

SYMBOLS OF OBLIVION AND COSMOS IN THE POETRY OF  
MATTHEW ARNOLD

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Leah Ellen Harrison

August, 1972

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## FOREWORD

To Dr. Samuel B. Southwell, the chairman of the thesis committee, the author wishes to express particular gratitude not only for presenting the ideas from which the thesis topic was generated and for patiently examining both the intellectual worth and style of every sentence of the thesis but also for providing the scholarly inspiration which has made the writing of this thesis a truly significant experience. The author wishes also to thank Dr. J. Gordon Eaker and Dr. Robert L. Robinson, the other members of the thesis committee, for their valuable comments and suggestions.

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Matthew Arnold expresses a tendency toward a conception of a central natural force in a rather consistent vocabulary of symbols of oblivion and cosmos which is present in his poetry and which may be interpreted in light of the poet's employment of an orientation toward experience that is consonant with his developing poetic theory. In the early poems where the persona embodies the orientation of sensibility, he sometimes gains an unsatisfactorily fleeting sense of cosmos and seeks comfort in contemplation of the prospect of death and oblivion. In other poems the persona is compelled at the outset to abandon the human world which obscures feeling. After the publication of Empedocles on Etna, which contains a kind of culminating symbol of oblivion, Arnold produced a group of transitional poems. Within this group some of the personae again ultimately become symbols of oblivion. Others embody the orientation of aesthetic consciousness; and as a result, it is symbolically implied, they gain a sense of cosmos. This latter pattern is sustained in a final group of poems. Although within the development of the symbols there is an implicit shift in the relationship between man and the natural force and therefore an implicit redefinition of the concept of nature itself, throughout the poetry there is a tendency toward a concept of nature which is approachable through the senses, emotions, and imagination.

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## INTRODUCTION

Matthew Arnold, like other intellectuals of the nineteenth century, experienced the ennui, doubt, and isolation which were the culminating effects of the rift between the intellect and the imagination. This rift was inherited from the romantics and, in the course of the century, resulted in the waxing of science at the expense of orthodox religion and the alienation of man from the universe.<sup>1</sup> The preponderance of criticism recognizes, as Arnold himself believed, that his poetry expressed "the main movement of mind"<sup>2</sup> of his period. He dealt with the lack of personal integration and direction, which manifested itself as the dialogue within the mind, which has been analyzed into numerous dichotomies relating to the psychical and social aspects of man. In such poems as "In Utrumque Paratus" (1849) and "Dover Beach" (1867), Arnold voiced the acute spiritual problem of the age. In the former poem, he cautioned man against the error of pride which leads him to reject kinship with the elements; for, he realized, this leaves man only the chilling prospect of

<sup>1</sup> Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 68, 79.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Arnold, Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888, ed. George W. E. Russell (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895), II, 9.

nihilism.<sup>3</sup> In "Dover Beach," man finds himself in a barren waste filled with strife and isolated from the orthodox God as well as from nature.<sup>4</sup>

As George R. Elliott observes, beneath Arnold's poetic expression of temporal imperfection lies the melancholy yearning toward "the full life of Poetry" and toward eternity.<sup>5</sup> While it is widely recognized that Arnold's object is to achieve a sense of reconciliation of the conflicting elements within man and a sense of the unity of man with the universe, few acknowledge his having achieved and sustained a sense of such harmony within either the argument or the symbolism of the poetry. J. Hillis Miller characterizes the poet as one of the generation which lost the romantic sense of a unifying spiritual force in nature and thus believes him unable to bring God back into the world.<sup>6</sup> Joseph Warren Beach puts Arnold into the same post-romantic classification that Miller does. Beach finds his attitudes toward nature rather confused and sums up by saying

<sup>3</sup> E. D. H. Johnson, in The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 160, interprets the poem as meaning that pride is the factor which deprives man of life; Jan B. Gordon, in "Disenchantment with Intimations: A Reading of Arnold's 'In Utrumque Paratus,'" Victorian Poetry, 3 (Summer 1965), 194-195, sees nothingness as one of the alternative explanations of man's origin posed by the poem.

<sup>4</sup> A. Dwight Culler, Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> George Roy Elliott, "The Arnoldian Lyric Melancholy," PMLA, 38 (December 1923), 932.

<sup>6</sup> J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1963), pp. 14, 261.

that the poet feels nature to be pagan and immoral and values man's morality above the cruelty of nature.<sup>7</sup> Lionel Trilling, who points to Arnold's prose criticism as the full embodiment of the poet's humanistic ideals of personal, social, and cosmic integration, describes Arnold, in his early poetic attitudes toward nature, as hovering between materialistic naturalism and Platonic realism, by which phrase Trilling means belief in a set of absolute values existing in a realm above the temporal. Quoting from one of Arnold's later poems, "A Wish" (1867), Trilling concludes that by middle age the poet has accepted, with stoic calm, a naturalistic universe as his home.<sup>8</sup> What Trilling seems to be saying is that Arnold accepts only a sense of unity between man and nature on the less than human level.

Other critics recognize in the poetry at least a slight tendency toward a sense of unification of man with nature. Wendell Stacy Johnson reads in Arnold's poetry the dichotomies of a persistent double vision. The double vision includes temporal change versus transcending order; society and love versus the isolated buried self; a comforting natural cosmic force versus a cold, strong natural force that is dangerous to man. Johnson believes that the question of man's relation to nature is a central one in

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry (1936; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), pp. 15, 405.

<sup>8</sup> Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (1939; rpt. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), prose—p. 152, early poetry—p. 89, later poetry—p. 269.



Arnold's poetry. Because he recognizes that the poet often comments on the subject indirectly, through imagery, he provides illuminating interpretations of some of the images which represent the unifying side of what he labels the poet's double vision.<sup>9</sup> A. Dwight Culler offers a valuable insight in his interpretation of the ever present Arnoldian myth of personal and historical cycles, which is told in terms of landscape symbolism. He describes the initial state in the myth as one in which the individual is "in harmony with nature." After a period of alienation and strife on the barren plain, one may achieve a new state of peace and joy "through active service in the world." This state follows from a religious affirmation. Although this critic recognizes, in the poetry, a resolution of the state of alienation through work in the world, as well as a resolution through union with the natural process in death, which is often symbolized by the sea,<sup>10</sup> he does not connect both of these resolutions directly with man's union with cosmic nature as the present study will attempt to do through a discussion of the recurring symbols of cosmos.

G. Robert Stange is the only critic who discovers in the poetry

<sup>9</sup> Wendell Stacy Johnson, The Voices of Matthew Arnold: An Essay in Criticism (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 140-141. Johnson interprets Arnold's poetry as consistently embodying the dialogue characteristic of the age. There is an awareness of temporal change as well as of an order transcending time, of human unity as well as of isolation, and of a unifying natural force as well as man's necessary separateness from nature.

<sup>10</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, cycle—pp. 4-5, resolution—p. 16.

a constant tendency toward a conception of cosmic nature with which both poet and man unify themselves through the cultivation of all their faculties; however, he finds no specifically related significance in natural symbols nor does he seem sensitive to the doubting, tentative quality in many of the more direct nature poems.<sup>11</sup> William A. Madden, who assumes a pantheistic basis for the unifying orientation of aesthetic consciousness which he finds developed in Arnold's prose, fails to recognize in the poetry any occurrence of the orientation relating to the symbolism.<sup>12</sup>

The hypothesis with which this study begins is that although the poet may be intellectually confused in his attempts to reconcile man with the universe, as one might assume from the wide divergence of critical opinion on his work, he is emotionally consistent. He expresses symbolically states of unity with the universe which he is never able to affirm directly.

Through the identification and interpretation of these symbols, Arnold's impulse toward the development of a conception of nature, particularly as defined by man's relation to it, can be traced. In the earlier poems of the group the character or narrator contemplates a symbol

<sup>11</sup> G. Robert Stange, Matthew Arnold: The Poet as Humanist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), cosmic nature—p. 131, symbols—p. 163.

<sup>12</sup> William A. Madden, Matthew Arnold: A Study of the Aesthetic Temperament in Victorian England (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 200-201.

suggesting a sense of unity with nature which may be grasped solely by reaching below the level of ordinary human awareness to the realm of Dionysian sensibility. Because of the instability of such an experience, a character often is led to contemplate his own death; and, in poems where the death of the character occurs, the dead character becomes a symbol for the narrator of man's potential unity with nature on the elemental level. In the later poems, the implications of the symbols of cosmos change. Here the symbols of cosmos grow from the detached artistic orientation of balanced thought and feeling exhibited by the character or the narrator. This orientation may be cultivated within the framework of the human state. Characters who possess this orientation toward experience are portrayed in a way suggesting their sense of unity with nature. More often, the artist-narrator converts experiences which he narrates into balanced harmonious art. The art object, then, is symbolic of the narrator's sense of unity with nature. These symbols suggest Arnold's impulse toward the development of a concept of the unity of man with nature.

## I. A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POETIC THEORY

In beginning a study dealing with nature, it is well to remember, with Arnold, "what pitfalls are in the word of Nature!"<sup>1</sup> As Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas have demonstrated, the concept of nature considered as a standard of value to which man can relate had developed in Greece by the fifth century B. C. and has since accumulated myriad, often contradictory shades of connotation.<sup>2</sup> Concepts of nature and related ideas which seem to have been influences on Arnold will be reviewed. It will be demonstrated that each of the concepts of nature under consideration correlates with a different poetic theory. These poetic theories, which seem to be implicit in Arnold's poems, will serve as a basis for explanation of the symbolic definition of nature and man's relation to it toward which he seems to be impelled during his poetic career.

As Lionel Stevenson states, the Darwinian theory led many nineteenth-century thinkers back to Lucretius's De rerum natura, which

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, Literature and Dogma (1873), in The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. R. H. Super, VI (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 389. Hereafter this work will be cited as Works, Super.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), development—p. 103, connotations—p. 12.

delineated a philosophy based on a conception of a material cosmos.<sup>3</sup> According to his notebooks, Arnold, too, was reading the De rerum natura in 1845, 1846, and 1849.<sup>4</sup> Epicurus begins with a conception of a corporeal cosmos which includes man and which works mechanically according to natural laws and without supernatural intervention.<sup>5</sup> Religious sentiment is attached to nature. Adopting Aristotle's stance, Epicurus believes that organic nature furnishes the norm of truth.<sup>6</sup> Nature is not only the creative force of the universe but also a "benevolent teacher" in that it "reveals the Canon of truth and bestows upon man the means of contact between his soul and the material world, Sensations, Anticipations, Feelings,"<sup>7</sup> which always supplant analytical reason.<sup>8</sup>

In Epicureanism, life is the greatest good; and pleasure is the chief good of life while pain is the evil.<sup>9</sup> Virtue and knowledge are considered inseparable from pleasure even though neither has an absolute

<sup>3</sup> Lionel Stevenson, Darwin Among the Poets (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), pp. 18-20.

<sup>4</sup> C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 292-293.

<sup>5</sup> Norman Wentworth DeWitt, Epicurus and His Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), pp. 156, 157, 249.

<sup>6</sup> DeWitt, pp. 22-23.

<sup>7</sup> DeWitt, p. 324.

<sup>8</sup> DeWitt, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup> DeWitt, pp. 218-219.

value of its own.<sup>10</sup> The perfect condition is ataraxy, which means calm,<sup>11</sup> and which is achieved when man allays his fears concerning the gods and death and the limits of pleasure and pain through knowledge and when he learns to keep "his emotions within their natural limits."<sup>12</sup> The latter is achieved by renouncing pleasures beyond those needed for the well-being of the body and mind.<sup>13</sup> In summary, man, through his senses and the resultant emotions, experiences unity with the material universe; and such an experience is measured by the amount of pleasure involved. There is much in this cast of ideas which carries over into the thought of romanticism and German Hellenism, both of which influenced Arnold.

Romanticism is of particular importance in a study of a Victorian writer since either it was the movement against which to react or, as in Arnold's case, it formed a foundation from which to build.<sup>14</sup> In the romantic period science had already discredited the concept of an anthropomorphic god and thus separated man and his feelings from the concrete scientific

<sup>10</sup> DeWitt, pp. 245, 226.

<sup>11</sup> Warren D. Anderson, in Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), pp. 132-133, notes that the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies are parallel in many respects. This is particularly true of what is considered the ideal state in both systems. Both look toward a state of inward calm, not exempt from emotion but undisturbed by outward circumstance. Therefore it is often difficult to distinguish such elements of the two systems when they are applied to concrete situations.

<sup>12</sup> DeWitt, pp. 225-226.

<sup>13</sup> DeWitt, p. 229.

<sup>14</sup> Leon Gottfried, Matthew Arnold and the Romantics (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 203.

data of the universe. Romantics set out to establish once again a unified sensibility; that is, they sought to "reassert the fusion of thought and feeling,"<sup>15</sup> which can be defined more specifically as scientific and aesthetic truth. They did so by asserting that through interpretation by the heart and imagination—which may also be called intuition and emotion—of sensual perceptions, one can arrive at truth and thus become one with the force of nature.<sup>16</sup> The central premise of this fusion is that nature is substituted for God.<sup>17</sup> Nature is defined as a "power that moves and shapes all things," including the mind of man.<sup>18</sup> This nature provides, through the feelings, an ethical norm for man and the norm for all truth. It is regarded as vaguely beneficent and thus supports religious feelings.<sup>19</sup> This unified sensibility is quite harmonious with Epicurean ideas.

As an expression of the romantic theory of art, the especially sensitive imagination of the artist, which affords him the power to feel acutely, may be viewed as a manifestation of nature<sup>20</sup> in man. Poetry is feeling and, thus, truth.<sup>21</sup> The early Wordsworth, especially in "Tintern Abbey," is an important exponent of this view and is central to Arnold's thinking.<sup>22</sup> In "Memorial Verses," Arnold pays tribute to Wordsworth's

<sup>15</sup> Gottfried, p. 212.

<sup>16</sup> Beach, pp. 20-21, 24-25; Gottfried, pp. 212-213.

<sup>17</sup> Beach, pp. 4-5; Gottfried, p. 213; Madden, p. 156.

<sup>18</sup> Madden, p. 157; Gottfried, p. 213.

<sup>19</sup> Beach, pp. 19, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Madden, p. 157.

<sup>21</sup> Gottfried, p. 213.

<sup>22</sup> Madden, p. 156.

power to unite man with the universe and thus to "make us feel":

He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.  
 He laid us as we lay at birth  
 On the cool flowery lap of earth . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . there was shed  
 On spirits that had long been dead,  
 Spirits dried up and closely furled,  
 The freshness of the early world.<sup>23</sup>

This romantic conception of truth is aesthetically oriented.<sup>24</sup> Arnold quotes Keats as saying, "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth."<sup>25</sup> However, Arnold recognizes that pure sensuousness can transform one into "passion's slave."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the romantic reliance upon the subjective feelings which has been called the "sympathetic imagination"<sup>27</sup> makes the creative act an especially painful one since the poet has to submerge himself in the experiences about which he is writing.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Arnold, "Memorial Verses," (1850), ll. 67, 47-49, 54-57, in The Poems of Matthew Arnold, ed. Kenneth Allott (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1965), pp. 228-229. All subsequent quotations of Arnold's poetry will refer to this volume.

<sup>24</sup> Madden, p. 192.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Arnold, "John Keats" (1880), in Essays in Criticism, Second Series, Vol. IV of The Works of Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1903), 85. Hereafter this work is cited as Works.

<sup>26</sup> Works, p. 75.

<sup>27</sup> Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 80.

<sup>28</sup> Gottfried, pp. 122-123.



Romantics such as Byron and Shelley attempt to find emotional fulfillment in what, for them, seems an indifferent universe. Romantics like Byron and Shelley experience a recurring pattern of alternating intense sensuous indulgence and melancholy longing for unattainable sensuous experiences. Jerome Hamilton Buckley sums up Thomas Carlyle's description of the Byronic period as an escape from the scepticism of the immaterial into a "worship of the 'beauties of art,' a retreat to lonely nature and a self-conscious nurturing of private emotion. Its inevitable outcome was suicide, physical or moral . . . ." <sup>29</sup> Buckley also notes that both Kierkegaard and Tennyson have remarked upon the debilitating effects, moral and social, of uncontrolled passion. <sup>30</sup> Of Byron, Arnold writes: "With shivering heart the strife we saw / Of passion with eternal law." <sup>31</sup> Arnold calls Shelley, who was also the picture of melancholy restlessness, an "ineffectual angel" in both his poetry and his life. <sup>32</sup> Romantic figures often turn to the elemental forces of nature for fulfillment of their passions. Byron "is romantic in his craving to identify himself with, to lose himself in, these wild and elemental forces." <sup>33</sup> In

<sup>29</sup> Buckley, p. 36, summarizing and quoting Thomas Carlyle, Lectures On the History of Literature (New York, 1892), pp. 190-224.

<sup>30</sup> Buckley, p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> "Memorial Verses" (1850), ll. 8-9.

<sup>32</sup> "Shelley" (1888), Works, 185.

<sup>33</sup> Beach, p. 36.

romanticism, as in Epicureanism, man's ability to feel provides the link between him and the objective universe. Wordsworth is able to reproduce a synthesis of things because he has resolved, unlike many other romantics, the intellectual debate which posits a hostile universe. Others distort the Wordsworthian ideal by becoming dominated by their passions and submerging themselves in the sensuous. The implications of this romantic orientation are clarified when viewed from the perspective of the existentialist.

In Nicolas Berdyaev's opinion, when these romantics began trying to reunite themselves with objectified nature they actually further alienated themselves from nature's "inner life."<sup>34</sup> Like many predecessors, the romantic, in his struggle against the determinism of nature and the law of civilization, was attracted by the naturalism which predicates world harmony and order or a world soul.

The lure of the cosmos is an ecstatic emergence beyond the closed existence of personality into a world of communion, as the depriving of personality of its very form, and its dissolution.<sup>35</sup>

This lure of the cosmos may assume the form of Dionysianism in all of its forms, such as orgiastic cults and erotic sex. For the existentialist, however, there are ways in which man may achieve unity with the "inward cosmic life, . . . nature in the existential sense . . . ." This can

<sup>34</sup> Nicolas Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom (London: Centenary Press, 1944), pp. 93-94.

<sup>35</sup> Berdyaev, pp. 97, 100.

be achieved through "aesthetic contemplation which is always a trans-figuring creative activity, and by the way of love and compassion . . . ." <sup>36</sup>

Movement in this direction can be seen in the work of Goethe.

Goethe, who, like Byron and Shelley, had experienced a sturm und drang period, transcended it and averted self-annihilation through modification of the tendency toward aestheticism already present in romanticism. This is a movement in the direction of the existentialistic thought which began to develop toward the end of the century. Although Goethe does not escape from naturalism, he redefines man's way of relating to nature. In 1879 Arnold entered in his notebook Pater's evaluation of Goethe: he

illustrates that union of the Romantic spirit, its adventure, its variety, its deep subjectivity, with Hellenism, its transparency, its rationality, its desire for beauty. <sup>37</sup>

In his evaluation of Goethe

He looked on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power;  
. . . . .  
He said: The end is everywhere,  
Art still has truth, take refuge there. <sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Berdyaev, pp. 97, 100.

<sup>37</sup> Matthew Arnold, Note-Books, ed. H. F. Lowry, K. Young and W. H. Dunn (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 321.

<sup>38</sup> "Memorial Verses" (1850), ll. 23-24, 27-28.

—Arnold emphasizes Goethe's realistic critical temper and his tendency to transfigure reality aesthetically.

Goethe's approach to nature is based on Spinoza's idea. It provides a correction for the romantic insistence upon a nature benevolent to man in particular, which the modern spirit finds untenable. In the essay, "Spinoza and the Bible" (1863), Arnold pinpoints those aspects of Spinoza's philosophy which Goethe found most congenial. They are the idea that God, defined as nature or "the sum total of cosmic forces,"<sup>39</sup> operates in accord with universal law rather than in particular regard to man and that man, in reaction to such a universal scheme, should accept an attitude of active Stoicism. The latter idea entails the notion that man should conform to nature, rather than have it conform to man.<sup>40</sup> The ideal toward which men should strive is knowledge of God,<sup>41</sup> which may be emotional rather than intellectual.<sup>42</sup> Through both knowledge and moral living, which has a kind of aesthetic rationale, man may reach self-realization and happiness.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> William Robbins, The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> Works, Super, III, 176.      <sup>41</sup> Works, Super, III, 178.

<sup>42</sup> Robbins, pp. 69, 64. Although Arnold does not elaborate upon the idea in this essay, Spinoza does teach that the masses need only know enough of God's goodness to love him and thus to be obedient to his divine moral law; for Spinoza teaches that "the image and knowledge of God are recorded in the enduring substance of the human heart."

<sup>43</sup> Works, Super, III, 177.

The most attractive element of Spinoza's philosophy for Goethe, as an "artist and emotionalist,"<sup>44</sup> as well as for Arnold, is Spinoza's mysticism, with its appeal to the imagination.<sup>45</sup> This feeling for nature is analogous to that of the Wordsworthian romantics. In "Spinoza and the Bible," Arnold says,

Spinoza first impresses Goethe and any man like Goethe, and then he composes him; first he fills and satisfies his imagination by the width and grandeur of his view of nature, and then he fortifies and stills his mobile, straining, passionate, poetic temperament by the moral lesson he draws from his view of nature. And a moral lesson not of mere resigned acquiescence, not of melancholy quietism, but of joyful activity within the limits of man's true sphere.<sup>46</sup>

The force of nature, though modified in concept, is still revered as Wordsworth reveres it in "Tintern Abbey."<sup>47</sup>

In Goethe's writings, nature is represented as a self-sufficient cosmic force, which is indifferent to man. Unlike the Wordsworthian nature, this nature encompasses all things, including all contradictions and thus, it has an evolutionary, naturalistic aspect. Man, including his spiritual faculties, is a product of it; and since he can not free himself from its laws, he must accept them.<sup>48</sup> A capsule of these ideas is presented in the

<sup>44</sup> James Bentley Orrick, Matthew Arnold and Goethe, Publications of the English Goethe Society, ed. J. G. Robertson (London: William Dawson and Sons, Ltd., 1966), p. 34.

<sup>45</sup> Madden, pp. 152-153.

<sup>46</sup> Works, Super, III, 177.

<sup>47</sup> Madden, p. 156.

<sup>48</sup> Beach, pp. 295, 287-288, 278.

"Fragment uber die Natur":

Nature: we are surrounded and wrapped about by her—unable to break loose from her . . . . Men are all within her, and she within all . . . . Even that which is most unnatural is still natural . . . . You obey her laws even when you strive against them. She is everything.<sup>49</sup>

For Goethe, too, man's happiness lies in realization of his unity with nature. As in Epicurean and romantic formulations, this unity is experienced imaginatively through the senses and emotions.<sup>50</sup>

In contrast to romantic ideas, however, in art as in morality, Spinoza's active Stoicism brings limit and balance to Goethe's feelings without eliminating them. For Goethe, the imagination, which is a manifestation of nature in man, is an ordering faculty which he calls architectonice.<sup>51</sup> Arnold defines this concept in the "Preface of 1853" as "that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the abundance of illustration."<sup>52</sup> Edward Caird explains, "The poetic truth of the passions shows itself . . . only when their conflict leads to their purification, and so reveals a higher principle."<sup>53</sup> Goethe expresses this idea, along with the judgment that poetry and philosophy are the highest triumphs of nature in man, in the poem, "Dauer in Wechsel."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Beach, p. 285.

<sup>50</sup> Beach, p. 285.

<sup>51</sup> Edward Caird, Essays on Literature and Philosophy (Glasgow, 1892), p. 84, quoted in Madden, p. 153.

<sup>52</sup> Works, Super, I, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Madden, p. 153.

<sup>54</sup> Madden, p. 158.

<sup>55</sup> Beach, p. 283.

