modern (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1936).
- **UP** The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry In England (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1933).
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