Goethe finds the perfect embodiment of his ideal of aesthetic balance, disinterestedness, serenity, wholeness, and perfect beauty in Greek art and literature. He believes that the romantic represents sickness; and the classic, health and joy.<sup>56</sup> The aesthetic norm, which is re-introduced from the classical period, requires a detachment from the personal involvement in experience and feeling, from the "egoistic subjectivity"<sup>57</sup> which characterized romanticism. From an aesthetic point of view, beauty is the sole criterion upon which one judges an experience, be it a work of art or an occurrence in life.<sup>58</sup> The principle of the aesthetic experience is based on the Epicurean beliefs that the senses are the ultimate contacts with reality and that there is an imminent standard of truth in nature.<sup>59</sup>

Goethe is only one of a number of German thinkers, including Herder, Lessing, and Schiller, who turned to the aesthetic norm as a tool for reconciliation of the various existing dichotomies—ethical and cultural

<sup>56</sup> Helen C. White, "Matthew Arnold and Goethe," PMLA, 36 (September 1921), 451-452.

<sup>57</sup> Edward Bullough, Aesthetics: Lectures and Essays, ed. with introduction by Elizabeth Wilkenson (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1957), p. 78.

<sup>58</sup> Bullough, pp. 65-66, 77-78. It should be noted that a distinction is being made between an aesthetic standard for achieving a moral truth, which is being discussed here, and the aestheticism of the late nineteenth century, which made beauty an end in itself.

<sup>59</sup> Bullough, pp. 28, 80.

as well as artistic.<sup>60</sup> The aesthetic ideal carries over into culture as the humanistic idea of the harmonious perfection of all man's faculties, which unifies him with nature.<sup>61</sup> In the poem, "Vermächtnis," Goethe, like Herder and Lessing, gives a moral coloring to his aesthetic humanism by urging self-mastery. He does so because a sense of morality is part of the harmonious development, the natural development, of the individual.<sup>62</sup> In this poem, also, Goethe states that when man achieves an aesthetically balanced harmony of all his faculties, as when an artist produces an aesthetically balanced artistic whole, unity with nature is achieved.<sup>63</sup> This modification of the romantic emphasis upon the feelings to an emphasis upon aesthetically ordered and distanced feelings, which contribute to a beautiful whole, still depends upon the senses and the emotions which they evoke and is a further application of the basic Epicurean method of attaining truth in a naturalistic universe.

Goethe's theory of art and development toward an aesthetic humanism are, in many ways, parallel to Nietzsche's mature development of

<sup>60</sup> David J. DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1969), pp. 166-167.

<sup>61</sup> White, pp. 442-444; Bullough, p. 64; Edith A. Runge, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Sturm und Drang Literature (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), pp. 33-34.

<sup>62</sup> Bullough, p. 86; Beach, p. 283.

<sup>63</sup> Stange, pp. 131, 133; Runge, pp. 26, 32-34; Beach, p. 283.



the concept of the Dionysian impulse. According to the naturalistic philosophy of Nietzsche, who is a nineteenth-century precursor of existentialism, matter and spirit, which include man and all segments of the universe, are one.<sup>64</sup> The essential cosmic force is the "will to power," which is the desire to transcend the self. This consists in the sublimation and ordering, by the Apollonian force of reason, of passion or strength, which the philosopher had formerly designated the Dionysian element.<sup>65</sup> The supreme examples of those living the "Good Life," which Nietzsche regards as the moral life, are the types of the artist and the philosopher, who "employ their passions in spiritual pursuits and are the most nearly perfect of men; for the powerful life is the creative life."<sup>66</sup> Specifically, in the Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche defines the creation of the beauty of Greek tragedy as "a triumphant response to suffering, and a celebration of life . . . ."<sup>67</sup> When he chooses an example of the artist as a powerful man, he chooses Goethe, who seeks "totality." Nietzsche describes Goethe's conception of man as one for whom

there is no longer anything that is forbidden, unless it be weakness, whether called vice or virtue. Such a spirit who has become free stands amid the cosmos with a joyous and trusting fatalism, in the

<sup>64</sup> Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1950), p. 225.

<sup>65</sup> Kaufmann, pp. 185-189.      <sup>66</sup> Kaufmann, p. 244.

<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, quoted in Kaufmann, p. 110.

faith that only the particular is loathsome, and that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole—he does not negate any more.<sup>68</sup>

Affirmation of the totality of the self constitutes an affirmation of the totality of the cosmos.<sup>69</sup> Thus, prescribing a way for one to unify himself with nature through the development of the aesthetic consciousness eliminates the prospect of self-destruction, which is the existentialist's chief objection to romantic naturalism.

Under the influence of Goethe, Arnold will be shown to approximate Nietzsche's tendencies in many instances. Arnold develops a conception of a method for dealing with experience consisting of emotion tempered with reason, which he calls "imaginative reason."<sup>70</sup> This parallels Nietzsche's formula for dealing with experience. Like Nietzsche, also, he is drawn to Goethe, who exemplifies the desired orientation toward experience.<sup>71</sup> In the "Preface" to Merope (1858), Arnold, again like Nietzsche praises tragedy as the most appropriate art form that may be used as a vehicle for presenting experience made into art and emotion in controlled form, and, thus, for inspiring the reader to seek personal balance and perfection.<sup>72</sup> The ultimate goal of Arnold's concept of

<sup>68</sup> Nietzsche, in Twilight of the Gods, quoted by Kaufmann, p. 244.

<sup>69</sup> Kaufmann, p. 245.

<sup>70</sup> See below, pp. 56-57.

<sup>71</sup> See above, pp. 14-15 ; below, p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> See below, p. 52.

"imaginative reason" is culture, which calls for man's perfection in all his faculties.<sup>73</sup> By viewing Arnold's developing thought from the perspective of the development of the thought of Nietzsche, who is a precursor of existentialism, one may determine the direction in which Arnold's thought tends.

In the preceding pages the development of two slightly different but related poetic theories has been traced. Each of these theories, romantic and German Hellenic, correlates with an idea of nature and man's relationship to it. The two conceptions of nature are themselves rather similar. In the romantic frame of reference the concept of God is replaced by a concept of nature as a benevolent creative force permeating all things, including the mind of man. The German Hellenic concept of nature, based largely upon Spinoza's ideas, also takes the place of a concept of God. The concept of nature as a generative cosmic force present in all things is much like the romantic concept, except that here nature is thought of as indifferent to man. Both of these poetic theories involve for the artist a sense of cosmos, a sense of oneness, or unity, with the remainder of the universe. The two poetic theories are basic to the entire development of the present study.

First, the poetic orientation of sensibility<sup>74</sup> is based upon romantic

<sup>73</sup> See below, pp. 67-68.

<sup>74</sup> The use of the term sensibility in this study comes from Arnold's own use of the term to describe a devotion to emotions in The Study of Celtic Literature (1866), Works, Super, III, 346.

subjectivism. According to this theory, the self is dispersed in feeling; and through this feeling one gains contact with the rest of the universe. Thus, nature here is approachable through feeling. This conception is harmonious with the Epicurean conception of nature and man's relation to it; for according to Epicureanism, nature is a creative force permeating a corporeal cosmos. Man establishes contact between his soul and the material world through his feelings, senses and imagination. The romantic theory concentrates on the use of the feelings and imagination.

Secondly, the poetic theory of aesthetic consciousness has been discussed. This term, aesthetic consciousness, is derived from William A. Madden's use of it particularly to describe the orientation toward experience prescribed in Arnold's prose criticism.<sup>75</sup> It is analogous to the term "imaginative reason," used by Arnold in "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment" (1864).<sup>76</sup> This poetic theory is Goethe's modification of the romantic devotion to feeling with the idea of aesthetic balance. It is the beauty of aesthetic perfection in man and in the work of art which provides one with a sense of cosmos. This theory is a further modification of the Epicurean concept of the function of the senses, feelings, and imagination as man's links with nature. Here the focus is particularly upon the senses as they figure in the aesthetic faculty. With these theories and

<sup>75</sup>

Madden, p. 9 et passim.

<sup>76</sup>

Works, Super, III, 230.

their implications of a concept of nature in mind, one may survey Arnold's own developing poetic theory as it parallels the development just outlined.

As G. Robert Stange points out, the question of the manner in which the poet may deal with experience is a central concern of Arnold. Stange notes that in the poet's thinking, aesthetic and ethical ideas coalesce, so that ultimately the correct reaction to experience for the poet is, by implication, the correct reaction for any man.<sup>77</sup> In romantic thought and in Goethe's Hellenized thought, cultivation of feeling and feeling tempered by reason, respectively, are considered vehicles for relating the self to the universe and thus for perfecting the self and experiencing truth. Therefore, although the artist is considered more capable of such an orientation than other men, the orientation may be cultivated by any man in order to perfect himself rather than to create art. Both of these ideas as well as Arnold's parallel the Epicurean belief that through exercise of feeling and experience of pleasure, one may relate to nature and thus lead a moral life. In the following paragraphs then, the development of Arnold's poetic theory, which consists of both romantic and classical elements,<sup>78</sup> will be traced.

Matthew Arnold seems to have been deeply aware of the inherent value of the beautiful at the age of nine, when he recalled first having been impressed by the poetry of Virgil.<sup>79</sup> In accounts of his Oxford years, it is

<sup>77</sup> Stange, pp. 15-16; see also E. D. H. Johnson, p. 162.

<sup>78</sup> Trilling, p. 75.

<sup>79</sup> Madden, p. 4.

a commonplace to describe him as a dandy who generally avoided the religious, social and scientific controversies of the day.<sup>80</sup> This harmonizes well with his early Epicurean lyric which states his chief ambition as the making of garlands "to crown Eugenia's hair."<sup>81</sup> Perhaps a clue to the poet's behavior is given in his playful protest against involvement in the world of academia:

It seems not clear why I should stand at Oriel: for wisdom I have not, nor skilfulness—after the Flesh—no, nor yet Learning: and whowill see a delicate Spirit tossed on Earth, opossum like, with the down fresh upon him, from the maternal Pouches of nature, in the grimed, and rusty coalheaver, sweating and grunting . . . . I have other ways to go.<sup>82</sup>

In this passage, be it ever so playfully, the poet related his conception of true naturalness to the realm of beauty and feeling and opposed it to the world of cold rationalism, of the "unpoetical."<sup>83</sup>

From the beginning of the young poet's correspondence with his friend Arthur Hugh Clough, he set forth a belief that poetry must be an integrated whole, the chief attribute of which is beauty of form.<sup>84</sup> Such a state of aesthetic balance is apparently much more easily envisioned than attained. After perusing Keats's letters, at Arthur Clough's suggestion, he

<sup>80</sup> Trilling, pp. 21-24; Culler, Imaginative Reason pp. 56-58.

<sup>81</sup> "Horatian Echo" (1887), 1. 24.

<sup>82</sup> Matthew Arnold, The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. Lowry (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 56. Hereafter designated Lowry.

<sup>83</sup> Lowry, p. 99.

<sup>84</sup> Lowry, p. 100.

exclaimed, "What harm he has done in English Poetry!" Then he went on to diagnose the romantic poet's shortcoming as a passionate desire for "movement and fulness" which he could not produce because he lacked "an Idea of the world."<sup>85</sup> Then Arnold admitted his own romantic longing for experience, for emotional and sensual fulfillment in the world: "I have had that desire for fulness without respect of the means, which may become almost maniacal."<sup>86</sup> It will be demonstrated that Arnold struggled to suppress his romantic tendency in the early poems, but that he was unable to do so, with sustained success, until well after 1853.

In "The Strayed Reveller" (1849), the title poem of Arnold's first volume of poetry, are analyzed the positive and negative ramifications of the romantic sensibility.<sup>87</sup> In the poem, the young poet, "beloved of Pan" (l. 80), has come to participate in the orgiastic rites at the temple of Iacchus, who is also called Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry and the symbol of the "mystery of life and its relation with death."<sup>88</sup> Later, in the temple of Circe, to which he has wandered from the revelry, he explains to Ulysses the Dionysian view of the poet's approach to experience. He has been taught by Silenus, who is the former teacher of Dionysus, that "wise bards" can see and sing the spectacle of life truly only by becoming

<sup>85</sup> Lowry, p. 97.

<sup>86</sup> Lowry, p. 97.

<sup>87</sup> Gottfried, pp. 122-126, interprets both Dionysian and Circean approaches as romantic; but his conclusion seems invalid.

<sup>88</sup> Trilling, p. 92.

what they sing, which entails "oh, what labour! / O prince, what pain!" (ll. 208, 210-11). The pain involved here is that of submersion of the personality in vicarious experiences as well as the pain which must be taken into consideration, along with the beauty and pleasure, in a realistic view of life in a world of natural limitation.<sup>89</sup> The poet seems to be saying that it is only through romantic sensuous-emotional involvement in experience that one may arrive at truth.<sup>90</sup> The presence of pain in the creative experience is common also to the Hellenic theory; however, at least in part, the origin of the pain is different. The notion of experiencing life as it is, is incorporated in the Hellenic ideas. The painful experiences of Tiresias and the Centaurs, pointed out in the poem, seem quite similar to Goethe's analysis of the results of employment of the poetic orientation dominated by the Hellenic element of balance. "From Homer and Polygnotus I every day learn more clearly . . . that in our life here above ground we have properly speaking, to enact Hell."<sup>91</sup> However, one exhibiting the Hellenic orientation is subject not only to the pain which is part of ordinary human experience but also to the pain of maintaining a state of personal detachment from the vicarious life experiences which form the substance

<sup>89</sup> Robert A. Donovan, "Philomela, A Major Theme in Arnold's Poetry," Victorian Newsletter, No. 12 (Autumn 1957), pp. 4-5; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 70-71.

<sup>90</sup> Trilling, p. 91; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 71.

<sup>91</sup> Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe, vi, 230, quoted in Works, Super, I, 102; Madden, p. 164, explains the quotation as classical realism.



of the art.

The alternative approach to experience is symbolized in the poem by Circe, who is also the enchantress of the Odyssey, who turns men into swine.<sup>92</sup> In her temple is to be found wine for a kind of revelry much more pleasant than that of Dionysus. After drinking this wine, the young poet falls into a sleep which is filled with a "bright procession / Of eddying forms" (ll. 4-5). He, like the gods, sees without painful effort pleasant vignettes, which seem to be real but are not. Pain is lacking in attainment of these visions because he has fallen victim to scene painting, which is a manifestation of aestheticism,<sup>93</sup> against which Arnold cautions Clough.<sup>94</sup> Here everything is viewed from the exterior; but beautiful form alone fails to take into account life as it is. Though the poet sees much, he never experiences life; images just pass through his mind. Circe is the temptress of pure sensuousness,<sup>95</sup> whom Arnold, at this time believes ensnares Keats and Tennyson and others.<sup>96</sup> The images which the youth relates while in Circe's temple, show signs of the "multitudinousness,"<sup>97</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Gottfried, p. 124.

<sup>93</sup> Gottfried, pp. 124-126; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 74-76.

<sup>94</sup> Lowry, p. 98.

<sup>95</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 74.

<sup>96</sup> Lowry, pp. 97, 63.

<sup>97</sup> Lowry, p. 97.

the disunity, and the lack of substance for which Arnold criticizes those who are lured by the aestheticism, which is latent in the romantic commitment to sensibility.<sup>98</sup>

The romantic poetic theory which is analyzed in the "Strayed Reveller," at the beginning of his first volume, proved attractive to him again and again until 1853, when it was actually absorbed into his mature theory; thus the young poet was vulnerable to both its positive and negative aspects. This poetic orientation is manifested, Arnold believed, in the Celtic makeup, as well as in certain individual artists, including Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, and Maurice de Guérin.<sup>99</sup> This "sensibility," as Arnold designated it, predicates the romantic inclination "to react against the despotism of fact."<sup>100</sup> It is the desire for fullness, which includes a sense of unity with the self and the world; it is a youthful Titanic aspiration.<sup>101</sup>

In "On the Study of Celtic Literature" (1866), Arnold explains sensibility:

For sensibility, the power of quick and strong perception and emotion, is one of the very prime constituents of genius, perhaps its most positive constituent; it is to the soul, what good senses are to the body, the grand natural condition of successful activity. Sensibility gives

<sup>98</sup> Buckley, pp. 20-21; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 184.

<sup>99</sup> Madden, pp. 167, 175-176; Trilling, p. 218.

<sup>100</sup> Trilling, p. 17.

<sup>101</sup> Madden, p. 169.

genius its materials; one cannot have too much of it, if one can but keep its master and not be its slave.<sup>102</sup>

Arnold concedes, in the essay on Keats (1880), that joy and truth follow from beauty, although devotion to beauty alone may lead one to be "passion's slave."<sup>103</sup> This power to feel is, in any case, the central tool to poetic insight, which is equated with truth.<sup>104</sup> In his essay on Maurice de Guérin (1863), Arnold distinguishes this "naturalistic" faculty from a strictly moral one and explains that the poet exercises it by passively serving as a "sort of human aeolian harp, catching and rendering every rustle of Nature . . . to assist at the evolution of the whole life of the world . . . ."<sup>105</sup> As Allott points out, this is quite harmonious with the experience of the Strayed Reveller when he is in Circe's palace;<sup>106</sup> and therefore this facet of the theory may have both positive and negative ramifications. Perhaps the unique contribution of the orientation is that it affords a "magical" quality to treatments of nature and can

awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them /natural objects/, and of our relation with them. When this sense is awakened in us, as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us as no other can.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Works, Super, III, 346.

<sup>103</sup> Works, IV, 85, 75.

<sup>104</sup> Madden, p. 167.

<sup>105</sup> Works, Super, III, 30.

<sup>106</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 66, note 11. 3-6.

<sup>107</sup> "Maurice de Guérin," Works, Super, III, 13.

Through exercise of the senses and emotions, man's unity with "a sacred energy" of cosmic nature is perceived.<sup>108</sup>

In Arnold's previously quoted discussions of the possible debilitating effects of sensibility, the poet senses what Berdyaev, the philosopher, asserts. Modern sensibility-oriented youths, who aspire toward personal joyous fulfillment and a sense of unity with nature, meet an alien world, for which they are willing to make no allowance; and, like the Celt, they must endure passionate longing and Byronic melancholy.<sup>109</sup> Many of Arnold's early poems chronicle such frustration. The "New Sirens: A Palinode" (1849) is not, as Allott suggests,<sup>110</sup> a decisive recantation of sensibility; rather it is a poem without a clear resolution. After cataloging the unsatisfactorily fleeting nature of romantic love and unleashed sensibility in art and life in general, the persona is still unable to reject what beauty and pleasure sensibility does provide. In later life, the poet describes this poem of 1843 to 1845 as "a work of his youth, a work produced in long-past days of ardour and emotion."<sup>111</sup> Here, somewhat as in the "Strayed Reveller," the band of poets has been lured down to the palace of the sirens; they have exchanged their Apollonian laurels for the

<sup>108</sup> "Wordsworth" (1879), Works, IV, 113.

<sup>109</sup> Madden, p. 164.

<sup>110</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 33, note on title.

<sup>111</sup> Arnold, note to reprint of "New Sirens" in Macmillan's Magazine, Dec. 1876, quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 33, headnote.

myrtles of pleasure, as the poet later says the sirens themselves have done.

These new sirens, who hold out the promise of spiritual fulfillment in their emotional romantic love, prove to be a subtle modern version of the ancient sensual sirens and a symbol of the romantic temptation to plunge the self into feelings:<sup>112</sup> "Only, what we feel, we know" (l. 84). Stange explains the lure of the sensual and emotional:

As at sunrise, in his youth, man quickens to the life of the senses, so at the beginning of the century men responded to that art which offered a pure and naive awakening to the power of feeling.<sup>113</sup>

The youth finds, contrary to his greatest wishes, that in the light of day the "mimic raptures" of the dawn change to "frozen calms" and "fits of pain" (l. 101), set in a symbolically lush natural lawn, reminiscent of the Wordsworthian world of unity of man with nature as an immediately present phenomenon:

But, for me, my thoughts are straying  
Where at sunrise, through your vines,  
On these lawns I saw you playing,  
Hanging garlands on your odorous pines.  
(ll. 93-96)

Romantic love does not endure; and when it dies, as man reaches maturity,<sup>115</sup> the beauty of its temptresses fades and their natural setting, which

<sup>112</sup> Stange, pp. 40, 42.

<sup>113</sup> Stange, p. 47.

<sup>114</sup> Madden, pp. 50-51; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 6-10.

<sup>115</sup> Stange, p. 47.

seemed to indicate a unity of man and nature produced by the romantic sensibility, becomes a mere mirage in the burning plain of life, which the youth describes as a "waste of sunless greens" (l. 212).<sup>116</sup> Still he leaves his course of action a question:

—Shall I seek, that I may scorn her,  
Her I loved at eventide?  
Shall I ask, what faded mourner  
Stands, at daybreak, weeping by my side?  
(ll. 271-74)

A solid rejection of the romantic orientation to experience implied by the title is lacking in this poem; for although the persona delineates the futility of it, he loves its fleeting pleasure and beauty.

All the implications of the romantic love of the "New Sirens" seem to anticipate remarkably the series of poems dealing with what is generally considered to have been Arnold's real love affair with the French girl Marguerite, in 1848-1849. These poems record the reliance upon sensibility and its failure. Therefore, Kathleen Tillotson is probably right in saying that Marguerite "is, has been poetically made, a part of the experience which was among the material of all his poems."<sup>117</sup> Another approach to experience through the highly subjective sensibility is presented in the

<sup>116</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 13-14.

<sup>117</sup> Kathleen Tillotson, "Yes: In the Sea of Life," RES, NS 3 (October 1952), 362.

poem, "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" (1852).<sup>118</sup> Arnold wrote Clough in 1848 that he had taken "up Obermann, and refuged myself with him in his forest against your Zeit Geist."<sup>119</sup> About the same time that he dismisses Marguerite, he also dismisses his old master, Obermann.<sup>120</sup>

In his 1869 essay on Obermann, Arnold notes outstanding traits in the romantic figure who represents Senancour, who is the author of Obermann: these traits are "inwardness," "austere and sad sincerity," and a "delicate feeling for nature."<sup>121</sup> Obermann is, for Arnold, the epitome of the modern romantic. His poetry was not well accepted because it told secrets "too deep."<sup>122</sup> These are secrets of the tragic alienation of life.<sup>123</sup> In the first poem on Obermann Arnold states that the figure is torn between the passionate Epicurean<sup>124</sup> longing for fulfillment of feeling

<sup>118</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 130, says that Obermann represents the same kind of "spiritual morbidity" as Marguerite.

<sup>119</sup> Lowry, p. 95.

<sup>120</sup> Paull F. Baum, Ten Studies in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold (Durham: Duke University Press, 1958), p. 67; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 129.

<sup>121</sup> Iris Esther Sells, Matthew Arnold and France: The Poet (Cambridge: The University Press, 1935), p. 260.

<sup>122</sup> Arnold, "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,'" l. 43.

<sup>123</sup> Trilling, p. 80.

<sup>124</sup> Sells, p. 51.

in the world and the search for fulfillment in solitude within the self in the alpine retreat: "The glow, he cries, the thrill of life, / Where, where do these abound?" (ll. 97-98). In the mountain solitude, he propounds self-mastery and detachment,<sup>125</sup> which allow one to see life as a whole:

He who hath watched, not shared, the strife,  
Knows how the day hath gone.  
He only lives with the world's life,  
Who hath renounced his own.

(11. 101-04)

However, sharing in the cultural disorder of his age, Obermann can not find peace within himself.<sup>126</sup> Since he is a kind of prisoner of sensibility, he can find only melancholy within.<sup>127</sup> Obermann's one source of pleasure and peace is isolated moments of communion with nature.<sup>128</sup> Through his commitment to sensibility, he, like Wordsworth and Maurice de Guérin, can perceive a unity with the cosmic force of nature, through the beauties of external nature:

How often, where the slopes are green  
On Jaman, hast thou sate and  
.....  
Heard accents of the eternal tongue  
Through the pine branches play—  
Listened, and felt thyself grown young!  
(ll. 113-14, 125-27)

125 Trilling, p. 110

126 Trilling, p. 29.

<sup>127</sup> Stange, pp. 72, 75; E. D. H. Johnson, *Alien Vision*, p. 172.

128 Sells, p. 254.



But the only lasting peace and union with the universe that appears possible for such a melancholy soul as Obermann is death and dissolution of the personality in the elements, which is a solution that is parallel with Byronic romanticism. Thus Arnold renders Obermann's epitaph as reading, "Eternity, be thou / My refuge!"<sup>129</sup>

When Arnold renounces the restless, desperate facet of Obermann's orientation and accepts the world, he admits that he still leaves a part of himself—"half of my life"<sup>130</sup>—with the romantic figure. He admits that he will never really forget the desire for fulfillment through sensibility.<sup>131</sup> But he will save himself from Obermann's unfruitful melancholy by adopting the moral code of self-mastery which Obermann tried to impose upon himself. By adopting the stance of resignation he will emulate Obermann's best characteristic<sup>132</sup> and will become what Arnold describes in the first Obermann poem as one of the "Children of the Second Birth . . . . Unspotted by the world" (ll. 143, 156). In "Resignation" (1849), the poet sets forth more clearly this detached approach to experience, which, at the least, allows one to come to terms with reality and retain his own being, and which can even afford a basis for aesthetic transfiguration of reality in such a way as to produce a sense of cosmic unity. This poetic

<sup>129</sup> "Obermann Once More" (1867), ll. 271-272.

<sup>130</sup> "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,'" l. 132.

<sup>131</sup> Madden, p. 115, mentions this idea, but does not relate it to this poem.

<sup>132</sup> Madden, p. 113.

orientation, which also serves as an ethical stance,<sup>133</sup> evidences the influence of Spinoza and Goethe, whom Arnold began to study about 1842.<sup>134</sup> Arnold tried to impose this approach to experience upon himself, with only temporary success, apparently as early as 1843, when he began writing "Resignation."<sup>135</sup> The attitude of moral self-mastery, which can also be described as the "secret life" of order,<sup>136</sup> receives increasing stress in the volume of 1852,<sup>137</sup> so that one can observe a gradual shift in the development of Arnold's poetic theory from one emphasizing sensibility toward one emphasizing Hellenic balance.

In "Resignation," the speaker addresses Fausta, who probably represents Arnold's sister, and who, like the pilgrims and others who are subjectively involved in the life of the world, is dominated by sensibility.<sup>138</sup> She longs passionately for a "goal which, gained, may give repose"<sup>139</sup> and is, thus, imprisoned by time. As in "Tintern Abbey,"<sup>140</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Stange, pp. 62, 70.

<sup>134</sup> Madden, pp. 152-153.

<sup>135</sup> Allott, p. 84.

<sup>136</sup> Anderson, p. 159, points out that this is an element common to both Stoic and Epicurean thought.

<sup>137</sup> Madden, pp. 102-103.

<sup>138</sup> Trilling, p. 93.

<sup>139</sup> "Resignation," l. 17.

<sup>140</sup> Gottfried, p. 219.

the pair revisits the setting of a former walk after a ten years' absence. The speaker finds the objects of nature unchanged; they are in eternal process: "This world in which we draw our breath, / In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death" (ll. 229-30). To his chagrin, he and his sister, modern mortals, have not changed either; they still retain their youthful desire for fulfillment.<sup>141</sup> However, on the first walk, they had felt completely happy and at one with nature, and now they sense a lack of unity with nature. Indeed they both have made themselves prisoners of the natural order.<sup>142</sup> Fausta especially feels herself a slave of the natural order and wishes to rebel. The speaker contrasts her romantic, sensibility-oriented attitude toward experience with that of the gipsy who is so much a part of the cycle of nature that he seems to blend with the plants and lower animals<sup>143</sup> and is insensitive to normal human feelings, "sinking wholly into the moment"<sup>144</sup> and resigning himself to a life controlled by the natural order rather than by man. Though man's potential is truly greater than that realized by the gipsy, he can learn resignation from the gipsy, the narrator advises.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Stange, pp. 58, 66; both Baum, p. 27, and Gottfried, p. 222, acknowledge that he is describing two tendencies within himself.

<sup>142</sup> Stange, p. 60; W. S. Johnson, p. 77; Alan Roper, Arnold's Poetic Landscapes (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), pp. 134-135..

<sup>143</sup> Gottfried, p. 221; Stange, p. 61.

<sup>144</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 79. <sup>145</sup> Stange, p. 61; Baum, pp. 22-23.

It is, however, toward the orientation of the poet, as he conceives of it, that the speaker believes that one should work. In classic Sophoclean and thus Goethean fashion the poet avoids the self-absorption which is the motive of the passionate romantic poet.<sup>146</sup> The orientation toward experience which the speaker outlines is one which incorporates the best of the so-called romantic and classic worlds; the Dionysian elements of sensory experience and emotion, discussed in the "Strayed Reveller," are tempered by the Sophoclean "ever-balanced soul."<sup>147</sup> Although the poet possesses a "quicker pulse" than that of others with which to feel, he "Subdues that energy to scan / Not his own course, but that of man" (ll. 145, 146-47). He experiences vicariously the pain and joy of life; but he rises above the moment, keeping himself apart from the world.<sup>148</sup> The speaker describes the result of this detachment:

Leaned on his gate, he gazes—tears  
Are in his eyes, and in his ears  
The murmur of a thousand years.  
Before him he sees life unroll,

<sup>146</sup> Trilling, pp. 93-94; Madden, p. 111; Baum, p. 25; Stange, pp. 64-66; Tinker and Lowry, pp. 65-67.

<sup>147</sup> "To a Friend" (1849), l. 9; Trilling, pp. 99-100, suggests that "Resignation" is the antithesis of the "Strayed Reveller"; however, Alan Roper, in Arnold's Poetic Landscapes, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), pp. 134-35, finds the sensuous experiences central to Arnold's conception of the poet's orientation.

<sup>148</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 79; see also Stange, pp. 63-64; Madden, p. 111; Trilling, pp. 93-94; Baum, p. 23; Gottfried, p. 221.

A placid and continuous whole—  
 That general life, which does not cease.  
 Whose secret is not joy, but peace.  
 (ll. 186-92)

Through the exercise of the "aesthetic consciousness," the poet is able to order his sensations into a unity of past, present, and future. Thought and feeling are, indeed, merged; and the poet experiences the all-encompassing cosmic force, which is called "the general life," of all things, which transcends the temporal.<sup>149</sup>

The melancholy aspect of the stance can be accounted for as the pain which the poet experiences in the necessary relinquishment of subjective experience in order to experience the general life<sup>150</sup> and, thus, the realization of the inherent melancholia of the human condition, which is a condition characterized by subordination of individual happiness to the scheme of the great natural order.<sup>151</sup> While Gottfried, who compares this poem with Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," acknowledges a kinship between the two poets in presenting some conception of a universal nature, he points out the great difference in the practical implications of the two

<sup>149</sup> Trilling, pp. 93-94; Madden, p. 111, 113; Stange, pp. 63-64; Gottfried, pp. 221-222; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 78-79; Madden, pp. 138-139 et passim, uses the phrase "aesthetic consciousness" to define Arnold's mature conception of the poet's orientation toward experience as propounded in his prose.

<sup>150</sup> Trilling, p. 95.

<sup>151</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 79.

conceptions of nature for man. Instead of the joy and life which Wordsworth found in the conception, Arnold, in the concluding stanza of the poem, seems to find peace through giving up life, through disillusioned resignation in terms of which he characterizes nature.<sup>152</sup> The explanation of this contrasting attitude lies in the fact that the personae of this poem have a much more difficult time achieving a joyous sense of unity with nature than Wordsworth had. It must be remembered that neither the speaker nor his sister has attained the ideal state of the poet; therefore, the speaker, in the end, must contrast the peace of resignation to the wished for but unattainable romantic ideal of sensuous fulfillment. At the same time that he recommends the application of resignation in one's ethical life, as the first step toward achieving the illumination of the poet,<sup>153</sup> he finds himself emphasizing the negative aspects of that resignation. Turning to the device of the pathetic fallacy as he often does when he tries to explain the human situation by analogy with external nature, the poet has his speaker observe that objects of external nature endure "rather than rejoice" (l. 270). Thus, man, too, must resign himself to "the something that infects the world" (l. 278). This is Arnold's designation of the universal law of necessity before which man is powerless.<sup>154</sup> The two figures in the poem live in the world of the later

<sup>152</sup> Gottfried, pp. 221-22; see also Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 37-39.

<sup>153</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 80.

<sup>154</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 95.

romantics, who were driven by passionate desires for emotional fulfillment, which is precluded by the natural order. For such persons, the only means to a measure of emotional fulfillment in life is the Spinozan path of resignation to the natural order prescribed by science and a subsequent sense of joy within limits. Thus the poet is moving, though quite hesitantly, toward the Hellenic idea of the poet's position, which will ultimately allow one to experience a sense of joyous unity with the universe which transcends the limitations of human existence as described by science.

As Madden points out,<sup>155</sup> in the middle portion of Arnold's poetic career he concentrates on individual moral restraint. He wrote Clough in 1849 that he was "sniffing after a moral atmosphere to respire in" and that his goal was a "distinct seeing of my way as far as my own nature is concerned."<sup>156</sup> External nature is called upon to be an aesthetic inspiration for a perfection of "toil unsevered from tranquility";<sup>157</sup> however, at this point Arnold has not yet realized the larger joyous Hellenic ideal of aesthetic consciousness. "The Second Best" (1852), a poem written between 1849 and 1852,<sup>158</sup> states the poet's attitude. It says that "Nature's wish" in regard to man's life is that he naturally conform to

<sup>155</sup> Madden, pp. 102-03.

<sup>156</sup> Lowry, pp. 109-10.

<sup>157</sup> "Quiet Work" (1849), l. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 278, headnote.

Moderate tasks and moderate leisure,  
 Quiet living, strick-kept measure  
 Both in suffering and in pleasure.

(ll. 1-3)

But man's intellectual turmoil and emotional longings keep him from his moderate position; thus he must consciously moderate his feelings. This self-mastery, though necessary, is only "second best."<sup>159</sup> He writes to his sister Jane of the pains of giving up youth to take refuge in our "morality and character." "It is," he said,

a melancholy passage from which we emerge shorn of so many beams that we are almost tempted to quarrel with the law of nature which imposes it on us.<sup>160</sup>

Indeed, Madden has called Arnold's poems on morality his "defeat as a poet."<sup>161</sup>

In "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" (1855), the bulk of which was probably composed about 1852,<sup>162</sup> Arnold assesses his aesthetic and religious position as that of one who stands "between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born" (ll. 85-86). In making the symbolic pilgrimage up the mountain to the Carthusian monastery, the speaker for a moment revisits not only the Christian world of the past but also the Wordsworthian world of childhood spontaneity of feeling and harmony with nature. These are two concepts which are closely related

<sup>159</sup> Madden, p. 114.

<sup>160</sup> Arnold, Letters, I, 14.

<sup>161</sup> Madden, p. 114.

<sup>162</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 285, headnote.



in the scientifically unfounded, and thus outworn, romantic ideal of the past.<sup>163</sup> The speaker is now a reluctant follower of "the high, white star of Truth" (l. 69), which represents the unemotional resignation, which, at the moment, does not seem to comfort man any better than the old unscientific faith.<sup>164</sup> He looks upon this remnant of dead Christianity which reminds him of his own earlier faith in the world of feeling.<sup>165</sup> This was the aesthetic and philosophic attitude which held out the promise that, through the exercise of the subjective sensibility, one could achieve, or produce poetically, a sense of oneness with the universe. Since the world of the speaker's time, according to science, is really a "desert of alienation," in which tears of longing have no value and cold, scientific resignation leaves man the pawn of fate,<sup>166</sup> death, which erases the dialogue of the mind, seems to be the only refuge.<sup>167</sup> For the

<sup>163</sup> Madden, pp. 70, 72-73; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 27; Roper, Arnold's Poetic Landscapes, p. 239.

<sup>164</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 92-93; Baum, p. 119; David J. DeLaura, "Matthew Arnold and John Henry Newman: The 'Oxford Sentiment' and the Religion of the Future," Tex. Studies in Lit. and Lang., 6 (Supplement 1965), 585.

<sup>165</sup> Madden, pp. 72-73; Baum, p. 117; Roper, Arnold's Poetic Landscapes, p. 239.

<sup>166</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 28; Madden, p. 73; Trilling, p. 102.

<sup>167</sup> Madden, p. 74, and Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 92, see the peace of death as Arnold's alternative to the modern world; however, they do not connect death with cosmic unity because they, like other critics, have failed to see the full symbolic value of Arnold's poems.

speaker, the cowed forms, which represent a state of death in life, symbolize man in a state of unity with the universe. As the speaker contemplates the figures, he yearns to retain the sense of cosmos which he gains in so doing.<sup>168</sup>

Take me, cowed forms, and fence me round,  
Till I possess my soul again.

(ll. 93-94)

If the melancholia which results from unfulfilled desire<sup>169</sup> cannot be erased through contemplation of these symbolic figures, he requests,

Here leave us to die out with these  
Last of the people who believe.

(ll. 111-12)

He recognizes death as the only refuge.

This symbolic pattern appears repeatedly in Arnold's poems as one of the possible alternatives to alienation. Figures who yearn toward an emotional fulfillment through a sense of unity with the universe, find their goal fleeting; and, in despair, they seek refuge in oblivion. In contemplating their own death and oblivion, they often gain a sense of euphoria because they feel that through oblivion and obliteration of the thinking faculty they will at least be dissolved in and united with elemental nature. After they have actually met their death, the point of view

<sup>168</sup> Baum, p. 119, defines the conflict in terms of the world versus the "soul" represented by the monks.

<sup>169</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 69, note 11.

of the poet or of an observer within the poem is often developed. To the one who contemplates them, the dead figures become symbols of cosmos; that is, they are symbols of the unity of man with the rest of the universe.

Indeed, in this poem both the speaker and the Carthusians are represented as melancholy and death-oriented,<sup>170</sup> a position which the modern world scorns.<sup>171</sup> The monks live on the high bleak mountain slope in a monastery that is austere and coffin-like. The monks, themselves ghostly, live in anticipation of a unity with God beyond the grave.<sup>172</sup> The speaker compares himself and these who share his plight to

. . . children reared in shade  
 Beneath some old world abbey wall . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,  
 Their abbey, and its close of graves!  
 (ll. 169-70, 173-74)

In this portrayal the children are not only dead but also absorbed by the forest.<sup>173</sup> This symbolizes the cosmic unity which is like that experienced in womblike childhood but which is now achieved only below the human level in oblivion.

This poem is a particularly interesting gauge of the development

<sup>170</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 27; Roper, Arnold's Poetic Landscapes, pp. 238, 240-241; Baum, p. 119; Madden, pp. 73-74.

<sup>171</sup> Baum, p. 117.

<sup>172</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 28.

<sup>173</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 27.

of Arnold's poetic theory,<sup>174</sup> because of the significant change which he makes in the last line. In the 1855 version, after indicating that he cannot accept resignation, he also rejects the life of action and pleasure of the sciolist, saying, "Leave our forest to its peace!"<sup>175</sup> In 1867, by which time Arnold has more successfully mastered the attitude of detachment and has, as Allott says, "at least one foot in the camp of the sciolists,"<sup>176</sup> he addresses them in a different tone: "Leave our desert to its peace!" (l. 210). The shift in wording indicates that the retreat into oblivion which had seemed, in 1855, the only refuge for alienated man<sup>177</sup> is becoming, by 1867, less attractive than life in the world would be if only he could cultivate a kind of compromise position encompassing both emotion and detachment. He is definitely between two worlds; he is neither committed to sensibility nor to detachment nor able yet to strike a balance between them.<sup>178</sup> With no formula for facing experience, he can only take refuge in oblivion. This yearning toward peace and cosmic unity which leads one to death and oblivion, forms a counterpoint with the other

<sup>174</sup> Madden, p. 76.

<sup>175</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 294, note to l. 210.

<sup>176</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 294, note to l. 210.

<sup>177</sup> Baum, p. 117.

<sup>178</sup> Trilling, p. 101; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 69; Baum, p. 118; Madden, p. 74; DeLaura, "Matthew Arnold and John Henry Newman," p. 585.

attitudes in the poetry; but gradually the Spinozan attitude toward the Stoic moral position seems to dominate. It becomes a positive protection of the feeling inner self,<sup>179</sup> through which, as Goethe and Spinoza believed, nature, which is continuous with man, manifests itself.

In the "Preface" of 1853, Arnold publicly rejects the commitment to sensibility to which he had succumbed in the past. In particular he denounces his Empedocles on Etna, which, as will be demonstrated later, is his most emphatic statement of the inevitable culmination of yearning for fulfillment through sensibility in an alien universe. With the suicide of the hero, Arnold quenches his own overt leanings toward such sensuous abandon and then turns to the orientation of the poet of resignation, which is a stance moderating feeling with detachment.

In an 1852 letter to Clough, Arnold introduces what is to be the emphasis of his theory of poetry. He believes in what Trilling calls a "religious theory of art."<sup>180</sup> Poetry is an aesthetic whole<sup>181</sup> which can only subsist by its contents; by becoming a complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did: by including, as theirs did, religion with poetry . . . .<sup>182</sup>

The "Preface" provides a fuller development of this idea. Poetry must "inspirit and rejoice the reader" with "the highest pleasure which he is capable of feeling."<sup>183</sup> Although the tragic can afford a pleasure-evoking

<sup>179</sup> Madden, p. 116.

<sup>180</sup> Trilling, p. 139.

<sup>181</sup> Madden, p. 15.

<sup>182</sup> Lowry, p. 124.

<sup>183</sup> Works, Super, I, 2.

subject, the situation portrayed in Empedocles on Etna (1852) cannot be-  
cause in it

a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by in-  
cident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be en-  
dured, nothing to be done.<sup>184</sup>

Arnold follows what he believes to be "Aristotelean psychology"<sup>185</sup> in  
specifying that suffering must be given a "vent in action"<sup>186</sup> in order to  
leave the mind of the reader in equilibrium.<sup>187</sup> The important point here  
is Arnold's rejection of the romantic subjectivity inherent in poetry which  
is "an allegory of the state of one's own mind"<sup>188</sup> and his affirmation of  
the creed of practical action in the moral sphere and the Goethean attitude  
of detached objectivity in art.

Arnold's new poetic theory provides that the artist must remain  
detached, must choose his subjects objectively, and must employ the aes-  
thetic faculty in producing his art. Arnold accepts Goethe's criticism of  
contemporary poets because "their subjectivity is not important"; and,  
therefore, they can not keep the self aloof; "they cannot find matter in the

<sup>184</sup> Works, Super, I, 2-3.

<sup>185</sup> Trilling, p. 138.

<sup>186</sup> Works, Super, I, 2.

<sup>187</sup> Trilling, p. 138; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 202,  
believes Arnold perverts Aristotelian thought by applying it to the ac-  
tor rather than the reader.

<sup>188</sup> Works, Super, I, 8; according to Super's critical note, p. 221,  
Arnold is refuting directly the proposition forwarded in Alexander Smith's  
"A Life Drama."

objective."<sup>189</sup> Indeed in Arnold's early poems, such as the "Strayed Reveller" and "The New Sirens," at least one alternative for the role of the poet is that of one who dwells on the mountain, apart from life, but at a vantage point which allows him to see and vicariously experience all; and, as has been pointed out, this position is advocated in "Resignation." Light is also shed on this position by Arnold's early comment to Clough that one "must begin with an Idea of the World in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness."<sup>190</sup> In order for this detached poet to create poetry which is a magister vitae, he must choose a subject which is a great action, one of those

which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time.<sup>191</sup>

Thus the objectively chosen content should evoke an emotional response. The poet, like the poet of "Resignation" must "penetrate" himself "with the feeling of its the poem's situations."<sup>192</sup> At the same time, the form or manner of presentation, must be objective. To achieve this combination of emotion, or sensibility, and objectivity, the poet should employ Goethe's architectonic: the artist's aesthetic faculty, should manifest itself as a shaping faculty, producing a pleasurable aesthetic "whole"<sup>193</sup> by

<sup>189</sup> Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, tr. J. Oxenford (November 14, 1824), quoted in Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 202.

<sup>190</sup> Lowry, p. 97.

<sup>191</sup> Works, Super, I, 4.

<sup>192</sup> Works, Super, I, 7.

<sup>193</sup> Works, Super, I, 9.

combining "mastery of technique with 'soul and matter.'" <sup>194</sup> Moral and intellectual perceptions are transformed by the artist's emotion in such a way as to produce a harmoniously beautiful work, which will appeal to man. The necessary fusion of the moral, intellectual and emotional elements is produced by the artist's detached application to experience of the aesthetic faculty. This faculty, which is the manifestation of nature in man, allows the artist to shape a balanced, imaginative whole without subjective involvement; and this balanced whole elicits from the reader a sense of controlled emotion, which he recognizes as beauty. Thus form and content are fused by the artistry of the poet.

Two poems of the 1867 volume <sup>195</sup> restate in a more positive manner the role of the poet as explained in "Resignation." The "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön" (1867), states that the poet must represent "life's movement, . . . the thread which binds it all in one" (ll. 140-41). He must unify experience into an aesthetically pleasing whole. <sup>196</sup> In "Bacchanalia" (1867), the subject is approached from the point of view of the poet's relation to his historical period. To present a unified objective truth the poet must see and feel both past and present in perspective. <sup>197</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Madden, p. 15, quoting Works, Super, I, 15; see also above, pp. 14-15.

<sup>195</sup> "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön," Poems, Allott, p. 509, headnote; "Bacchanalia; or, The New Age," Poems, Allott, p. 534, headnote.

<sup>196</sup> Stange, pp. 91-93.

<sup>197</sup> Stange, p. 102.



Arnold again follows Goethe in prescribing the classics as the models which artists should emulate.<sup>198</sup> In the "Preface" to Merope (1858), which is Arnold's most comprehensive attempt to emulate the Greek tragic form,<sup>199</sup> he explains the way in which Greek tragedy edifies:

a sense of emphatic distinctness in our impression rises, as the thought and emotion swell higher and higher without overflowing their boundaries, to a lofty sense of the mastery of the human spirit over its own stormiest agitations; and this, again, conducts us to a state of feeling which it is the highest aim of tragedy to produce, to a sentiment of sublime acquiescence in the course of fate, and in the dispensations of human life.<sup>200</sup>

Thus Arnold believes that the artist must aim toward a literature of "moral grandeur," which will produce a "steady and composing effect" upon the judgment of its readers, and which will make them "want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves."<sup>201</sup> Arnold is even more explicit in his idea of the moral implications of art, which arises from his designation of beauty as a norm of truth, when he writes Clough in 1853, saying,

If one loved what was beautiful and interesting in itself passionately enough, one would produce what was excellent without trouble oneself with religious dogmas at all.<sup>202</sup>

This comment stems directly from Arnold's belief that religion is being

<sup>198</sup> Madden, p. 15.

<sup>199</sup> "Preface," Merope, Works, Super, I, 38-39.

<sup>200</sup> Works, Super, I, 58-59.

<sup>201</sup> "Preface of 1853," Works, Super, I, 13-14.

<sup>202</sup> Lowry, p. 143.

over-intellectualized and thus that the effect of its being stifled. For he believes that "the service of reason is freezing to feeling . . . and feeling and the religious mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him."<sup>203</sup> Beginning in 1853, Arnold, under the influence of German Hellenism, reclaims from the excesses of sensibility Keats's equation of truth with beauty which implied that through exercise of aesthetic consciousness, one could achieve truth. In a basically Epicurean formulation, he designates the sense of the beautiful and the pleasing, as a norm for organization of passion into the harmonious perfection in art and into the perfection of human life. This points the way to an aesthetic humanism, in which the aesthetic sense is thought of as the manifestation of nature in man, and harmoniously perfect human nature is considered nature brought to full development in man.

Although this study cannot presume to treat in depth Arnold's prose writings, it should be pointed out by way of support of the present argument that Arnold's aesthetic consciousness provides the norm for his treatment of culture and religion, as well as of literature in his critical writings. "Obermann Once More" (1867), a poem written between 1865 and 1867,<sup>204</sup> provides an explanation for the replacement of the muse by

<sup>203</sup> Arnold, Yale Manuscript, quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 519, note.

<sup>204</sup> "Obermann Once More," Poems, Allott, p. 518, headnote.

the critic in Arnold.<sup>205</sup> In the poem, the persona, a poet, has made a pilgrimage back to Obermann's mountain solitude. The now deceased Obermann appears to him and reviews the religious development of Western civilization. He points out that while the religious emotion, which he calls the "central fire" (l. 221), aroused by the beauty of Christ's morality had in the past provided a unifying factor among men and between men and their world, the image of Christ had faded with time.<sup>206</sup> With the French Revolution, the old world had been torn asunder once and for all. Men floated in an ocean on isolated "blocks of the past" (l. 211). Obermann, who had longed for a return to the ideal—

The harmony from which man swerved  
 Made his life's rule once more!  
 Universal order served,  
 Earth happier than before!

(ll. 53-56)

—explains that in the unpoetic environment of his time, he was unable to re-assert a harmony; and, in despair, he had resigned his life for peace in nature. Having prefaced his forthcoming remarks by this historical background, he instructs his disciple that the world is approaching a new era of "a world new-made" (l. 312). The poet's role is to help to bring forth that world:

"What still of strength is left, employ  
 That end to help attain:

<sup>205</sup> Trilling, p. 276; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 285-286; Madden, pp. 119, 123.

<sup>206</sup> Madden, p. 122; Trilling, p. 274.

One common wave of thought and joy  
Lifting mankind again."

(ll. 321-24)

It is of singular importance that Arnold's Obermann expects the poet to help produce a unified sensibility composed of a fusion of thought and feeling which conforms with truth, which is here called "the way divine" (l. 188). He is saying that the instinct to create beautiful order, which is inherent in Obermann's philosophy of joy and renunciation,<sup>207</sup> can create a norm of truth and of unity in the world of men in addition to that of literature.<sup>208</sup> For the aesthetic consciousness predicates the preservation of "feeling and the religious mood," which "are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him."<sup>209</sup> That Obermann prescribes the ordered sensibility is evidenced symbolically by the articles he holds: a flower and a book,<sup>210</sup> which is the "Manual of Pseusophanes," which is a list of Stoic-Epicurean maxims much like the ethics of Goethe.<sup>211</sup> "Obermann Once More" is an optimistic poem which explains the poet's going into the realm of prose and the everyday world and explains the poetic theory which pervades the criticism.

<sup>207</sup> Anderson, p. 155.

<sup>208</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 282-84.

<sup>209</sup> Matthew Arnold, Yale Manuscript, quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 519, headnote.

<sup>210</sup> Tinker and Lowry, p. 266.

<sup>211</sup> Anderson, pp. 154-56.

Although critics have largely failed to bring special attention to the importance of the developing formulation of the poetic theory in Arnold's poetry, the aesthetic preoccupation has been observed in Arnold's criticism by many critics including David DeLaura, Madden, Robbins, Trilling, and T. S. Eliot, who labels it as a precursor of Pater's aestheticism:

The total effect of Arnold's philosophy is to set up Culture in the place of Religion and to leave Religion to be laid waste by the anarchy of feeling. And Culture is a term which each man not only may interpret as he pleases, but must indeed interpret as he can. So the gospel of Pater follows naturally upon the prophesy of Arnold.<sup>212</sup>

The tendency is evident from Arnold's early criticism.

Arnold explains at the end of Literature and Dogma (1873) that the total perfection of all faculties of the individual, which constitutes culture, is the culmination of religion and that one needs the benefit of culture to interpret the Bible as literature, as it should be interpreted, and to understand the religion set forth therein.<sup>213</sup> Such an idea shows the humanistic influence of Newman,<sup>214</sup> for it asserts that the language of religion is "emotive" rather than "exact."<sup>215</sup> From his earliest religious writings, Arnold's application of the aesthetic consciousness is evident. In "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment," originally

<sup>212</sup> T. S. Eliot, "Arnold and Pater," Selected Essays (1932; rpt. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1958), p. 436.

<sup>213</sup> Works, Super, VI, 409-10; DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, p. 109.

<sup>214</sup> DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, pp. 149-50.

<sup>215</sup> Trilling, p. 301.

published in 1864,<sup>216</sup> the poet establishes "imaginative reason" as "the element by which the modern spirit, if it would live right, has chiefly to live."<sup>217</sup> In order to explain "imaginative reason," the poet begins by contrasting the pagan religion of pleasure and sensuousness, which must end in ennui, with the medieval Christian religion, in which the whole spectacle of the world, including good and bad, is regarded through the faculties of the "heart and imagination," and "transfigured by the power of a spiritual emotion," which is also termed "supersensual love."<sup>218</sup> Although the "religion of sorrow"<sup>219</sup> is ultimately of more value than the religion of pleasure because it is relevant to the masses who endure hardship and because it affords more real enjoyment of the world,<sup>220</sup> it may give rise to the torment of doubt.<sup>221</sup> The need of the modern spirit can only be filled by a combination of the two elements, the "thinking power" and the "religious sense,"<sup>222</sup> which combination is best exemplified in the poetry of Periclean Greece. In this period of high culture,<sup>223</sup>

<sup>216</sup> Works, XV, 358.

<sup>217</sup> Works, Super, III, 231.

<sup>218</sup> Works, Super, III, 225.

<sup>219</sup> Works, Super, III, 229.

<sup>220</sup> Works, Super, III, 229-30; Trilling, p. 176.

<sup>221</sup> Robbins, p. 161.

<sup>222</sup> Works, Super, III, 231.

<sup>223</sup> Works, Super, III, 230; Madden, pp. 164, 168.

Sophocles is given particular mention as representative of the highest religious truth.<sup>224</sup> Arnold affirms the aesthetic consciousness of ordered emotion as the norm of right living. In "A Persian Passion Play," (1871), he reaffirms an experimental aesthetic sanction for religion, which Trilling compares to that of Coleridge,<sup>225</sup> by saying that the best religion is that which satisfies the human need for a sense of peace, happiness and fulfillment.<sup>226</sup> Arnold equates man's intuitive findings concerning God and a moral law with the findings of science; reason is intuitive and imaginative, like the implicit reason of Newman.<sup>227</sup>

Arnold arrives at a conception of God which is conformable with Spinoza's conception of nature. He begins by rejecting the concept of God as set forth in the so-called scientific theology of his day. In this thought God is defined as a "magnified and non-natural man."<sup>228</sup> Critics such as Trilling and Robbins have noted that, at his farthest extension of the concept of God, Arnold tends to erect an external moral absolute:<sup>229</sup> "the Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness."<sup>230</sup> As Arnold

<sup>224</sup> Works, Super, III, 231; Madden, p. 179.

<sup>225</sup> Trilling, p. 298. <sup>226</sup> Works, Super, III, 282-83.

<sup>227</sup> Robbins, p. 170; DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, p. 92.

<sup>228</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 358.

<sup>229</sup> Trilling, pp. 317, 321-25; Robbins, p. 109.

<sup>230</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 409.

explains his idea in God and the Bible (1875), the Old Testament conceptualization of God involves the deification of a natural law which was perceived intuitively and imaginatively.<sup>231</sup> Arnold believes that Paul possesses the true Hebrew idea of God as

in the world and the workings of the world, the eternal and divine power from which all life and wholesome energy proceed . . . /the/ element in which we live and move and have our being, which stretches around and beyond the strictly moral element in us, around and beyond the finite sphere of what is originated, measured, and controlled by our own understanding and will.<sup>232</sup>

Man is aware of this "not ourselves" as an influence manifesting itself in a sense of joyous aspiration and in positive emotions.<sup>233</sup> It has aesthetic sanction. Descending to the level of practical morality, the poet further defines God, which is a force in the individual or object, as the "stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfill the law of their being."<sup>234</sup> Trilling believes that Arnold confuses Spinoza's distinction of the scientific realm from the moral one when he moves from this naturalistic conception to the assertion that the law of man's being is morality.<sup>235</sup> However, this is parallel with Goethe's humanistic development from a central

<sup>231</sup> God and the Bible, Works, Super, VIII, 127-36.

<sup>232</sup> St. Paul and Protestantism, (1870), Works, Super, VI, 37.

<sup>233</sup> Trilling, p. 317; Madden, pp. 184-85.

<sup>234</sup> St. Paul and Protestantism, Works, Super, VI, 10.

<sup>235</sup> Trilling, p. 322.



Spinozan conception of nature and with the idea of God in Spinoza's Tractate, which describes a God who speaks to the heart.<sup>236</sup>

Further light is shed on Arnold's conception of God in his justification of the importance of conduct, which is his designation of morality. He interprets Paul as saying that conduct is the main business of religion.<sup>237</sup> Conduct is three-fourths of human life, while the reasoning and aesthetic faculties make up the other fourth. Although the ultimate definition of God would be a power through which one fulfills himself, not only morally but also aesthetically and intellectually, Arnold believes that the "power that makes for righteousness" must be mastered first.<sup>238</sup> Conduct must deal with man's basic instincts, which are the instinct of self-preservation and that of reproduction.<sup>239</sup> Arnold explains the gradual revelation of early man's "central moral tendency" through which he becomes one with the "universal order."<sup>240</sup> This is the development of nature in man, and a humanistic extension of naturalism, which is parallel with the Spinozan conception of man's oneness with the universe through

<sup>236</sup> Trilling, p. 296; Robbins, pp. 124, 127.

<sup>237</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 172; Trilling, p. 316.

<sup>238</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 173, 409.

<sup>239</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 174.

<sup>240</sup> St. Paul and Protestantism, Works, Super, VI, 31.

harmonization of all his impulses.<sup>241</sup> In God and the Bible, Arnold explains how the quest for righteousness became a part of early man's nature. He asserts that, through the processes of intuition and experience, man gradually discovered that the life of righteousness led to happiness and peace. Therefore, this desire for righteousness, which was actually an acquired habit, became engrained in human nature in a very early period of man's development.<sup>242</sup> For man realized, in the early womblike period of his development, that through renunciation, which necessitates harmonization of the fleshly impulses, and a conformity with the real, moral self he could achieve peace and happiness in self-fulfillment.<sup>243</sup> The joy produced leads one to the level of the impersonal self and unites him with all men in love and desire for the happiness of others.<sup>244</sup> This joy, defined not in the hedonistic sense but in the best Epicurean sense, is the end of life.<sup>245</sup> The Old Testament message then is that through the

<sup>241</sup> Robbins, pp. 126, 127; Trilling, p. 311; Madden, pp. 152, 156-57.

<sup>242</sup> God and the Bible, Works, VIII, 140-42; Trilling, pp. 204-205.

<sup>243</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 180-81, 195, 226; "Marcus Aurelius" (1863), Works, Super, III, 134; Robbins, pp. 101, 128; Trilling, pp. 302-03, 311; Madden, pp. 152, 154, 184.

<sup>244</sup> "Preface," Last Essays on Church and Religion (1877), Works, Super, IX, 188; Robbins, pp. 129, 131-32; Trilling, p. 319.

<sup>245</sup> God and the Bible, Works, VIII, 155; Trilling, pp. 326-328, and Robbins, pp. 128-29, find the Epicurean equation of happiness with good fallacious.

cultivation of righteousness through renunciation, one experiences a "sense of being alive,"<sup>246</sup> which is aesthetic proof of oneness with the universal nature and an aesthetic sanction of morality.<sup>247</sup> This is harmonious with the philosophy of Goethe and of Joubert, whom Arnold praises.<sup>248</sup> Arnold objectifies this intuition of righteousness as a moral absolute, as God.<sup>249</sup>

Because renunciation was a painful undertaking, Arnold believes, Israel's intuition of righteousness seemed, after a time, to lose its sanction of happiness; and the hopeful Messianic "aberglaube," which Arnold defines as poetic "extra-belief," began to flourish. Christ, who did not fulfill the prophesy literally, did fulfill the truth present in it by reapplying emotion to the concept of righteousness.<sup>250</sup> He reasserted, as Arnold believes St. Paul recognized, a definition of religion as "morality touched with emotion";<sup>251</sup> and Arnold considers this the true definition of religion.

<sup>246</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 404.

<sup>247</sup> Trilling, pp. 304-05, 320-21; Madden, pp. 156-57, 178-79; Gottfried, pp. 211-12; Robbins, pp. 127-28, 136, 141, considers Arnold's approach to religion more ethical than aesthetic.

<sup>248</sup> Robbins, pp. 127, 122-23; Trilling, pp. 295-98, 333; "Joubert" (1864), Works, Super, III, 197, 208; Madden, pp. 148, 156-157.

<sup>249</sup> "Preface to Popular Edition," Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 145; Trilling, pp. 317-18; Robbins, pp. 109-11.

<sup>250</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 209-12, 214-15, 218; Trilling, pp. 306-307.

<sup>251</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 176; St. Paul and Protestantism, Works, Super, VI, 30, 38-39.

Robbins points out that Arnold, like Coleridge, distinguishes Christianity from Stoicism, which is a pure ethical code. In Christianity, which absorbs Stoicism, virtue springs from feeling, while in Stoicism, virtue is inspired by a belief in its worth for its own sake.<sup>252</sup> Christ demonstrated how righteousness could be attained through his method of repentance, including "inwardness and sincerity,"<sup>253</sup> and his secret of peace and joy, which Arnold more fully explains as "liberty and self-knowledge,"<sup>254</sup> gained through renunciation. These two elements were balanced by Christ's temper of "sweet reasonableness." This is the aesthetic element which Arnold finds often lacking in religion.<sup>255</sup> Christ attained a state of moral perfection through necrosis, dying to the flesh and living to the spirit, which is also termed the best self, according to the humanistic dualism.<sup>256</sup> Trilling points out that Arnold especially emphasizes Christ's quality of purity, which is of particular importance in Arnold's conception of morality because it constitutes the requisite "style" or the outward manifestation of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness which is indispensable

<sup>252</sup> Robbins, pp. 127, 130; Madden, p. 184.

<sup>253</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 352.

<sup>254</sup> "Spinoza and the Bible" (1863), Works, Super, III, 164; Trilling, p. 307.

<sup>255</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 352, 405; Madden, pp. 165-66, 173, 184.

<sup>256</sup> St. Paul and Protestantism, Works, VI, 47; Trilling, p. 319.

in implementing morality.<sup>257</sup> To interpret and emulate the message of Christ requires, according to Arnold, "unfailing sweetness and unerring perception."<sup>258</sup> This is the combination of qualities which Arnold calls imaginative reason and which he finds exemplified in Christ himself. The faith that Christ inspires through his example leads others to emulate his necrosis. Faith consists in an emotional attachment, beyond the self, such as that felt toward another person or, ultimately, as Arnold believes, love for Christ. This inspires one to follow the good and the righteous.<sup>259</sup> This idea of faith is quite harmonious with Newman's intuitive and emotional faith and is not in opposition to the basically aesthetic implicit reason defined by both.<sup>260</sup>

In Arnold's religious writings the idea of the aesthetic consciousness, which manifests itself in Christ's attitude of "sweet reasonableness," is presented as the proper attitude for experiencing the controlled emotion which is an equivalent for scientific proof of truth.<sup>261</sup> This conclusion in

<sup>257</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 204; Trilling, pp. 315-16; Robbins, p. 132.

<sup>258</sup> Literature and Dogma, Works, Super, VI, 322.

<sup>259</sup> St. Paul and Protestantism, Works, Super, VI, 43-45; Robbins, pp. 133-36; Trilling, pp. 318-19; Madden, pp. 184-85.

<sup>260</sup> DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, pp. 114-16.

<sup>261</sup> Madden, pp. 174-84, 197.

the prose is anticipated by the earlier development of Arnold's poetic theory, which has been observed in the poetry.<sup>262</sup> Gottfried explains Arnold's conception of the aesthetic truth of religion by saying that religion is truth as a work of art is truth because it is "expressive"; that is, it embodies a "satisfactory organization of responses to both externally given and inward data, facts and feelings."<sup>263</sup> Most important, in the religious writings is to be found Arnold's only explicit acknowledgement of the link between the aesthetic consciousness as a norm and the central truth which it indicates. This central truth is defined as a universal force of nature, manifesting itself in man in the moral nature and ultimately in total cultural perfection. Indeed, in the 1883 "Preface" to Literature and Dogma, Arnold cites the balanced aesthetically beautiful temper of Christ as a norm for the total humanistic perfection of man:

The unerring and consummate felicity of Jesus, his prepossessingness, his grace and truth are . . . the law of right performance on all man's great lines of endeavor, although the Bible deals with the line of conduct only.<sup>264</sup>

This indicates Arnold's aesthetic and therefore basically Epicurean sanction for moral and for total perfection. This line of thought has affinities with that of Goethe.<sup>265</sup>

<sup>262</sup> Madden, p. 49 et passim, develops the thesis that the poems in some ways point to the prose conclusions; however, he does not find in the poems the careful development of the poetic theory that this study attempts to show.

<sup>263</sup> Gottfried, p. 212.

<sup>264</sup> Works, Super, VI, 145.

<sup>265</sup> Madden, pp. 165-66, 173-74, 184-85.

Having finally stated his argument for the attitude of aesthetic consciousness, Arnold dwells upon the importance of poetry as a means to the requisite ordered emotion of religion and ultimately as a virtual substitute for religion as it has been known. This is harmonious with the previously mentioned idea of the moral function of poetry presented in the "Preface" of 1853. In the "Preface" to God and the Bible he makes a direct comparison of the emotion distinguishing religion with that produced through the poetic imagination:<sup>266</sup>

For the power of Christianity has been in the immense emotion which it has excited; in its engaging, for the government of man's conduct, the mighty forces of love, reverence, gratitude, hope, pity, and awe,—all that host of allies which Wordsworth includes under the one name of imagination.<sup>267</sup>

In conjunction with this idea, Arnold warns that when invalid religious ideas are gradually discarded, the feeling which they furnished as inspiration for conduct must not be lost. Indeed, Arnold recognizes in much of the traditional part of religion a very valuable poetry which should be preserved as such.<sup>268</sup> DeLaura sees the influence of Newman in Arnold's praise of the beauty, imagination, and poetry of Catholicism.<sup>269</sup> Arnold

<sup>266</sup> Robbins, p. 136.

<sup>267</sup> "Preface," God and the Bible, Works, VIII, x-xi.

<sup>268</sup> "Preface," God and the Bible, Works, VIII, xi; "A Psychological Parallel" (1876), Works, IX, 234; Madden, pp. 182-83; Trilling, p. 333; Gottfried, p. 212.

<sup>269</sup> DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, pp. 126-27.

acknowledges the powerful influence for religion which Catholicism has exerted and recommends for Catholic countries a new Catholicism of liberalized spirits but retaining the poetry of "old religious services and usages."<sup>270</sup> Here, as in the "Study of Poetry," he predicts the complete usurpation by poetry of religion's role of edification.<sup>271</sup>

The culminating role of poetry is further elucidated in Culture and Anarchy (1869), where Arnold stresses the importance of the aesthetic consciousness in bringing about the ideal balanced state of culture, which supersedes that of religion as the state of man's ultimate perfection:<sup>272</sup>

The idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all its sides, which is the dominant idea of poetry, is a true and invaluable idea . . . and it is destined, adding to itself the religious idea of a devout energy /emotion/ to transform and govern the other /the moral sense/.<sup>273</sup>

Development of the aesthetic consciousness in the individual leads to the humanistic ideal of culture, which Arnold wishes to see infused in the whole society.<sup>274</sup> In his late essay on "Amiel" (1887), who, not incidentally, is in much the same way as Obermann comparable to Arnold

<sup>270</sup> Arnold, Letters, II, 132.

<sup>271</sup> "The Study of Poetry" (1880), Works, Super, IV, 1.

<sup>272</sup> Madden, pp. 174-75; Trilling, pp. 243-44; DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, pp. 234, 266-68.

<sup>273</sup> Culture and Anarchy, Works, Super, V, 100.

<sup>274</sup> Trilling, pp. 245-46.



himself, Arnold praises his conception of le grande monde or "high Society":<sup>275</sup>

Society is a form of poetry; the cultivated classes deliberately re-compose the idyll of the past . . . whose only end is beauty.<sup>276</sup>

This description is a crystallization of Arnold's own goal for the period of expansion,<sup>277</sup> the age of culture, to be affected through the development of the aesthetic consciousness which is capable of harmonizing all man's faculties, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic.<sup>278</sup>

In the preceding paragraphs the development of Arnold's poetic theory as it applies to the poet's method of dealing with experience has been traced through his poetry from the self-destructive stance of total absorption in sensibility through the period of emotionless detachment to the development of the aesthetic faculty as the harmonizing factor which enables both the artist and the man to achieve a sense of unity with himself and the universe and to know truth. The culminating formula of aesthetic consciousness has been briefly related to the writer's later prose criticism. The poet never loses sight of the Epicurean assumption that truth is approached through the senses and emotions; rather he modifies

<sup>275</sup> Madden, pp. 186-87.

<sup>276</sup> "Amiel," Works, IV, 239.

<sup>277</sup> "The Function of Criticism" (1864), Works, Super, III, 266-69.

<sup>278</sup> Literature and Science (1885), Works, Super, IV, 341.

the view in the way that Goethe had done in his Hellenism and draws specific parallels between feeling and the kind of naturalism which Epicureanism predicates.

In the symbolism in certain of Arnold's poems is anticipated the poet's eventual concept of nature. When these poems containing symbolic passages are interpreted in light of Arnold's developing poetic theory, it may be demonstrated that they imply that the symbolic identification of the personae with an orientation of sensibility or of aesthetic consciousness leads to their achieving a sense of cosmic unity, which is portrayed symbolically. Or the poet or observer within the poem may experience a sense of cosmos through imaginative contemplation of and transformation of a persona of the poem who has sought the comfort of death. It will be demonstrated that death is often the desperate result of a character's frustration in being unable to sustain a sense of cosmos through the orientation of sensibility. It will be demonstrated that in the earlier poems, the personae follow primarily the orientation of sensibility which results in the symbolically presented sense of cosmos, while in the later poems the personae follow primarily the orientation of aesthetic consciousness. In both cases, the symbolic representations of unity between man and the rest of the universe are elaborations of the concepts of cosmic nature implied by the development of Arnold's poetic theory, which has been set forth in this chapter.

## II. SYMBOLS OF OBLIVION IN THE EARLY POEMS

In Arnold's early poems, ending with Empedocles on Etna, there is the personal struggle to achieve a sense of inward unity and of unity with the universe through the orientation of sensibility, or dispersion of the self in feeling. Within this early group of poems is a series containing symbols which can be interpreted as exemplifications of a unity of man with nature and which represent the culmination of the exercise of this sensibility. Nature in these poems takes the form of an objective force, which is approachable through a complete absorption in sensibility. However, for the nineteenth-century man, whose ability to feel is impaired by conditioning to philosophy, science, orthodox religion, and morality, the sense of cosmos attained through the exercise of sensibility is a fleeting experience. Having failed to achieve a lasting sense of cosmos, the persona of the poem falls into a state of despair and seeks comfort in the thought of suicide. When the figure contemplates suicide he may find the prospect of dissolution in elemental nature a rather consoling alternative to alienation; at least on the elemental level he will be one with nature. Thus the symbols to be discussed in connection with the early poems are those of oblivion, of regression to a womblike state of unity with elemental nature. Indeed the opening of the poet's earliest published poem introduces a prevailing motif in this group of poems:

Unwelcome shroud of the forgotten dead,  
Oblivion's dreary fountain, where art thou?<sup>1</sup>

In the "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" (1855) and the related fragment, "To Meta" (1940), is voiced a similar sense of comfort in the prospect of death. The poems containing symbols pertinent to this discussion include "The Forsaken Merman" (1849), "Mycerinus" (1849), "Parting" (1852), and "A Farewell" (1853).

The singularly beautiful lyrical plaint of "The Forsaken Merman," composed between 1847-1849,<sup>2</sup> is a symbolic representation contrasting man in his nineteenth-century state of isolation and the natural world permanently inhabitable only by creatures oblivious to human life. The poem can be described probably more accurately as portraying two inclinations within the artist.<sup>3</sup> In the poem, adapted with significant changes from Danish folklore, the sea-dwelling merman and his children have been abandoned by the mortal wife and mother, Margaret, who has chosen to remain in the world of the sandy plain; and as the poem opens, the mournful, abandoned sea creatures stand on the alien seashore beckoning the mortal back to the sea. The telling change which Arnold makes in his adaptation of the legend is the emphasis upon the beauty, vitality, and natural feeling of the sea as opposed to the ugliness, sterility, and

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, "Alaric at Rome" (1840), ll. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 95, headnote.

<sup>3</sup> Howard W. Fulweiler, "Matthew Arnold: The Metamorphosis of a Merman," Victory Poetry, 1(1963), 221-22; Johnson, Voices, p. 90.

mechanical morality and religion of the land; for in the original, it is from the point of view of the land, representing orthodoxy and humanity, that the episode is viewed.<sup>4</sup>

The description of the sea is vivid and pregnant with meaning. The sea dwelling which Margaret shared with the merman is a setting of sensuous beauty.<sup>5</sup> It is a "clear green sea" (l. 54), set with a "red gold throne" (l. 51); and when harsh wind and waves are all that can be seen from the land, the sea creatures are afforded "a ceiling of amber, / a pavement of pearl" (ll. 118-19). The "kind sea caves" (l. 61) afford a womblike environment<sup>6</sup> of quiet and soft half-light.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it is a place of immense

<sup>4</sup> Tinker and Lowry, pp. 130-132, offer as Arnold's source either George Borrow's translation of the Danish ballad, "The Deceived Merman," or his prose account of the story in the review of Just Mathias Thiele's Danske Folkesagn. W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 86; Poems, Allott, pp. 95-96, headnote; and Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 209, accept Tinker and Lowry's rendering of sources. Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 21, adds as another possible source a version appearing in Benjamin Thorpe's Northern Mythology, Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and Superstitions of Scandinavia, North Germany, and the Netherlands; W. S. Johnson, Fulweiler, and Culler make special mention of the fact that all of these stories were told from the point of view of the humans and thus they justify the mother's leaving her family for the cause of her spiritual salvation.

<sup>5</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 21; Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 209.

<sup>6</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> Fulweiler, p. 210; Johnson, Voices, p. 85.

vitality and freedom,<sup>8</sup> as evidenced by the many untamed forms of life nurtured here,

The wild white horses foam and fret,  
 . . . . .  
 Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,  
 Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;  
 Where the sea-snakes coil and twine . . . .  
 (ll. 21, 39-41)

Thus it is that the sea-beasts and sea-snakes are associated with the "primal forces of nature."<sup>9</sup> Here Margaret experiences natural fulfillment of feelings in her consummated love with the merman and natural morality in her care of her children.<sup>10</sup> Here through exercise of sensibility, Margaret and the merman experience a sense of peaceful immortality<sup>11</sup> and

<sup>8</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 21; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 211, identifies the sea creatures with the forces of nature and the mysteries of "sex, life, and death" and supports his interpretation by citing similar associations in Tennyson's "The Mermaid" and "The Kraken."

<sup>10</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, recognizes the sexual emotional connotations of Margaret's role; but he describes the moral bonds of the sea as arising purely from the flesh and not from a spiritual relationship to a deity. Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 212, on the other hand, sees the moral responsibilities posed in the sea as the only true moral responsibilities. This writer finds Fulweiler's thinking consistent with Arnold's description in God and the Bible (1875), of how man's moral concepts were derived. In this connection see Matthew Arnold, God and the Bible (1875), in Works, VIII, 140-142.

<sup>11</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 21; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 87.

of unity with each other and with universal nature, symbolized by the sea as a whole,<sup>12</sup> as will be developed in subsequent paragraphs. In addition to the secrets of sexuality, represented by the coiling sea-snakes, the deepest wisdom of life and death are to be found in the sea state, as symbolized by the "great whales"<sup>13</sup> (l. 43), which

Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
Round the world for ever and aye?  
(ll. 44-45)

The sea world is one of aesthetic and emotional fulfillment. It is a world detached from the practical realm of human activities; however, as Fulweiler points out,<sup>14</sup> it is something more than a lethargic world of sensuous escape like that of Tennyson's "Lotus Eaters." Here there is a morality springing naturally from relationships between creatures. In addition, these creatures who partake of the sensuous emotional experience gain wisdom and immortality. This sea world, then, represents the world of the united sensibility, where the poetic imagination acts from the vantage point of

<sup>12</sup> Wendell Stacy Johnson, "Matthew Arnold's Sea of Life," Philological Quarterly, 31 (April 1952), 198-99, and Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 13-14, both relate the sea to an ordering force. Johnson specifies the natural force as pantheistic and Culler, who does not call the force nature at all, defines it as the true buried self which allows one to arrive at a sense of unity with the universe.

<sup>13</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 211.

<sup>14</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," pp. 210-11.

detachment to uncover poetic truth.<sup>15</sup> All the creatures involved permanently in this deeply sensuous life are other than human. Therefore, the implication seems to be that man is separated from the world of spontaneous intuitive natural feeling and that nature is a world completely other than human.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the fact that Arnold presents this state as below the human level, the state symbolized here is in many ways comparable to that cool, sensuously pleasing Wordsworthian world of childhood and unity with nature symbolized by the forest glade. However, the latter state was attainable by man in childhood or in the youth of the world.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the basic operative concept making this state possible, that of the fused sensibility, which is the idea of the validity of feelings as a criterion for reality, had not yet been brought into question by Darwinian thought. The conclusions reached through human intellect and through intuitive feeling were continuous.<sup>18</sup> However, by the nineteenth century, in the minds

<sup>15</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," pp. 211-12; Madden, p. 223, note 43; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 88, connects the sea imagery with "pagan and sensuous naturalism"; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 88-89, identifies the sea-related imagery as representing the animal as opposed to the moral. Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 212, presents the argument most nearly parallel to the present one by identifying the sea as the natural, and hence the true, values of real life as opposed to the strictly human values devoid of feeling and morality.

<sup>17</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 6-7, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Gottfried, p. 212.



of most people, the worlds of thought and feeling had become separated. Arnold felt this particularly in the exercise of organized religion. Miracles and historical accuracy of scriptures were being disproved by science. Many of the ethical prescriptions and modes of worship had lost their element of joy and thus had no meaning for people.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the sense of unity with the universe was no longer provided by human institutions. Nineteenth-century man, conditioned by the world of intellect, could no longer exercise sensibility freely. He had two alternatives; he could accept alienation or totally despair and turn to suicide, the contemplation of which may provide comfort in the idea of elemental unity with nature, below the human level. It is consistent with these ideas that the sea and the merman represent a reservoir of primal force which is distinctly other than the human state as it exists in the world. The process that, it is implied, would be required to achieve such a state, parallels Robert A. Donovan's<sup>20</sup> description of the self-conscious "romantic" artist's renouncement of personality to arrive at pure, unself-conscious art. Such pain and self-destruction had not been necessary for Wordsworth, who had successfully resolved for himself the intellectual struggles of the modern age.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Arnold, Literature and Dogma (1873) in Works, Super, VI, 232; Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism (1870), in Works, Super, VI, 69 et passim.

<sup>20</sup> Donovan, pp. 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> "Youth of Nature" (1852), "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Oberman'" (1852), and "Memorial Verses" (1850) explain that Wordsworth faced and resolved the intellectual crisis which left later poets such as Byron in despair.

To grasp the full significance of the sea, one must compare it to the land alternative which lures Margaret. The land is colorless, a sterile place,<sup>22</sup> a sand desert beaten by wind and accommodating a "white-walled town" (l. 25), and a "grey church" (l. 26). The natural green life of the sea is replaced by gravestones which are "worn with rains" (l. 74) and which are thus subject to destruction by time as is everything on the land.<sup>23</sup> All activity here, like Margaret's spinning, is mechanical; relationships lack emotion.<sup>24</sup> Hypnotized by the symbols of orthodox religion, the church and the Bible of "aberglaube,"<sup>25</sup> the mortal Margaret commits the very real sin of abandoning her husband and children.<sup>26</sup> Though at times she experiences a melancholy yearning, in her "heart sorrow-laden" (l. 104), for wholeness once again, she cannot go back to the sea of nature; she can not give herself up completely to feeling, for she is the thrall of a morality which dries up feeling. While the values of the sea of nature are approachable only through the senses and emotions, the land values are utilitarian and intellectual. The prime example

<sup>22</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," pp. 209-10; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 85; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 20-21.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, Voices, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," pp. 210, 212.

<sup>25</sup> Arnold, Literature and Dogma, in Works, Super, VI, 212, 232; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 21.

of the separation of thought and feeling in this world of man is in the area of religion. Margaret, who is conditioned to the rules and traditions of orthodox religion, does not realize, as Arnold asserts in his religious writings, that many people of the nineteenth century do not realize, that rules and tradition must be the outgrowth of feeling or they have no power to unify man with the universal order, which Arnold defines as a natural cosmic force.<sup>27</sup> In a world suppressing a feeling, one would have to escape below the level of the conscious intellectual dialectic to find his reservoir of feeling. Pure exercise of sensibility is rare and fleeting. Unable to maintain a link through feeling with this larger nature, Margaret remains isolated. The irony of her choice of the land is dramatized by the fact that it is an Easter celebration, the Christian festival of the resurrection of Christ from death to eternal life,<sup>28</sup> that calls Margaret to the land to save her "poor soul" (l. 59). It is implied that she, like the Puritans who, Arnold thinks, emulate only the aspect of renunciation in Christ's teachings while forgetting the joy,<sup>29</sup> actually relinquishes her immortality by clinging to the land.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Arnold, Literature and Dogma, in Works, Super, VI, 232; St. Paul, in Works, Super, VI, 69 et passim.

<sup>28</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> St. Paul in Works, Super, VI, 69 et passim.

<sup>30</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 212; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 87, believes that Margaret relinquishes only "natural immortality" for the hope of spiritual immortality.

The final section of the poem is suggestive of a hope for reconciliation of the human and natural elements but not by man's reuniting with the dehumanized sea world; rather there is a foreshadowing of at least a fleeting infusion of the land world and land values with the imaginative sensuous beauty of nature and thus of a momentary sense of union of man and nature in the land world:<sup>31</sup>

But, children, at midnight,  
When soft the winds blow,  
When clear falls the moonlight,  
When spring-tides are low;  
When sweet airs come seaward  
From heaths starred with broom,  
And high rocks throw mildly  
On the blanched sands a gloom;  
Up the still, glistening beaches,  
Up the creeks we will hie,  
Over the banks of bright seaweed  
The ebb-tide leaves dry.  
(ll. 124-35)

One may draw the inference that the coming of the sea creatures will be accompanied by the land world's gaining a knowledge of its true natural self, which is symbolized by the moonlight, which temporarily overtakes the land, transforming it into beauty as the imagination of the artist may do.<sup>32</sup> The sea creatures are able to bring self knowledge because they

<sup>31</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold, in the Yale MS., quoted in E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 157, makes a metaphorical comparison of "our remotest self" to the moon; Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., in "'The Moon Lies Fair': The Poetry of Matthew Arnold," Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 4 (Autumn 1964), 569-70 et passim, interprets Arnold's use of moonlight as an attempt to find a transcendent significance in the beauty of an imaginatively transformed natural setting as Wordsworth had done.

bring feeling. But they will return again to the sea alone; and the land will once again be the cold, sterile, religionless sand plain. This conclusion is extremely tentative; and at this point, the hint of a reconciliation is not developed sufficiently to demonstrate the nature of such a reconciliation. An implied duality remains; it is suggested that man must give up humanity to become part of primal nature and that, failing to do that, he must, as Margaret does, effect the "proud self severance" against which the narrator of "In Utrumque Paratus" seems to be cautioning. and become an isolated island in a treacherous sea of life.<sup>33</sup>

If one may judge from the description given in this poem, the sea symbolism seems to represent a nature that is material, elemental, and distinctly below the human, conscious level.<sup>34</sup> In an early letter to Clough, Arnold calls water "the Mediator between the inanimate and man."<sup>35</sup> Indeed, often in Arnold's poetry water is a symbol of the permeating force linking man and the rest of the universe. It can be demonstrated in "The

<sup>33</sup> Both W. S. Johnson, "Matthew Arnold's Sea of Life," pp. 200-03, and Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 13-14, assert that the images of man's tossing about without direction in the sea or of man's being isolated as an island in the sea represent man's view of his relationship to the amoral natural order when he is a victim of his illusory human will, when he has not found his unity with the cosmic force behind the natural order; see also Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 219; W. S. Johnson, "Arnold's Lonely Islands," Notes and Queries, NS 1 (July 1954), 312-13.

<sup>34</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 211; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 84.

<sup>35</sup> Lowry, p. 92.

Forsaken Merman," as well as throughout his poetry, that this cosmic link is a central natural force which man approaches through his feelings.<sup>36</sup> In the religious writings Arnold characterizes God as "a stream of tendency";<sup>37</sup> and in the later poem, "The Buried Life" (1852) he describes the true self of the individual discovered through feeling as a "buried stream" (l. 42).<sup>38</sup> In the 1836 "Lines Written on the Seashore at Eaglehurst," the young poet first describes the conflict of land and sea in terms parallel to those employed in "The Forsaken Merman." The sea, again given sensuous and magical qualities by its inherent beauty and by its naiad inhabitants, struggles to come into the shore. Although the sea seems to represent all that is beautiful and alive in the world of the poem, it is repelled by the man-made "castled height" (l. 33).<sup>39</sup> In the much more mature poem, "Dover Beach" (1867), the sea is a symbol of the vitality and sense of unity once produced by faith, which had covered the land but which has now withdrawn.<sup>40</sup> It will be remembered that Arnold, in his

<sup>36</sup> W. S. Johnson, "Matthew Arnold's Sea of Life," pp. 198-99; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 13-14; Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 212.

<sup>37</sup> St. Paul, in Works, Super, VI, 10.

<sup>38</sup> See below, pp. 139-142.

<sup>39</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 6, 16, 20-21.

<sup>40</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 91.

religious writings, defines the subject of religion, God, as a natural force manifesting itself in man and in all of the universe.<sup>41</sup> All of these uses of the water symbolism seem to be variations on the same theme of a natural force unifying all elements of the universe and approachable by man only through feeling. This is particularly plausible when two of Arnold's rather early tentative, questioning poems are considered. In "In Utrumque Paratus" (1849), after briefly entertaining the possibility of a Platonic origin of man, from a divine mind, he turns to what seems to him the more tenable explanation of man's origin from the "wild unfathered mass" (l. 22), of material nature.<sup>42</sup> In the 1869 version of the poem's last stanza he warns man,

Thy native world stirs at thy feet unknown,  
 Yet there thy secret lies!  
 Out of this stuff, these forces, thou art grown.  
 And proud self-severance from them were disease.<sup>43</sup>

In another early poem countenancing the same set of alternatives, "Written in Butler's Sermons" (1849), Arnold concludes by describing human nature as "God's harmonious whole" (l. 3), which is rooted in the elemental natural force represented by the sea.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> God and the Bible, in Works, VIII, 127-136.

<sup>42</sup> Gordon, pp. 194-95; Poems, Allott, p. 56, note for ll. 36-42.

<sup>43</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 56, quoted in note for ll. 36-42.

<sup>44</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 22; W. S. Johnson, "Arnold's Lonely Islands," p. 313.

. . . Deep and broad, where none may see,  
 Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne  
 Where man's one nature, queen-like, sits alone,  
 Centred in a majestic unity;

And rays her powers, like sister-islands seen  
 Linking their coral arms under the sea . . . .  
 (ll. 5-10)

Thus the sea in particular and water in general are recurring symbols in Arnold's poetry; and while they undergo much development and modification in the course of the poetry, they seem often to indicate a relationship between man and nature.

Further indirect evidence for such an interpretation of the water symbolism is offered by W. H. Auden, in The Enchafed Flood.<sup>45</sup> Here he explains the ambivalence of the sea symbolism for romantic writers. Although the ideas of alienation, loneliness, and danger are associated with the sea, the dominating romantic attitude is a positive one, encompassing a sense of the sea as a womblike mother nature and a free and powerful force totally opposed to the civilized, socially structured world. W. S. Johnson notes that such an attitude is present not only in Byron, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, but also in Spinoza and Emerson and, perhaps most significantly, in Goethe, who uses the figure of the river to direct the "movement of life toward a larger life with which it is ultimately merged."<sup>46</sup> This is a representation of individual human life merging

<sup>45</sup> W. H. Auden, The Enchafed Flood (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> W. S. Johnson, "Arnold's Lonely Islands," pp. 312-13, footnote 9.



with the sea.

Another poem which fits into this group is "Mycerinus" (1849), which was probably composed in 1843 or 1844.<sup>47</sup> Although this poem actually precedes "The Forsaken Merman" both chronologically and in the order of the Strayed Reveller volume,<sup>48</sup> it can be seen as a modification of the symbolic usage delineated in "The Forsaken Merman." As the poem begins, the young king Mycerinus, having just learned of the gods' decree of his death within six years, voices the same kind of religious problem which vexes the people of the nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup> Throughout his youth he has lived an austere life of renunciation, has bent "in reverential awe" (l. 8) before the moral and religious "law" (l. 10)<sup>50</sup> because he has believed the "aberglaube"<sup>51</sup> that in the gods is to be found the archetype of human justice and goodness and that by following the divine example he will enjoy the blessings of a providential, homocentric divinity. He bitterly sums up the motive for his self-renunciation and the results of his efforts:

I looked for life more lasting, rule more high;  
And when six years are measured, lo, I die!  
(ll. 17-18)

<sup>47</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 26, headnote.

<sup>48</sup> Works, XV, 344-45.

<sup>49</sup> Trilling, p. 77.

<sup>50</sup> Trilling, p. 77; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 58.

<sup>51</sup> Arnold, Literature and Dogma, in Works, Super, VI, 229-32.

He has lived in a society nurturing the false belief in a universal order governed by human moral values.<sup>52</sup> His idea of a reward has been the impetus for his conduct, rather than a sense of joyous self-fulfillment.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, his society suffers from the division of thought and feeling which, as has been pointed out, isolates men.<sup>54</sup> Mycerinus now pictures the gods as hedonistic and indifferent to the plight of man.<sup>55</sup> They, like men, he supposes, are subject to the great amoral generative force which is the central, inevitable force of all nature:<sup>56</sup>

'Or is it that some Force, too wise, too strong,  
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,  
Sweeps earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,  
Like the broad volume of the insurgent Nile?  
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be  
Slaves of a tyrannous necessity?

(ll. 37-42)

It is of key significance here that the cosmic force is identified with the

<sup>52</sup> Allan Brick, "Equilibrium in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold," University of Toronto Quarterly, 30 (October 1960), 49; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 82; Trilling, p. 77; Alan H. Roper, "The Moral Landscape of Arnold's Poetry," PMLA, 77 (1962), 293.

<sup>53</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 59-60; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 94, 97-8, asserts, contrary to present argument, that Mycerinus never grasps the idea of righteousness for its own sake.

<sup>54</sup> Gottfried, pp. 212-13.

<sup>55</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 58; Trilling, p. 77; Anderson, p. 144; and Roper, Landscapes, p. 94, interpret Mycerinus's view of the gods as Epicurean.

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, p. 18; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 58; Roper, "The Moral Landscape," p. 293; Trilling, p. 77.

Nile, a river.<sup>57</sup> Alan H. Roper, Culler, and W. S. Johnson<sup>58</sup> all identify the river in many of Arnold's poems with the individual human life; and Culler and W. S. Johnson specifically interpret it as human nature merging with the overall natural process, represented by the sea. The implication that the river represents the true self is particularly well developed in "The Buried Life" (1852).<sup>59</sup> In "Mycerinus" the image of man's being swept along coincides with the point of view of man viewing the natural order in external nature without feeling himself a part of it. He has not penetrated below the surface of the stream.<sup>60</sup>

Feeling that he has duped himself, Mycerinus vows to make up for lost time in Byronic fashion by indulging in all conceivable sensuous pleasures, by giving himself to "revels more deep, joy keener" (l. 66) than that of the gods. He sets out with a band of revellers for the "tranquil gloom" (l. 94) of lush, cool, river-washed forest groves. There is a definite similarity between this circumscribed glade, with its subtle

<sup>57</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 60; Roper, "The Moral Landscape," p. 293.

<sup>58</sup> Roper, "The Moral Landscape," pp. 291-92; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 16; W. S. Johnson, "Matthew Arnold's Sea of Life," pp. 194, 198-99.

<sup>59</sup> See below, pp. 139-142.

<sup>60</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 13-14; W. S. Johnson, "Matthew Arnold's Sea of Life," pp. 200-203.

womblike or gravelike coloring, and the cool Wordsworthian glade, representing childhood innocence and oneness with nature.<sup>61</sup> Here the symbol emphasizes an escape into nature as opposed to the human world where feeling is abandoned. The King,

Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way  
To the cool region of the groves he loved.  
There by the river-banks he wandered on,  
From palm-grove on to palm grove, happy trees,  
Their smooth tops shining sunward, and beneath  
Burying their unsunned stems in grass and flowers;  
Where in one dream the feverish time of youth  
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of joy  
Might wander all day long and never tire.

(ll. 83-91)

The description of the sensuous revelry—"flushed guests and golden goblets foamed with wine" (l. 97)—suggests a kind of Dionysian dispersion of the self in feeling<sup>62</sup> which is, as already demonstrated, an orientation which Arnold believes may bring man into unity with a universal nature.

It is the lines of the poem which follow, those dealing with the result of the king's revelry and the poet's judgment of the king's action, that critics have found ambiguous.<sup>63</sup> Here the objective narrator, repeating

<sup>61</sup> John M. Wallace, "Landscape and 'The General Law': The Poetry of Matthew Arnold," Boston University Studies in English, 5 (Summer 1961), 94; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 82.

<sup>62</sup> Gottfried, p. 77; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 82; Madden, p. 87; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 93, 95; Trilling, pp. 77, 91; Wallace, p. 94.

<sup>63</sup> Anderson, p. 19, and Madden, p. 87, find the implications of revelling and Stoicism irreconcilable and thus find the statement of the poem ambiguous. Roper, "Matthew Arnold's Moral Landscapes," p. 293; Gottfried, p. 77; Trilling, p. 77; and Wallace, p. 94, find the emphasis

the phrase, "It may be" (l. 100), states several possible experiences that the king might have had in the midst of the revelry. He might have continued to be haunted by a vision of death despite the revelry,<sup>64</sup> an alternative having overtones of Hebraic guilt.<sup>65</sup> He might have withdrawn into himself from indulgence which really gave no pleasure and there have found strengthening self-knowledge; this is an alternative with Stoic implications.<sup>66</sup> But these possibilities are not supported by the context of the poem. The narrator says that the two things which are certain are that Mycerinus attained a state of tranquility—"his brow was smooth" (l. 112)—and that he continued to revel. His revelling gained a timelessness, being unaffected by the seasonal change of external nature.<sup>67</sup> In addition, the revelling is touched by the "silver arrows of the moon" (l. 97), which shine through the foliage. This same symbol was noted in "The Forsaken Merman," when the sea creatures, representing a nature which must be approached through feeling, visit the land world of mortals,<sup>68</sup> and in the

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in the poem resting upon Mycerinus's sensuous abandon; and Roper, Landscapes, pp. 93-96, believes that Arnold's emphasis upon Mycerinus's sensuous abandon is meant to imply the moral judgment that Mycerinus is engaging in a self-deluding, morally degenerating activity. Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 59-60; and Baum, p. 19, interpret the conclusion of the poem to mean that Mycerinus gained his own stoic calm in the midst of the revelling.

<sup>64</sup> Brick, p. 50.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, pp. 17-18.

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, pp. 18, 142; Baum, pp. 18-19; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 60-61.

<sup>67</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 82.

<sup>68</sup> See above, pp. 79-80.

Yale Manuscript, Arnold associates moonlight with the "remotest self."<sup>69</sup> Finally, the positive attitude which Mycerinus seems to maintain toward the revelling, as well as the sense of tranquility and transcendence of time which he achieves, implies that Mycerinus does experience "Revels more deep, joy keener" (l. 66) than that of any conjectural hedonistic gods. It is implied that through devotion to sensibility he experiences the Dionysian sense of dispersion of the self in feeling, through which he gains a sense of oneness with a universal nature force which can not be sensed on the usual human level of awareness.<sup>70</sup> This implication is substantiated by the final passage of the poem:

So six long years he revelled, night and day,  
And when the mirth waxed loudest, with dull sound  
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,  
To tell his wondering people of their king;  
In the still night, across the steaming flats,  
Mixed with the murmur of the moving Nile.  
(ll. 122-27)

<sup>69</sup> E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 157.

<sup>70</sup> Trilling, p. 77, describes Mycerinus's ultimate state as a "Lucretian calm"; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 82-83, asserts that Mycerinus gains a command of his feelings through either Stoicism or Epicureanism. Both W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 82, and Tinker and Lowry, p. 36, assert that Mycerinus gains a view of the wholeness of life and thus a sense of cosmos analogous to that of the figure of the Scholar Gypsy. This is the argument of the present study although it is here argued that the Scholar Gypsy's orientation toward experience is a modification of that of Mycerinus. Wallace, p. 94, notes that in "Mycerinus" Arnold exhibits an attraction to devotion to sensibility as a solution to alienation. Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 60, asserts that Mycerinus gains a sense of oneness with things through Stoicism. Anderson, p. 19, who asserts that the Stoic implications of the poem can not be reconciled with the Epicurean revelling, later, p. 133, asserts that, in application, Stoicism and Epicureanism are closely related.

As the poem has unfolded, the point of view moved from that of Mycerinus and later the narrator's conception of Mycerinus's point of view to the narrator's point of view in this final section. To the narrator, Mycerinus, the individual is no longer visible. He has sunk below the level of individual human personality to become one with the elemental nature force, symbolized by the Nile, which has been identified by Mycerinus early in the poem as a symbol of "tyrannous necessity" (l. 42).<sup>71</sup> Through contemplation of Mycerinus's oblivion in nature, the narrator gains a sense of the possibility of transcendence of death. The dichotomy of the human realm and the realm of nature which is symbolized in this poem is consistent with that implied in "The Forsaken Merman."

The Marguerite poems record another, rather complex early attempt of Arnold's persona to achieve a sense of cosmic unity through exercise of the sensibility. As G. Robert Stange has pointed out, Arnold's series of love poems shares affinities with the literary love affairs of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister and Faust, Clough's Amours de Voyage, and Hughes's Tom Brown at Oxford, all of which end in renunciation of profane love and thus "trace a moral history of the nineteenth century."<sup>72</sup> Despite affinities with other such works, however, Arnold's poems do not reach the same kind of conclusion. In two poems of the series, "Parting"

<sup>71</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 60.

<sup>72</sup> Stange, pp. 228-29.

and "A Farewell," symbols of oblivion are developed.

"Parting" catches the persona at the dramatic moment of choosing between the two orientations for achieving a sense of cosmos: the love affair with Marguerite, which represents devotion to sensibility, and the austere snowy heights of the Alps, which ultimately represent the idea of oblivion.<sup>73</sup> Seeking sensuous emotional fulfillment through romantic love is a youthful ideal pursued in many of Arnold's poems; the "New Sirens," discussed in the preceding chapter is one example.<sup>74</sup> In "Parting," in the fleeting moment in which pure, fulfilling love is experienced, the young man sees Marguerite as the embodiment of nature, with its beauty, vitality, joy and wholeness.<sup>75</sup> Through the condition of sensibility of which romantic love is a form, one may achieve a sense of unity with the universe. That this is the experience of the persona in the poem is symbolized in the identification of the object of love with forms and characteristics of external nature. As always, she is here portrayed in a natural alpine setting. Her voice, buoyant as morning" (l. 18), is also compared to the morning song of a bird out of a lush English landscape and to a "mountain-brook" (l. 21). The inviting lips, which bear an "arch smile" (l. 39), indicate "the unconquered joy in which her spirit dwells" (l. 40).

<sup>73</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 149.

<sup>74</sup> See above, pp. 31-33.

<sup>75</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 122-23.



Trilling<sup>76</sup> finds a suitable gloss for the description of Marguerite in the later poem, "Euphrosyne" (1852), which, though usually believed to be a part of the Faded Leaves series relating to the future Mrs. Arnold,<sup>77</sup> expresses a similar type of feeling about woman. She is one of those

. . . souls whom some benignant breath  
Hath charmed at birth from gloom and care.  
These ask no love, these plight no faith,  
For they are happy as they are.

(ll. 13-16)

To the persona of the latter poem, the object of love seems the embodiment of the ideal of unity with the self and the universe, of the pagan sense of happiness without pain, of the wholeness of the past Wordsworthian world.<sup>78</sup> Fulweiler<sup>79</sup> has seen "The Forsaken Merman," in which the female figure is indeed named Margaret, as another representation of the love affair, when read with the roles of the merman and Margaret reversed. There, as in "Parting," sensuous beauty, vitality, and joy are associated with the figure identified with nature.

But love cannot be sustained and fulfilled. The series of poems provides a host of ambiguous and contradictory reasons for the failure of

<sup>76</sup> Trilling, pp. 117-18.

<sup>77</sup> Baum, pp. 83-84.

<sup>78</sup> Trilling, pp. 116, 118; Miller, p. 251.

<sup>79</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 218.

love. For one thing, if the description of Marguerite given above implies that she experiences already a sense of cosmic unity which makes her joyous and independent, she would surely spurn the overtures of one less perfect than herself or would perhaps regard romantic love as a useless crutch for which she has no use.<sup>80</sup> The speaker in "Parting" believes that the reason for the failure is within himself.<sup>81</sup> Through Marguerite he is introduced to the reality of sexuality, of passion, and perhaps most particularly, of the transitory nature of such a feeling of love and he is repelled and frightened.<sup>82</sup>

To the lips, ah! of others  
 Those lips have been pressed,  
 And others, ere I was,  
 Where strained to that breast  
(ll. 67-70)

It will be remembered that by the time of Arnold's religious writings of the 1870's he specifies that control of the sexual instinct is one half of morality;<sup>83</sup> and that the quality of innocence is the "style" which, in Arnold's opinion, gives morality its beauty and Christ his attraction.<sup>84</sup> Having

<sup>80</sup> Trilling, pp. 116-18.

<sup>81</sup> Trilling, pp. 116-18; Miller, pp. 251-52; Baum, pp. 74-75, 78-79.

<sup>82</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 125; Roper, Landscapes, p. 152.

<sup>83</sup> Literature and Dogma, in Works, Super, VI, 174.

<sup>84</sup> Trilling, pp. 314-15.

been conditioned by the Rugby morality of his father, Arnold sought an ideal of unity with the universe which predicated innocence.<sup>85</sup> The self-conscious examination of himself and his feelings, which is a modern malady, made it impossible for him, as for others of his day, to experience or share real feelings.<sup>86</sup> Juxtaposed in the mind of the persona, then, are the belief in moral strictness and the belief that feeling, or sensibility, is the proper tool for discovery of truth and unity of man and the universe, as evidenced in the initial impulse of the persona to find fulfillment in love.

The alternative to the passion which cannot be fulfilled is the romantic solitude to be found among the austere, snowy mountain peaks.<sup>87</sup> During this turbulent two year period of the love affair, Arnold wrote Clough that he had grown tired of the hedonistic Beranger and of women.<sup>88</sup> The next summer when he wrote from the Alps he spoke of the "damned times" when even one's self was an enemy; and he spoke of his desire for a self-mastery he had never achieved and resolved to "carry my aching head to the mountains and to my cousin the Blumli's Alp."<sup>89</sup> The choice of solitude

<sup>85</sup> Trilling, p. 120; Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," pp. 217-18; Baum, p. 62.

<sup>86</sup> Baum, pp. 74-75; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 124; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 151; Madden, p. 81; Miller, p. 252; Trilling, p. 116.

<sup>87</sup> Baum, p. 66; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 127-30; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 152; Tinker and Lowry, p. 154.

<sup>88</sup> Lowry, p. 93.

<sup>89</sup> Lowry, p. 111.

in nature was a subjective, romantic one, which made a virtue of alienation and which smacked of Byron<sup>90</sup> and especially of Obermann,<sup>91</sup> about whom he was composing a poem at the time. As he explained in the first chapter, Obermann, Senancour's fictional character, had retreated to the alpine solitude in search of peace and unity within himself, since his age could not provide it; however, the state of self-mastery, balance, and calm which he sought could not be achieved because Obermann himself was infected with the passionate longings for fulfillment and the intellectual dialectic of the modern age.<sup>92</sup> As George Sand had said, he represented the "consciousness of incomplete faculties."<sup>93</sup> The persona of "Parting" declares that he experiences a similar state when he asks, "And what heart knows another? / Ah! who knows his own?" (ll. 73-74). The setting of "Parting," with its "mountain bee's hum" (l. 56), recalls the same detail from the first Obermann poem, in which this sound was only superimposed over a "groundtone / of human agony,"<sup>94</sup> which resulted in

<sup>90</sup> Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Christianity and Romanticism in the Victorian Era: 1830-1880, Vol. IV of Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 487; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 152; Tinker and Lowry, p. 154.

<sup>91</sup> Baum, p. 66; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 127-30.

<sup>92</sup> Trilling, pp. 29, 110.

<sup>93</sup> George Sand, "Preface" to Obermann, quoted in Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 129; see also Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 128-30; Madden, pp. 112-13; Stange, pp. 72, 75.

<sup>94</sup> Arnold, "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" (1852), ll. 35-36.

Obermann's despair.<sup>95</sup> As Arnold himself had said in "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" (ll. 109-28), Obermann's only source of joy was contemplation of nature.<sup>96</sup> Through the exercise of sensibility, he, at times, experienced what Arnold called the magic of nature, the sense of unity with the natural world. It is, then, this means of attaining a sense of unity with nature for which the persona of "Parting" yearns; it is the alternative to the less lastingly satisfactory but still attractive orientation of romantic love, against which he struggles. He entreats nature, "Calm me, restore me, and dry up my tears" (ll. 83-84), because

To thee only God granted  
 A heart ever new  
 To all always open,  
 To all always true.  
 (ll. 79-82)

Seeking such fulfillment of the feelings in nature is a romantic idea of reminiscent of Byron and of Shelley.

However, the tendency of "Parting" goes even further to the extreme of dissolution of the personality in the cosmic force, in elemental nature, which can also be seen in Byron, Shelley, and Obermann.<sup>97</sup> The sense of despair like that experienced by Obermann in his mountain solitude—a despair resulting from an inability either to gain a form of inner

<sup>95</sup> Baum, p. 69.

<sup>96</sup> Sells, pp. 254, 260.

<sup>97</sup> Beach, p. 36; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 130; Fairchild, p. 487.



force.<sup>100</sup> Again, in "Parting," a tendency toward a concept of a cosmic force within material nature is developed. The central natural force, which is present in man as in all of nature and with which he may unify himself through exercise of the sensibility, can not be sensed by the persona because his man-made age has destroyed the ability to feel, has made men isolated islands in the sea of life. At such a juncture, the despairing persona yearns toward death. Upon contemplation of oblivion, the persona becomes somewhat euphoric at the prospect of union with nature on the elemental level.

"A Farewell," which was written about the same time as "Parting" and which deals with the same situation in different terms, has been interpreted as offering a Christian resolution<sup>101</sup> rather than a naturalistic one as in "Parting." However, when the poem is analyzed, it seems to point in the same direction that "Parting" does. In the first stanzas, the speaker reviews his meeting with Marguerite, the moments of bright expectation and first love. The natural setting of trees and stream is infused with the beautiful moonlight which, as was seen in both "The Forsaken Merman" and "Myserinus," is the specific natural element associated with the awareness of the true self, and thus of a sense of cosmic unity, which may be

<sup>100</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 133.

<sup>101</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 133.

discovered through the exercise of sensibility and the imagination.<sup>102</sup>

"To Marguerite—Continued" (1852) provides a parallel example of an intuition of the unity of beings produced by the sensuously appealing in nature. Human beings are like islands separated by the sea;

But when the moon their hollow lights,  
And they are swept by balms of spring,  
And in their glens, on starry nights,  
The nightingales divinely sing;  
.....  
Oh! then a longing like despair  
Is to their farthest caverns sent;  
For surely once, they feel, we were  
Parts of a single continent!  
(ll. 7-10, 13-16)

In "A Farewell" love again quickly cools; and although this time it is Marguerite who falls out of love, the speaker admits that the problem lies in his own lack of Byronic courage to feel deeply:<sup>103</sup>

I too have longed for trenchant force,  
And will like a dividing spear;  
Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,  
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.  
(ll. 33-36)

In another poem, he says that a suitable mate for one such as Marguerite would be one embodying "the magic of the universe,"<sup>104</sup> which he lacks.

<sup>102</sup> Arnold, Yale MS., quoted in E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 157; Coursen, pp. 569-70; Madden, p. 104.

<sup>103</sup> Madden, p. 81; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 125, 133; Stange, p. 238; Gottfried, p. 77; Baum, p. 68; Trilling, pp. 115-16; Roper, Landscapes, p. 154.

<sup>104</sup> Arnold, "Urania" (1852), l. 24.



Again and again, as he vows to Obermann when he says, "I leave half my life with you,"<sup>105</sup> he will wish for sensuous, emotional fulfillment of which he is incapable.<sup>106</sup>

The hope for unity which the speaker develops in the last section of the poem is one which he can anticipate being fulfilled only in death.<sup>107</sup> It is at this juncture only that the pair can according to the speaker perceive their true selves, which indicate their unity, their "true affinities of soul" (l. 56). This line, in particular, along with the reference in the next stanza to "the eternal Father's smile" (l. 61), which beams above a sphere of sincerity and love, has led critics to interpret the symbolic resolution as a Christian after-life<sup>108</sup> or a Platonic spiritualized existence.<sup>109</sup> However, the most significant symbolic stanzas present the pair in a state of unearthly peace, indistinguishable from the elements of material nature:

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,  
My sister! to maintain with thee

<sup>105</sup> Arnold, "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,'" ll. 131-32.

<sup>106</sup> Baum, p. 70; Miller, pp. 252-53.

<sup>107</sup> Stange, p. 239; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 133; Madden, p. 84; Roper, Landscapes, p. 154.

<sup>108</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 133.

<sup>109</sup> Stange, p. 239; Roper, Landscapes, p. 154; Madden, p. 84.

The hush among the shining stars,  
 The calm upon the moonlit sea!  
 (ll. 77-80)

Again the state of oblivion is looked forward to by the persona as the only real unity of men with the universe, in view of the fact that in the human state fulfillment through the sensibility can not be permanently sustained. Perhaps this is why, in his notes, Arnold labels this group of poems with the phrase, "refusal of limitation by the sentiment of love,"<sup>110</sup> Thus, again, Arnold tends toward a definition of nature as a cosmic totality.

<sup>110</sup> Arnold, Yale MS., quoted in E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 150.

### III. EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA: THE CULMINATION OF OBLIVION SYMBOLISM

In Empedocles on Etna, the title poem of his 1852 volume, the poet dramatizes the stark culmination of reliance upon sensibility as the means of achieving oneness with the universe. The chief figure in the poem is Empedocles, a former poet, who, as the poem opens, finds himself "one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers."<sup>1</sup> Living in a truly modern period which has required an "intellectual deliverance," or the intellectual comprehension of a complex past and present, he experiences the "modern feeling" of "depression and ennui," which is often produced in "the unsound, in the over-tasked, in the over-sensitive" by an age of reflection.<sup>2</sup> In his notes for the poem and in pertinent references in the 1853 "Preface," as well as in his strikingly parallel analysis of Lucretius in "On the Modern Element in Literature" (1857),<sup>3</sup> he explains that the modern malady occurs when an intellectual outlives the society

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, "Preface to First Edition of Poems" (1853), in On the Classical Tradition, Vol. I of Works, Super, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold, "On the Modern Element in Literature" (1857), in Works, Super, I, 20, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Walter E. Houghton, "Arnold's Empedocles on Etna," Victorian Studies, I (June 1958), 315-17; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 166-167; Tinker and Lowry, pp. 292-297; Allott, ed. Poems, p. 148. All of these critics relate Empedocles to Arnold's view of Lucretius.

with which he had been in sympathy. He retreats to the solitude of himself to preserve his simple, clear view of truth, finds that this rarified intellectual atmosphere suppresses and discourages feeling and thus prohibits his experiencing "rapture"<sup>4</sup> and peace through his vision, and is finally left in the state of doubt and weary depression which constitutes the modern "dialogue of the mind,"<sup>5</sup> which plagued Hamlet, Faust, and Obermann.<sup>6</sup> There is evidence that Arnold indeed identified Empedocles's malady with his own condition.<sup>7</sup> He wrote to Clough from the Alps in 1849:

These are damned times—everything is against one—the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones . . . our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties . . . .<sup>8</sup>

Arnold projected his intellectual turmoil and lack of ability to feel into the character of Empedocles.

The poet's descriptive note beside the projected poetic subject

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Arnold, Yale MS., quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> Arnold, "Preface" (1853), Works, Super, I, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold, "Preface" (1853), Works, Super, I, 1; Poems, Allott pp. 148-49; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 154-56; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," p. 314; Tinker and Lowry, pp. 300-02.

<sup>7</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 185; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 153-54; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 313-14; Tinker and Lowry, pp. 287-89.

<sup>8</sup> Lowry, p. 111.

of Empedocles, "refusal of limitation by the religious sentiment,"<sup>9</sup> graphically indicates the attitude of the philosopher of Act I, where he has defied and fled the world of such falsity as that of Pausanias, who, like many nineteenth-century miracle-mongers, looks to Empedocles only for magical charms to revive the dead,<sup>10</sup> and the world of the sophists, who attempt to overlay "the last spark of man's consciousness with words."<sup>11</sup> Empedocles believes both self-conscious extremes are to be avoided;<sup>12</sup> for he perceives the universe in a modern intellectual way.<sup>13</sup> Arnold says that Empedocles perceives "things as they are—the world as it is—God as he is: in their stern simplicity."<sup>14</sup> What he sees is the "general life,"<sup>15</sup> the immanent life force, which the speaker describes in "Resignation" (1849):

All things the world which fill  
Of but one stuff are spun,  
That we who rail are still,  
With what we rail at, one;

<sup>9</sup> Yale MS., quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 147.

<sup>10</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 161-62.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold, Empedocles on Etna, II.i. 39; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 323-24.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, pp. 37-38.

<sup>13</sup> W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 315-17.

<sup>14</sup> Yale MS., quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 148.

<sup>15</sup> "Resignation," l. 191.

One with the o'erlaboured Power that through the  
breadth and length

Of earth, and air, and sea,  
In men, and plants, and stones,  
Hath toil perpetually,  
And travails, pants, and moans;  
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails  
in strength.

And patiently exact  
This universal God  
Alike to any act  
Proceeds at any nod,  
And quietly declaims the cursings of himself.

This is not what man hates,  
Yet he can curse but this.  
Harsh Gods and hostile Fates  
Are dreams! this only is —  
Is everywhere; sustains the wise, the foolish elf.<sup>16</sup>

This life force permeates the universe. It is the force which causes all things to fulfill the law of their being.<sup>17</sup> It clearly is not omnipotent;<sup>18</sup> it "sometimes fails in strength" (I.ii. 296). It is not moral in the anthropomorphic sense:<sup>19</sup>

Nor is that wind less rough which blows a  
good man's barge.  
Nature, with equal mind,  
Sees all her sons at play.

(I.ii. 256-58)

<sup>16</sup> Empedocles on Etna, I.ii. 187-306.

<sup>17</sup> Trilling, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup> Madden, p. 90.

<sup>19</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 163; Johnson, Voices, pp. 110-11; Stevenson, p. 47; Trilling, pp. 81-82; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 174; Robbins, p. 97.

Empedocles, because of the state of solitary contemplation which he has assumed as protection against the world, has gradually lost the united sensibility which had been his when he was a youthful poet. He now perceives that man and nature are united in the generative force; but he can no longer feel, or experience, a sense of that union.<sup>20</sup>

As Act I, Scene II opens, the philosopher addresses Pausanias, his friend from the modern, strife-torn city. The condition of alienation and strife of the city is symbolized by its location on the burning plain.<sup>21</sup> Empedocles offers to Pausanias, the practical man of limited, divided sensibility, a practical Stoic-Epicurean ethical code<sup>22</sup> much like the one presented to Fausta in "Resignation." According to Empedocles, man errs in expecting his will to prevail, in expecting satisfaction of his youthful desire for bliss, for personal emotional fulfillment to which he has no right. Not unlike his historical counterpart,<sup>23</sup> Empedocles observes that in the contemporary world of strife, man's illusory, proud will is not

<sup>20</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 165; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 107, 111-12; Roper, Landscapes, p. 185; Stange, pp. 155-57.

<sup>21</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, pp. 39-40; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 163-64; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 316, 333; Madden, p. 95; Roper, Landscapes, p. 185.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, p. 39; Sidney Feshback, "Empedocles at Dover Beach," Victorian Poetry, 4 (1966), 273; Roper, Landscapes, p. 185.

only curbed by a neutral natural scheme of things which is eternal, but also by the wills of other men.<sup>24</sup> No less does modern man err in over-intellectualizing, which results from desiring to perceive absolute truth. Thus Empedocles scolds weak, proud men for inventing gods and fate upon which to vent their wrath, upon which to lean as omniscient anthropomorphic intelligences, and from which to anticipate receiving the bliss unattainable in life.<sup>25</sup> As Pausanias points out, Empedocles had earlier observed that "mind is a light which the Gods mock us with" (I.ii. 32); Empedocles believes that man may be led astray by his mind.<sup>26</sup>

In seeming contradiction, Empedocles begins his sermon by instructing Pausanias to employ his mind in arriving at an adequate plan for survival. However, he is not contradicting himself; for he means for Pausanias to employ his rational knowledge of man's limited condition to help himself to moderate his desire, to help himself find a position of moral poise against his will.<sup>27</sup> Man's welfare, which constitutes his

<sup>24</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 185-86, 190-91, 192-93.

<sup>25</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 163; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," p. 324; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 110; Madden, p. 90; Robbins, p. 97; Stevenson, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 108; Madden, p. 97; Robbins, p. 97; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 192-93; Trilling, p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, p. 38; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 163; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 108-9, 110; Madden, pp. 91, 97; Robbins, p. 97; Trilling, pp. 82-83.



happiness, is his proper concern: "Man errs not that he deems / His welfare his true aim" (I.ii. 173-74). However, hedonistic indulgence, often represented in Arnold's poems as youth's quest for delight, is no more appropriate than complete withdrawal from the world, which the sophists recommend. Moreover, it is not for such persons as the speaker, those who have been frustrated and self-divided because of their uncompromising will, to judge that the "bliss" (I.ii. 396), or fulfillment, achieved by those who follow such a prescription is not complete. Indeed, the speaker implies that it is in appreciation of the pleasures of everyday life, such as those of the "village churl" (I.ii. 411), that true fulfillment lies:<sup>28</sup>

Is it so small a thing  
To have enjoyed the sun,  
To have lived light in the spring,  
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;  
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes . . . ?  
(I.ii. 397-401)

This line of thought has affinities with the idea of joy within the limits of moderation which is present in both Carlylian and Spinozan philosophy.<sup>29</sup> That Arnold himself regards the concept as basically Epicurean

<sup>28</sup> Trilling, p. 83; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 185-86, notes that in Arnold's poetry romantic "joy" replaces the historical Empedocles's "love" as the harmonizing influence of the universe; see also Feshback, pp. 274-75; Anderson, p. 39; and Gottfried, p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 163; Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1957), p. 254; Madden, p. 90; Trilling, p. 81.

is borne out in the poet's own comment:<sup>30</sup>

All men have equal rights, therefore All men should have equal enjoyment. Oh! A man has a right to what he can get—and then—why necessity is laid upon him to forego all . . . . Epicureanism is Stoical, and there is no theory of life but is.<sup>31</sup>

The object of the ethical code of moderated desire is to allow man to find his true self, to "fulfill the law of his . . . being."<sup>32</sup> Empedocles says, "Once read thy own breast right, / And thou hast done with fears . . . ." (I.ii. 142-43). Later, in Act II, when he complains of his own inability to arrive at a balance, or poise, he equates the desired state with finding "our own only true deep-buried selves, / Being one with which we are one with the whole world: (II. i. 371-73). The philosophy voiced here includes the concept that moderated joy gives one a sense of cosmic unity because it illuminates one's true self which actually does serve as a link between man and the remainder of the universe.

Houghton says that Empedocles, like Arnold, could see only two "refuges from ennui and depression"—Stoicism or "'the flowery lap

<sup>30</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 163, note for I. ii. 172-74; Marie C. Mengers, "Matter versus Man; or Regnier's Lyrical Interpretation, Hugo's Dream of Triumph, and Arnold's Abdication," French Review, 28 (Feb. 1955), 299.

<sup>31</sup> Yale MS., quoted in Poems, Allott, pp. 162-63, note for I. ii. 152-56.

<sup>32</sup> Trilling, p. 82.

of earth."<sup>33</sup> Although this analysis does not hold true in Arnold's poetry as a whole, the two alternatives of the indifferent universe calling for an ethical code of moderation on the part of man and of a beautiful, harmonious nature with which man must try to experience a sense of union are present in this poem. At the least, as in "Resignation," the position of resignation allows modern man a method of survival without delusion;<sup>34</sup> but at the most it is the element of moral balance which is a part of the balance of all one's faculties through the operation of the aesthetic consciousness. The manifestation of aesthetic consciousness, or controlled sensibility, in shaping one's being as well as in serving as a tool for dealing with experience signifies the development of nature in man.<sup>35</sup> Empedocles's position in the first part of the poem is much like that of the philosopher described in God and the Bible (1875). There Arnold outlines, as an example of man's intuition of righteousness, which constitutes knowledge of God, the development and decline of the Hellenic worship of Apollo, "the awakener and sustainer of genius, . . .

<sup>33</sup> W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," p. 326, in part quoting Arnold, "Memorial Verses" (1850); Madden, p. 97; Anderson, p. 43; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 115.

<sup>34</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 164.

<sup>35</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 110, interprets the orientation of detachment as conducive to discovery of nature within the self; but he does not explain the orientation of detachment as related to aesthetic consciousness.

the power illuminating and elevating the soul through intellectual beauty," and "the prophet of the moral order and of right."<sup>36</sup> Thus Apollo is the patron of all harmony, including all art and healing.<sup>37</sup> Arnold explains that after the decline of the Apolline worship as religion, it was perpetuated by poets and later by the philosophers<sup>38</sup> such as Empedocles. Thus Empedocles is portrayed as one who, alone in his time, possesses the Apolline perception of the necessity of a moral balance to bring life to fulfillment,<sup>39</sup> but who lacks the unified sensibility of the poet, which would allow him to feel the joyous sense of cosmos, which he perceives intellectually, and delineates for Pausanias when he proclaims,

All things the world which fill  
Of but one stuff are spun . . . .  
(I. ii. 287-88)

That he is aware of his inability to feel is apparent when he says that fabrications of the mind

. . . keep us prisoners of our consciousness,  
And never let us clasp and feel the All.  
(II. i. 353-54)

Thus Empedocles is torn between an intellectual perception of a unifying

<sup>36</sup> Matthew Arnold, God and the Bible, Vol. VIII of Works, 113-14.

<sup>37</sup> Meredith B. Raymond, "Apollo and Arnold's Empedocles on Etna," Review of English Literature, 8(July 1967), 25.

<sup>38</sup> Arnold, God and the Bible, Works, VIII, 115-16; Frank Kermode, The Romantic Image (New York: Chilmark Press, 1957), p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 195.

cosmic force in nature, which requires, as a part of its development in man, the cultivation of moral restraint, and an inability to actually feel, or experience, the presence of this force.

Empedocles's state of mind is mirrored in the natural description. As he delivers his sermon, it is noon, in "a glen on the highest skirts of the woody region of Etna" (I. ii.). The setting is the sun-flooded region which forms a transition between the lush natural beauty in which the poet Callicles sings and the barren mountain peak upon which Empedocles encounters only isolation from the universe. Thus it does suggest, as Roper has pointed out,<sup>40</sup> the burning plain which is Arnold's often-repeated symbol for the cosmic alienation of modern society. This is appropriate because the philosopher is setting out an ethical code for one who lives in such a world. The philosopher's own personal sense of alienation is seen in his description of the setting. It is the sun beating down mercilessly, "shining on those naked slopes like flame" (I. ii. 6), which Empedocles notices. Thus the code of resignation does not guarantee fulfillment; and indeed, for one such as Empedocles who has known a sense of cosmos, the meager pleasures of everyday life in an indifferent world are insupportable.

Callicles, the poet-votary of Apollo, presents a dramatic contrast to the Empedocles of the poem, though he is probably much like the

<sup>40</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 189-90.

younger Empedocles was.<sup>41</sup> His orientation of aesthetic consciousness allows him to experience a sense of cosmos, through the balance of all his faculties, not just the moral one.<sup>42</sup> The manifestation of aesthetic consciousness, or controlled sensibility, in the perfection of one's being as well as in serving as a tool for transfiguring experience signifies the development of nature in man and thus man's unity with universal nature. In Callicles then are combined reason and imagination.<sup>43</sup> Much like Empedocles, Callicles disdains Pausanias's superstitious belief that Empedocles possesses some magical charm which can be employed in raising the dead. This is, of course, the same rational mind with which Arnold approaches the "aberglaube" of Christianity in his religious writings.<sup>44</sup> Callicles further demonstrates his rational quality when he sees past Pausanias's superficial explanation of the cause of Empedocles's feeling of isolation, the political and philosophical position of society,

<sup>41</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 159.

<sup>42</sup> Madden, pp. 95-96; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 158-59, associates Callicles with the use of the imagination to produce a sense of cosmic harmony; however, he does not include a moral-intellectual element in his interpretation of Callicles; Anderson, p. 40; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 175.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, pp. 37-38; Fred L. Burwick, "Holderlin and Arnold: Empedocles on Etna," Comparative Literature, 17(Winter 1965), 37.

<sup>44</sup> Arnold, Literature and Dogma (1873), Works, Super, VI, 212; see above, p. 62.

to the real reason, "some root of suffering in himself" (I. i. 151).<sup>45</sup> In Act II, also, it will be shown that Callicles's songs provide not only beauty but also insights meant to help Empedocles find an alternative other than suicide to his dilemma.<sup>46</sup> This ability to experience vicariously the pain of life and to offer a practical solution of balance makes Callicles more than a strayed reveller of the imagination.<sup>47</sup> Another and more frequently pointed out aspect of Callicles is his "natural magic."<sup>48</sup> Throughout the poem, he occupies a leafy glade on the lower slopes of Etna,<sup>49</sup> while Empedocles progresses from the glade to the isolated peak.<sup>50</sup> In the glade setting of natural beauty Callicles experiences a Wordsworthian sense of well-being and harmony with himself, and thus with the universe,<sup>51</sup> as symbolized by the clear, vigorous stream. His

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, p. 37; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 169; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 323-24.

<sup>46</sup> E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 175.

<sup>47</sup> Anderson, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Arnold, "Maurice de Guérin" (1863), Works, Super, III, 33; Gottfried, pp. 126-28; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 197-98; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 158-59; Bush, p. 254.

<sup>49</sup> Wallace, p. 98.

<sup>50</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 189; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 157.

<sup>51</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 159; Madden, p. 98; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 111-12; Burwick, p. 39.

songs are a magister vitae.<sup>52</sup> When he praises the setting, he invokes both Pan, who is often associated with the Dionysian, the irrational and emotional, and Apollo, of whom Callicles is certainly a disciple as indicated by his lyre: "How gracious is the mountain at this hour! . . . . Apollo! / What mortal could be sick or sorry here?" (I. i. 6, 19-20). The Apolline, representing art, intellectual beauty, and harmony, incorporates the elements of the Dionysian.<sup>53</sup>

The last quotation, in which Callicles invokes Apollo, contains the same phrase Arnold employs in "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment" (1864) to describe the Hellenistic "religion of pleasure," which never allowed for the possibility of one's being "sick or sorry";<sup>54</sup> thus Arnold seems to be associating Callicles with, what seems to him to be, the negative side of Greek culture. In his essay, Arnold contrasts the qualities of the medieval Christian orientation toward life, which allowed for the transfiguration of the sorrow and pain of the material world by the "heart and imagination," with the qualities of the Hellenistic orientation, which called for dealing with experiences of the material world solely through the "senses and understanding."<sup>55</sup> This quality of total

<sup>52</sup> Letter (1852), Lowry, p. 124.

<sup>53</sup> Anderson, p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> Works, Super, III, "pleasure . . ." —227; "sick . . ."—222.

<sup>55</sup> Works, Super, III, "hearts . . ."—225; "senses . . ."—223.



aesthetic detachment and insensitivity to the reality of inward pain made the Greek "religion of pleasure" of the decadence empty of therapeutic value for modern man.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in order to maintain his compatibility with both the world of men and the mountain solitude of nature, and in order to maintain his ability to feel without being feeling's slave, Callicles must cultivate a difficult, unself-conscious detachment from the world; however, as has already been pointed out and as will become even clearer in the analysis of his songs, Callicles represents the blend of aesthetic distance and religious emotion of the Hellenic period,<sup>57</sup> which Arnold praises in "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment,"<sup>58</sup> as worthy of emulation. Although after 1853 there is a gradual shift in Arnold's thought toward this position of "imaginative reason," or aesthetic consciousness, the development of Empedocles on Etna seems to indicate a kind of evaluation of the two orientations toward experience: devotion to sensibility, which leads Empedocles to inevitable failure, despair, and the shocking resolution of suicide, and aesthetic consciousness, the necessary isolation of which, Empedocles again proves, may lead one to subjectivity, intellectual dialectic, and inability to feel. In the present poem, Arnold seems to lean toward the Empedoclean

<sup>56</sup> Works, Super, III, 225; Anderson, p. 37.

<sup>57</sup> Madden, p. 96; Anderson, p. 38; Wallace, p. 98.

<sup>58</sup> Works, Super, III, 230-31.

devotion to sensibility.

In the context of the previously discussed ideas, Callicles's first two songs, which are interspersed among the parts of Empedocles's sermon, can be explained. First as Empedocles begins delivering his intellectually-based code of ethics, Callicles juxtaposes his own poetic wisdom. It comes in the form of the song of Chiron, "the aged Centaur" (I. ii. 59), who, in his own verdant, stream-skirted glen, taught Achilles not only the traditional heroic lore but also the secrets of nature, the intuitive wisdom:<sup>59</sup> "He told him of the Gods, the stars, / The tides; . . . / And all the wisdom of the race" (I. ii. 71-72, 76). From this voice of the aesthetic consciousness, of the united sensibility, comes the mythopoeic revelation of the wisdom symbolized by the centaur, which is Greek legend's half human, half horse creature. The centaur itself is a graphic representation of man's unity with primal nature, with the animal and vegetable world.<sup>60</sup> In Callicles's song, Chiron acquaints Achilles with the secrets of beautiful nature so that he may experience the joy of unity with the universe and thereby gain the strength to be an heroic, a fulfilled man. Indeed, it is through the artistic orientation that all of one's faculties are brought to perfection and thus that wisdom may

<sup>59</sup> Raymond, p. 26.

<sup>60</sup> Stange, p. 25; Anderson, p. 39; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 174.

be cultivated.<sup>61</sup> The particular reference to the centaur in this song brings to mind what Arnold terms Maurice de Guérin's magical treatment of nature in "The Centaur"; for the song makes "magically near and real the life of Nature."<sup>62</sup> Callicles's wisdom, then, is a sense of the oneness of the universe, which results from the artistic view of life.

Callicles's second song, in which he relates the story of Cadmus and Harmonia, occurs just after Empedocles finishes his advice to Pausanias. Cadmus, the founder of Thebes,<sup>63</sup> and his wife Harmonia had experienced the pains of an unsettled time—"curse upon curse, pang upon pang" (I. ii. 447)—just as Empedocles has. Arnold related Pindar's description of their situation in "On Translating Homer" (1861):

A secure time fell to the lot neither of Peleus the son of Aeacus, nor of the godlike Cadmus; howbeit these are said to have had, of all mortals, the supreme of happiness, who heard the golden-snooded Muses sing, one of them on the mountain (Pelion), the other in seven-gated Thebes.<sup>64</sup>

Arnold cites this passage as an example of the "grand style in simplicity,"<sup>65</sup> which, it will be remembered, combines moral profundity with

<sup>61</sup> Raymond, p. 26; Culture and Anarchy (1869), Works, Super, V, 98-100.

<sup>62</sup> "Maurice de Guérin" (1863), Works, Super, III, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 173, note for I. ii. 436.

<sup>64</sup> Works, Super, I, 191, footnote.

<sup>65</sup> Works, Super, I, 190.

a sense of natural magic, and which transforms the real world through the imagination.<sup>66</sup> In the poem, Arnold renders the passage in the following manner:

The Gods had to their marriage come,  
And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days  
In sight of blood.

(I. ii. 450-54)

Thus through the eyes of the artist the tragic nature of a life of alienation and strife can be transformed into a thing of beauty and harmony; in this case a beautiful myth is made.<sup>67</sup> Under this influence, they

Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,  
And all that Theban woe, and stray  
For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.  
(I. ii. 458-60)

Thus, not only is the painful and subjectively conscious experience of life utterly transcended,<sup>68</sup> but also a sense of fulfillment, of unity of man with the universe is produced. This is symbolized here by their newly metamorphosed form as "two bright and aged snakes" (I. ii. 435).<sup>69</sup> The transformation has another related level of implication if it is interpreted as the metamorphosis that the poet or man of aesthetic

<sup>66</sup> Works, Super, I, 190-91; Madden, pp. 177-78.

<sup>67</sup> Madden, p. 98.

<sup>68</sup> Raymond, p. 26.

<sup>69</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 111.

consciousness undergoes in transcending the self-conscious self<sup>70</sup> and uniting with the unself-conscious self and thus with the universe. These songs offer the orientation of the aesthetic consciousness as an alternative to Empedocles's proclamation that resigned acquiescence is the only workable stance in the modern world.<sup>71</sup>

When Act II begins, it is evening and the evening of Empedocles's life as well. He stands alone on the bleak, lifeless summit of Mt. Etna, a setting symbolizing Empedocles's social and cosmic alienation,<sup>72</sup> and contemplates suicide. The Empedocles of this act is, in many ways, like Obermann.<sup>73</sup> Disgusted by the sophists and petty men of the new age, he had fled society and turned within, clinging to his intellectually clear perception of truth. His once balanced soul has become overcome by self-conscious intellectualism.<sup>74</sup> He is watching his spirit's "faculty of joy"

<sup>70</sup> Donovan, pp. 4-6.

<sup>71</sup> Although W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," p. 334-35, does not define Callicles's artistic orientation with the term "aesthetic consciousness," as this writer does, his description of Callicles's orientation parallels that presented in this paper.

<sup>72</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 157, 169; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 316-17; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 174; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 107; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 189-90.

<sup>73</sup> Trilling, p. 80; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 154-55; Mengers, p. 299.

<sup>74</sup> Anderson, p. 38; Burwick, p. 27; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 165, 168, 171; Gottfried, p. 79; W. E. Houghton,

(II. i. 273) dry up; to his horror, he can no longer feel. He is becoming "nothing but a devouring flame of thought" (II. i. 329), alienated from the universe.<sup>75</sup> He realizes, as the narrator of "In Utrumque Paratus" (1849) and of "Stagirius" (1849) realizes, that it is the structures of the mind which are products of intellectual pride, that

. . . keep us prisoners of our consciousness,  
And never let us clasp and feel the All  
But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.  
(II. i. 352-54)

In the 1863 essay, "Dr. Stanley's Lectures on the Jewish Church," Arnold directly cautions against intellectual pride, saying that it is only the "born thinker," the philosopher such as Spinoza or Hegel, for whom the ideal life is "an eternal series of intellectual acts." In actuality there are many who forsake religion to follow the life of thought only to find that they "cannot really breathe its air."<sup>76</sup> This happens to Empedocles, who cries out, "Air! air!" (II. i. 217).<sup>77</sup> Indeed, for mankind, in general, Arnold believes that

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"Empedocles," p. 322; Madden, pp. 97-98; Mengers, p. 298; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 193-94, 196; Trilling, pp. 78, 137.

<sup>75</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 107, calls attention to the similarity between the imagery of "In Utrumque Paratus" and Empedocles on Etna.

<sup>76</sup> Works, Super, III, 65-66.

<sup>77</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 165-66.

the service of reason is freezing to feeling, chilling to the religious mood. And feeling and the religious mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him.<sup>78</sup>

On an even larger scale, according to Arnold's interpretation of history, when a culture, such as that of Greece, comes to rely exclusively upon thought, or philosophy, and discards religious sentiment, feeling, or the stuff of poetry, as Empedocles does, it begins to fragment and lose its contact with truth.<sup>79</sup>

Empedocles is now aware of an overwhelming self-conscious passionate desire for emotional fulfillment.<sup>80</sup> He longs to experience once again a sense of unity with the universe, a unity which he still believes to exist. He nostalgically recalls the time in his youth when he and others were, like Callicles, votaries of Apollo. Then he had possessed the balanced soul, the aesthetic consciousness, in which thought and feeling are harmonized; and then he had experienced a Wordsworthian sense of unity with the universe:<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Yale MS., quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 518, headnote.

<sup>79</sup> Trilling, pp. 80-81; "Curtius's History of Greece," II (1871), Works, Super, V. 270-71.

<sup>80</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 167, 169; Gottfried, p. 78, describes Empedocles as one directing his passion toward the world of thought.

<sup>81</sup> W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 320, 334-35; Madden, p. 93; Roper, Landscapes, p. 194.

Then we could still enjoy, then neither thoughts  
 Nor outward things were closed and dead to us;  
 But we received the shock of mighty thoughts  
 On simple minds with a pure natural joy.

(II. i. 240-43)

This was the period when he, like Callicles, numbered among the "Children of the Second Birth,"<sup>82</sup> when he could live in the world but not be of it.<sup>83</sup> The realization of what he has lost brings Empedocles into a state of despair in which he contemplates suicide.

To Empedocles's mood, Callicles replies in a manner meant to point the way to an alternate resolution. Callicles sings of Typho, the Titan who strove passionately against the gods to gain his will.<sup>84</sup> He represents all the "strength of soul"<sup>85</sup> which Arnold praises in Byron and "the second Cato" (l. 13).<sup>86</sup> It is only for this creature, led totally by his sensibility, that the sound of the lyre, the symbol of Apolline harmony,<sup>87</sup> is repelling. Callicles's description of the

<sup>82</sup> Arnold, "In Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" (1852), l. 143.

<sup>83</sup> Anderson, p. 38, discusses Callicles's orientation in similar terms.

<sup>84</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 112; Madden, p. 92.

<sup>85</sup> Arnold, "Courage" (1852), l. 12.

<sup>86</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 155-56, 175.

<sup>87</sup> Raymond, p. 25.



Olympian gods' feeling the "lulling spell" (II. i. 64) of the Apolline cup, "whose draughts beguile / Pain and care" (II. i. 85-86), is reminiscent of the Strayed Reveller's pronouncement that the gods have the privilege of seeing experience as a totality without pain while the artist must endure great pain in achieving the necessary balance for such a view.<sup>88</sup> Typho, because he lacks the necessary self-discipline to balance his faculties and to overcome self-consciousness as mortals must do, can not experience the peace of unity with the universe. From his own point of view, he is eternally the victim of an alien, indifferent nature which renders him powerless; he is the victim "through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone / To imbed them in the sea" (II. i. 43-44). Remaining the Titan eternally, Typho continues to assert his will, to writhe and groan against the music of the lyre even when the "strong sea-currents" (II. i. 59) flow over him. As has been mentioned before, the sea, in which the very mountain of Etna is imbedded, is regarded by Arnold as the symbol of union between man and nature. Thus Typho's situation is quite ironic. Because Typho, in his subjectivity, can not submit to the course of nature, he feels himself imprisoned by it. Callicles, then, is presenting for Empedocles an example of a behavior and a state of mind analogous to his own and thus is attempting to demonstrate the

<sup>88</sup> See above, pp. 26-28.

futility of the idea of approaching experience through sensibility.

But Empedocles, remaining true to his Titanic role,<sup>89</sup> interprets Callicles's tale in a different manner. Leaping furiously upon the image of the gods who are stupified by the "appeasing, gracious harmony" (II. i. 75) of Apollo's lyre, he associates the gods with superficial men of his age who put their trust in miracles and magic,<sup>90</sup> "all the fool's-armory of magic" (II. i. 118). The terms in which he refers to the conflict of Typho against the gods—"the brave, impetuous heart, yields everywhere / To the subtle, contriving head" (II. i. 90-91)—indicate that he also indicts the society of the age for over-intellectualizing sophistry, which is analogous to the nineteenth century's strictly scientific, logical gathering of knowledge<sup>91</sup> against which Arnold warns in "Literature and Science" (1885). Empedocles turns within himself to maintain his perception of truth. He sees Callicles's song as a justification of his flight from society and now discards forever his crown and royal robe, the symbols of social authority.<sup>92</sup>

Immediately, Callicles begins a second song which is meant

<sup>89</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 155-56; Gottfried, p. 78.

<sup>90</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 169.

<sup>91</sup> Madden, p. 93.

<sup>92</sup> Burwick, pp. 32-33; W. E. Houghton, pp. 318-19; Trilling, p. 103.

to demonstrate even more clearly that the emotional excess to which Empedocles is tending obscures the only vision of truth which man can experience without self-destruction. Callicles, of course, favors the Apolline balance, which harmonizes all faculties:

The music of the lyre blows away  
The clouds which wrap the soul.  
Oh! that Fate had let me see  
That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,  
That famous, final victory,  
When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire.  
(II. i. 123-28)

In the preceding lines, which preface the song, Callicles makes it clear that his primary sympathies are with Apollo, as the revealer of truth.<sup>93</sup>

In the story, Apollo pits his lyre against proud Marsyas's oriental auloi, or flute,<sup>94</sup> in a contest of musical ability. In many ways it is clear that Marsyas represents the intuitive, sensibility-oriented, elementally natural in man;<sup>95</sup> he represents the Dionysian element as opposed to the Apolline.<sup>96</sup> Marsyas is a faun, part man and part goat; and he is a flute player and thus is associated with Pan, the god of nature. He is also followed by the Dionysian Maenads.<sup>97</sup> Finally, his

<sup>93</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 175.

<sup>94</sup> Anderson, p. 41.

<sup>95</sup> Madden, p. 97; Mengers, p. 299.

<sup>96</sup> Anderson, p. 41.

<sup>97</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 182, note for II.i. 128; Anderson, p. 41.

home is Phrygia in Asia Minor,<sup>98</sup> a primitive area colonized by Apolline Greece, but different from "European Greece" because it lacked the unifying, harmonizing inspiration of Apollo of Delphi to balance the "love of change and the love of pleasure," the "native vivacity and mobility."<sup>99</sup> The faun is defeated by Apollo and flayed by a follower of Apollo. The effect of the song is made somewhat ambiguous in the second half where Callicles portrays the young Olympus, the disciple of Marsyas, whom Marsyas had taught to play the flute and to woo the Phrygian girls. At the sight of the flaying of his master, Olympus is horrified and hides his eyes; and the song ends with the line: "Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun! ah, poor Faun!" (II. i. 190). The scene is symbolic of the cooling and controlling of passion by harmony or balance, the Apolline element superseding the Dionysian.<sup>100</sup> However, Callicles is a poet; and like Olympus, he has undergone the difficult but necessary ordeal of finding balance. This explains the burst of sympathy for Marsyas demonstrated at the end of the song.<sup>101</sup>

Empedocles, still overcome with the desire to regain feeling,

<sup>98</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 182, note for II.i. 131.

<sup>99</sup> "Curtius's History of Greece," II (1871), Works, Super, V, 270-71.

<sup>100</sup> Anderson, p. 42.

<sup>101</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 195.

sees the song as a warning that the service of Apollo, which in his mind predicates solitude and subsequent over-intellectualization, leads to dessication of the feelings, which are the link with life itself.<sup>102</sup> Thus, he discards the "laurel bough, / Scornful Apollo's ensign" (II.i. 192-93). He realizes that his loss of inner balance is his own fault when he appeals to the stars, at first believing that they, too, are victims of the times.<sup>103</sup> Then, as Arnold does elsewhere in his lyrics on nature, here he has Empedocles apply to each object, representing each of the four elements of the Empedoclean universe, what seem to be anthropomorphic qualities of "courage," "force," and "held-in joy swelling its heart" (II.i. 319, 316).<sup>104</sup> What is meant here, and suggested in Arnold's religious writings, is that all of the elements of nature partake of the central generative life force and are harmoniously unified with it.<sup>105</sup> This is certainly implied in Empedocles's rather Wordsworthian

<sup>102</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 169-70; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," p. 319; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 113; Madden, pp. 93-94; Roper, Landscapes, p. 194.

<sup>103</sup> Madden, pp. 93-94.

<sup>104</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 113.

<sup>105</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 170; Madden, p. 95; See also James Benziger, Images of Eternity: Studies in the Poetry of Religious Vision from Wordsworth to T. S. Eliot (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), pp. 205-06. Benziger recognizes Empedocles's imaginative vision of a cosmic force, but he interprets it as a tendency toward Platonism.

description of the landscape at this point:<sup>106</sup>

. . . . And thou, fiery world,  
 That sapp'st the vitals of this terrible mount  
 Upon whose charred and quaking crust I stand—  
 Thou, too, brimmest with life!— The sea of cloud,  
 That heaves its white and billowy vapours up  
 To moat this isle of ashes from the world,  
 Lives; and that other fainter sea, far down,  
 O'er whose lit floor a road of moon beams leads  
 To Etna's Liparean sister-fires  
 And the long dusky line of Italy—  
 That mild and luminous floor of water lives . . . .  
 (II. i. 305-15)

This description calls to mind Arnold's symbolic rendering of man's nature in "Written in Butler's Sermons" (1849), which advances the implication of man's unity with elemental nature. There the foundation of man's "deep-buried"<sup>107</sup> self is to be found below the sea, as the basis of the mountain which is the manifested form of the self. The "powers," or faculties of the self are "like sister-islands seen / Linking their coral arms under the sea . . . ." <sup>108</sup> Here the "sister-fires" (II. i. 313) are linked by "moonbeams" (II. i. 312). The substitution of moonlight, a symbol of the true self usually as perceived through employment of imagination and feeling, for an object of material nature is significant because it indicates that Arnold is tending toward the notion of nature which may manifest itself in human faculties and link man with the remainder of the

<sup>106</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 188; Tinker and Lowry, p. 302.

<sup>107</sup> Empedocles on Etna, II. i. 371.

<sup>108</sup> "Written in Butler's Sermons," ll. 9-10.

universe.<sup>109</sup> Empedocles, who is sensibility-oriented, sees in the vitality of external nature a symbolic rendering of the potential life within himself, which he could sense if he could once again approach the unself-conscious level of feeling.<sup>110</sup>

It is mind, Empedocles decides, which makes it impossible for him to "clasp and feel the All" (II. i. 353),

Oh, that I could glow like the mountain!  
 .....  
 But no, this heart will glow no more; thou art  
 A living man no more, Empedocles!  
 Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—  
 But a naked, eternally restless mind!  
(II. i. 323, 327-30)

which will

. . . keep us prisoners of our consciousness,  
 And never let us clasp and feel the All . . . .  
(II. i. 351-52)

Since he is unable to feel, in his present state, he desperately concludes that death and the accompanying destruction of the thinking power are the only alternatives.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Tinker and Lowry, p. 302, note a Wordsworthian quality in Empedocles's description of the moonlit setting; Coursen, pp. 569-70, 578, acknowledges that Arnold's use of the moonlight in Empedocles indicates an attempt to recapture the Wordsworthian world view; however, contrary to the present argument, Coursen defines the Wordsworthian view as totally transcendental and he also asserts that Empedocles can never sustain the Wordsworthian view.

<sup>110</sup> Burwick, p. 40.

<sup>111</sup> Anderson, pp. 43-44; Baum, pp. 135-36; Burwick, p. 30; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 171-72; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 328-29; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 112-13.

To the elements it came from  
 Everything will return—  
 (II. i. 331-32)

.....  
 And we might gladly share the fruitful stir  
 Down in our mother earth's miraculous womb . . . .  
 (II. i. 339-40)

For a moment he is plagued by the Empedoclean fear of reincarnation.<sup>112</sup>  
 Then, suddenly, while contemplating his death and elemental unity with nature, he experiences once again a momentary sense of his buried self, of unity with the universe. For him sensibility has momentarily lifted the cloud of alienation which, Callicles had claimed, Apolline balance can lift permanently (II. i. 123-24):<sup>113</sup> "The numbing cloud / Mounts off my soul; I feel it, I breathe free" (II. i. 407-08). Because of his excess of intellectualism, Empedocles fears that this state is only temporary. He is overpowered by a total commitment to sensibility, the desire to maintain feeling:<sup>114</sup> "We shall feel the agony of thirst, / The ineffable longing for the life of life / Baffled for ever . . ." (II. i. 356-58). Therefore, he triumphantly throws himself into the crater, accepting oblivion, dissolution of the personality in the hope of permanent union

<sup>112</sup> Burwick, p. 35; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 328-29; Madden, p. 95; Roper, Landscapes, p. 186.

<sup>113</sup> W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 330-31; Anderson, pp. 43-44, recognizes the similarity of imagery used in Callicles's and Empedocles's speeches; but he believes that Empedocles gains a momentary sense of cosmos because he thinks he is entitled to it as a result of his "intellectual integrity."

<sup>114</sup> Trilling, p. 137.



with nature on the elemental level.<sup>115</sup> In death, Empedocles becomes a symbol for the reader of man's potential elemental unity with the universe.

Among the philosophical sanctions of this kind of action is the belief of the artist that he must transcend the self-consciousness in order to unite himself with the universe and thus present life as an harmonious unity. While some poets can achieve this state through aesthetic balance, others can not elude self-consciousness and, in despair, are led to the prospect of self-annihilation,<sup>116</sup> through which act they certainly are united with the universe on the material level. Another philosophical explanation is the Hindu belief, as outlined in the Bhagavad Gita, that the ego, or power of thought, must be transcended in order for one to arrive at the identity of the individual Atman with the universal Brahman, or with the central power of the universe.<sup>117</sup> S. Nagarajan, in his analysis of the poem in terms of the Bhagavad Gita, points out that Arnold's idea of poetic synthesis, as presented in others of his writings such as "Literature and Science" and the "Maurice de Guérin" essay, and in his idea of culture itself, points to the kind of integration of the

<sup>115</sup> Fairchild, pp. 488-89; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," p. 327; Roper, Landscapes, p. 186; Trilling, p. 83.

<sup>116</sup> Donovan, pp. 5-6.

<sup>117</sup> S. Nagarajan, "Arnold and the Bhagavad Gita: A Reinterpretation of Empedocles on Etna," Comparative Literature, 12 (Fall 1960), 336, 338; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 173-75; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 110; Trilling, p. 83.

faculties that is necessary for absorption in the central force of the universe as delineated in the Gita. However, Empedocles had become imprisoned in himself and thus could not experience a sense of absorption.<sup>118</sup>

At any rate, in making his choice Empedocles reaffirms the Arnoldian belief in man's absolute kinship with the "brother-world"<sup>119</sup> in a natural force at the center of things.<sup>120</sup> Empedocles muses, "And we might gladly share the fruitful stir / Down in our mother earth's miraculous womb" (II. i. 339-40). Thus as he leaps to his individual death, he appeals to the elements as the speaker had in "Parting":<sup>121</sup> "Receive me, save me!" (II. i. 416). What Empedocles does is not an act of nihilistic despair or even a hollow moral victory of defiance of fate.<sup>122</sup> Although despair of being able to achieve a lasting sense of cosmos through exercise of sensibility brings Empedocles to the idea of suicide,

<sup>118</sup> Nagarajan, pp. 336-38.

<sup>119</sup> Arnold, "In Utrumque Paratus" (1849), 1. 31.

<sup>120</sup> Burwick, p. 40; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 329-31; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 178; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 115.

<sup>121</sup> Fairchild, p. 488.

<sup>122</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 175, considers the suicide primarily a triumph of defiance; Roper, Landscapes, p. 204, suggests that Empedocles is an existentialistic hero for whom the only triumph is the intellectual struggle toward a sense of harmony with nature and for whom death is a victory because it precludes the experience of total loss of a sense of harmony which would naturally follow upon intellection.

when he contemplates personal oblivion he concludes that it is the only means of fulfilling the quest of cosmos which he sought unsuccessfully through sensibility.<sup>123</sup> In Empedocles's suicide, as in all the oblivion wishes already discussed, is borne out the Epicurean type of belief in an elemental, material nature<sup>124</sup> which man, in his human state, can approach briefly and imperfectly through feeling and which man can merge with in death, through his material nature.

This poem does not end with Empedocles's suicide, although the poet's sentiments seem to be with him. Callicles's rendering of Apollo's song at the end of the poem serves as a significant transition to the modified orientation of aesthetic consciousness<sup>125</sup> toward which Arnold moves in later poems. Referring to the scene of the suicide on the lifeless, isolated peak, Callicles begins by saying, "Not here, O Apollo / Are haunts meet for thee" (II. i. 421-22). Apollo's haunt should be that area of the landscape where the sea of universal nature meets the river of the individual buried life:

But, where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea,

<sup>123</sup> W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," p. 327; Burwick, p. 36; Miller, pp. 260-61; see also Madden, p. 99, who believes that while Arnold presents the suicide as the culmination of a romantic longing for cosmos, the poet does not look upon the suicide as a triumph for Empedocles.

<sup>124</sup> Trilling, p. 89.

<sup>125</sup> Anderson, pp. 42, 46-47.

Where the moon-silvered inlets  
 Send far their light voice  
 Up the still vale of Thisbe,  
 O speed, and rejoice!

(II. i. 423-28)

The moonlight, here symbolizing the true self illuminated by the controlled sensibility of the aesthetic consciousness, brings out the harmonious natural beauty of the mountainside:

In the moonlight the shepherds,  
 Soft lulled by the rill,  
 Lie wrapped in their blankets  
 Asleep on the hills.

(II. i. 433-36)

Here divine Apollo roams, singing with his nine muses:

First hymn they the Father  
 Of all things; and then,  
 The rest of immortals,  
 The action of men.

The day in his hotness,  
 The strife with the palm;  
 The night in her silence,  
 The stars in their calm.

(II. i. 461-68)

In the song of Apollo, all the elements of human experience are harmonized<sup>126</sup>—the mortal and the immortal, day and night, strife and calm.

In Apolline fashion, Callicles remains, at the end of the poem, solitary on the mountainside. From here, he is able to experience vicariously Empedocles's plight and the life of men like Pausanias and is able,

<sup>126</sup> Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, pp. 176-77; W. S. Johnson, *Voices*, p. 115; Roper, *Landscapes*, p. 205.

through his art, to harmonize all these experiences with the scheme of the universe. This use of controlled sensibility to produce a sense of cosmos also predicates a belief in a central generative force in nature.<sup>127</sup>

In all of the poems discussed up to this point in chapters one and two, man has been concerned with approaching a sense of cosmos. In the "Forsaken Merman," that in nature which is the cosmic link is portrayed symbolically as an unself-conscious world of sensuous beauty, feeling, and vitality springing directly from material nature. This cosmic link is below the level of the human and approachable by man only through his feelings, which is harmonious with the Epicurean approach to a material universe. In the poems following "The Forsaken Merman" and culminating with Empedocles on Etna, man, for one reason or another, is unable to experience the deep unself-conscious feeling which provides him with a sense of unity with the universe; therefore, in a state of despair, he has turned to the idea of suicide, which, upon contemplation, he has found to be consistent with his quest of cosmos. Through dissolution of the personality man's material nature merges with the elements.

<sup>127</sup> Madden, pp. 98-101; W. E. Houghton, "Empedocles," pp. 334-35; Bush, p. 258.

#### IV. POEMS OF TRANSITION

In the poems discussed in the preceding chapters, the main characters, yearning toward a sense of cosmos, have reached out through the senses and emotions to achieve it. This orientation of sensibility consists of an Epicurean approach to a material nature. However, except for Mycerinus, who at least must leave society to achieve his goal of sensuous emotional fulfillment, in every case the desired sense of joy, or unity with the self, others, and ultimately the universe is achieved by human beings only in fleeting moments. Therefore, it is only through contemplation of death, and the implicit unity of man and the universe on the material level that the character and, after the fact, the poet and reader, the observers, gain a sense of the fulfillment of man's passionate desire for a sense of cosmos. The previous discussion has been concerned with identifying and explaining the symbols of cosmos and oblivion in these terms.

However, about the time that he was writing Empedocles on Etna, Arnold began to consider poetically another means to a sense of unity with things other than devotion to sensibility. This new poetic orientation is that epitomized by Callicles; it entails use of the aesthetic consciousness, which has affinities with Goethe's and Nietzsche's Hellenic modifications of pure sensibility through the introduction of reason and the production of

aesthetic balance. This orientation toward experience is, as has been pointed out, a manifestation of naturalistic humanism. The group of poems to be considered here represents a period of transition in the tendencies manifesting themselves in relation to the symbols. The poet has not ceased to portray characters devoted to sensibility nor to create symbols of cosmos which may be interpreted in terms of sensibility; but he is now portraying characters who represent the orientation of aesthetic consciousness and symbols of cosmos which must be interpreted as representations of the result of application of aesthetic consciousness, also. Both orientations, which the poet seems to be weighing symbolically, are demonstrated by various characters in the poems. Therefore, the symbols of oblivion and cosmos which will be examined can be explained as the product of application of one or the other of two different but related poetic orientations, both of which imply a concept of nature as a totality of which man is a part.

"The Buried Life" and "The Neckan," two poems in which are crystalized important symbolic values which are variously modified in the poems dealt with in this section will be considered first, out of chronological sequence. In "The Buried Life," which was probably composed between 1849 and 1852 and was published in the 1852 volume,<sup>1</sup> water symbolism is developed which implies a new relationship between the values

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, "The Buried Life," Poems, Allott, p. 271, head-note.

symbolized therein and man. The occasion of the poem, which is reminiscent of Arnold's Marguerite sequence,<sup>2</sup> is a moment of light conversation between two lovers. However, it is meaningless, superficial communication which only serves to point out their true state of isolation from their true selves and thus from each other.<sup>3</sup> The conversation is compared to the blind strife on the plain of alienation:<sup>4</sup> "Light flows our war of mocking words" (l. 1). But, at this very moment, the speaker is seized with "an unspeakable desire / After the knowledge of our man's buried life," our his true, original course' (ll. 47-48, 50). All men are seized with this melancholy longing from time to time within the "din of strife" (l. 46) which is everyday life.<sup>5</sup> Fate, or nature, has hidden the true self deep within man's heart so that he, "frivolous" (l. 31) creature as he is, will ultimately have to follow in some general way "his being's law" (l. 36).<sup>6</sup> This true self of every man is symbolized by a "buried stream" (l. 42), or current, underneath the rough surface of the river. Since man does not see it, he seems to be

<sup>2</sup> Madden, pp. 83-85.

<sup>3</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 33; Madden, p. 85; Stange, p. 169; Trilling, p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> Madden, p. 83; Stange, pp. 173-174; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Stange, p. 170.



Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,  
 Though driving on with it eternally.<sup>7</sup>  
 (ll. 43-44)

The buried self is ever man's ruling force.

The nature of this buried self and thus the composite value of the symbol are largely revealed in the means by which man may contact it. It is only at "rare" (l. 77) fleeting moments,<sup>8</sup> through the condition of love<sup>9</sup> that

A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,  
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.  
 . . . . .  
 And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know,  
 A man becomes aware of his life's flow  
 And hears its winding murmur; and he sees  
 The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.  
 (ll. 84-85, 87-90)

The speaker is saying that through the exercise of sensibility one can gain a momentary insight into the deep intuitive feelings<sup>10</sup> which are at the center of one's being, the same central unifying core of feeling which is in each individual:<sup>11</sup> "The same heart beats in every human breast!" (l. 23).

<sup>7</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 14; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 175-176; Stange, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> Madden, pp. 84-85; Stange, p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 34; Madden, p. 83; Robbins, p. 121; Stange, p. 175.

<sup>10</sup> Robbins, p. 121; Stange, pp. 170-171.

<sup>11</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 176-77, finds a confusion caused by pronoun shifts, on the point of whether or not this is a common river or one of the identical ones possessed by each individual. He decides that the idea of communion is meant; but to Roper this does not provide a resolution because he does not find an ultimate value in the symbolism or relate it to the sea symbolism.

Implied is a concept of man's nature akin to Epicurus's ideas of the "hidden life," lathe biosa.<sup>12</sup> A further tie with Epicurean-oriented thought is the implication that truth is to be approached through feeling or through the imaginative vision which is produced by the application of emotion to experiences. This poem has an even broader significance when it is realized that Arnold's implied theories of love and of religion are overlapping. In St. Paul and Protestantism (1870), he asserts that it is through the inspiration of love for Jesus that men perfect themselves and reach God,<sup>13</sup> or find their true selves, which means conforming with nature, uniting with the universe.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in St. Paul and Protestantism,<sup>15</sup> Arnold includes a verse passage symbolically describing the central self in exactly the same terms as those of the present poem; and this symbol is related directly to a conception of God as "that stream of tendency by which all things strive to fulfill the law of their being."<sup>16</sup>

This brings one to the question of what the insight into the central feelings tells one. From the experience man gains an "unwonted

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, p. 140; Roper, Landscapes, p. 174, relates this idea to the Stoic and Socratic "know thyself."

<sup>13</sup> Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism, in Works, Super, VI, 38-39, 47-49.

<sup>14</sup> Robbins, p. 121.

<sup>15</sup> Works, Super, VI, 51.

<sup>16</sup> St. Paul and Protestantism, Works, Super, VI, 10; Miller, pp. 251-252.

calm" (l. 95).

And then he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose,  
And the sea where it goes.  
(ll. 96-98)

This calming insight is something more than an implication of one's place in the cycle of life and death;<sup>17</sup> it is an implication of one's permanent unity with the central force of the universe, a unity existing from the time of birth in the hills of the strictly human realm of the universe until the culmination of life in the sea of the vital eternal natural force.<sup>18</sup> The symbolic dichotomy of the surface stream with its strife and superficial conversation and the deep current of cosmically unifying feeling is reminiscent of that of the land world of ordinary human life and the sea world of universal nature, which man could approach only through oblivion, that is developed in "The Forsaken Merman" (1849). In the present poem, however, the poet is rather more optimistic; for man, in his human state, may at least fleetingly glimpse the buried stream of intuitive feeling. The central symbol of the poem, the buried stream, is a symbol of cosmos, a sense of which man gains through the exercise of sensibility. Other poems to be discussed in this section contain modifications and reapplication

<sup>17</sup> Madden, p. 84; Roper, Landscapes, p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> Madden, p. 84, recognizes a relationship between the kind of union suggested here and in "Parting"; however, contrary to the present argument, he interprets both as representing a "union in a Platonic universe ruled by love"; Stange, p. 176.

of this symbol with all its implications of a universal nature as well as adaptations of the tendency toward reliance upon intuitive feeling as the key to discovering this truth.

In "The Neckan" (1853), which seems more obviously to deal with the symbols presented in "The Forsaken Merman," a new relationship between the state of deep intuitive feeling through which man is placed in contact with the cosmic natural force and the strictly human state is developed. In "The Forsaken Merman," it will be remembered, the beautiful, vital, sensuously appealing state represented by the sea, where all elements of the universe are unified, is the permanent abode of a totally non-human creature only; the human figure, Margaret, is called back to land by man-made religious traditions. Human life is represented in a sterile, lifeless environment, where man's alienation from others and from the universe is not relieved by his mechanical religion. In the first version of "The Neckan," which was written about 1852,<sup>19</sup> at least three years later than "The Forsaken Merman," the sea creature<sup>20</sup> ventures upon the land to gain the blessing of man's Christian God so that his mortal wife will accept him without sorrow or dread. He is feared and scorned not only by his wife and human knights but also by a priest, who asks,

<sup>19</sup> "The Neckan," Poems, Allott, p. 281, headnote.

<sup>20</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 213, interprets this poem and its sea creature as a modification of "The Forsaken Merman"; Kenneth Allott, "Matthew Arnold's 'The Neckan': The Real Issues," Victorian Poetry, 2 (1964), 61-62, does not recognize a direct relationship between the two poems.

—Why sitt'st thou there, O Neckan,  
And play'st thy harp of gold?  
Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,  
Than thou shalt Heaven behold.  
(ll. 49-52)

As the poem ends, the Neckan remains beside the river, weeping and singing his "plaintive song" (l. 4). The symbolism in this poem tends in the same direction as that of "The Forsaken Merman." The Neckan's sea home is the green world of the "kind seawave" (l. 16), of "shells and roses pale" (l. 10). This is the world of deep intuitive feelings.<sup>21</sup> The land, as portrayed in the "twilight grey" (l. 59), is the home of human beings who lack pity, acceptance, and love.<sup>22</sup>

The outcome of the poem is reversed in the new final stanzas, which may have been composed as early as 1854 but which were not published until 1869.<sup>23</sup> Here, after the priest has scorned the Neckan,

. . . lo, the staff, it budded!  
It greened, it branched, it waved.  
"—O ruth of God," the priest cried out,  
"This lost sea creature saved!"  
(ll. 53-56)

This sign of salvation offered to the sea creature by the God recognized by the human land world does not allay the Neckan's sorrow.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 214.

<sup>22</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," pp. 213-14.

<sup>23</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 212; Tinker and Lowry, p. 127.

<sup>24</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," p. 214; Allott, "The Neckan," p. 63, accounts for the change in the poem as a simple addition from the source to sustain the desired note of melancholia.

He wept: "The Earth hath kindness,  
 The sea, the starry poles;  
 Earth, sea and sky, and God above—  
 But, alas, not human souls!"  
 (ll. 61-64)

The blessing received by the Neckan is a kind of reconciliation of the land and sea worlds.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the Neckan feels a sympathy, a oneness with all of nature—earth, sea, and sky and God, who appropriately manifests himself in terms of external nature in the budding staff—except with men themselves, who have not found their buried selves. In this version of the poem, a religious significance, spelled out in a vocabulary of traditional religion, is attached to the sea of feeling, or at least to the Neckan, who is identified with it. At the same time, however, the Neckan is still identified symbolically with a cosmic force extending beyond the level of the human. As the poem ends, the melancholy sea creature remains reluctantly upon the land, playing his harp and singing his song. The state of the Neckan is perhaps a symbolic rendering of the state of the poet as Arnold sees it in the nineteenth-century world. The store of feeling is tapped by the poet to allow him imaginatively to transform human experience into an harmoniously beautiful whole. This manifestation of the aesthetic consciousness signifies here, as it does for Goethe and others, the manifestation of nature in man, or the development

<sup>25</sup> Fulweiler, "Metamorphosis," pp. 213-15.

of naturalistic humanism. Thus the nature creature functions in the human role of poet; he reconciles the human and the non-human without destroying the human. Such reconciliation is the tendency toward which the symbols of cosmos move in "Tristram and Iseult" (1852), "The Church of Brou" (1853), and "Sohrab and Rustum" (1853).

Arnold's "Tristram and Iseult," a combination of narration and dramatization<sup>26</sup> composed between 1849 and 1850 and revised by 1852, adapts for the first time in modern literature the medieval tale of the frustrated passion of the knight Tristram and Iseult of Ireland.<sup>27</sup> In Arnold's version, Tristram, who had been sent to Ireland to secure the hand of Iseult for King Marc of Cornwall, falls victim, along with Iseult, to a magic love potion which they accidentally drink during the voyage to Cornwall. Although Iseult marries Marc, she and Tristram persist in their clandestine adulterous relationship until Marc discovers them. At this juncture, leaving Iseult to pine away, Tristram flees to Brittany where he marries Iseult of Brittany, a calm domestic type of woman for whom he feels no passion. After vain attempts to find relief from his desire for Iseult of Ireland in forest seclusion and in campaigns with King Arthur's knights, Tristram, attended by his patient wife, lies dying and awaits the arrival of his love, Iseult of Ireland, whom he has summoned. The

<sup>26</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> Poems, Allott, pp. 194-95, headnote.

two Iseults, one characterized by passion and the other by calm, represent not only two kinds of love,<sup>28</sup> perhaps mirroring Arnold's own experience with Marguerite and Miss Wightman,<sup>29</sup> but also, on another level, two orientations for dealing with life and art.<sup>30</sup>

The first section of the poem, titled "Tristram," portrays the fleeting nature of the sense of fulfillment, or unity with things, produced through passion.<sup>31</sup> Tristram, who is pale and wasted beyond his years as a result of his fever of unfulfilled desire,<sup>32</sup> lies near death in a room enshrouded by the shadows of a dying fire.<sup>33</sup> Outside the winter wind and rain pound the window, and the "fierce Atlantic deep" (l. 92), representing the sea of life or fate, can be seen in the distance. The harsh natural

<sup>28</sup> Stange, p. 257; Baum, pp. 38, 53-54, classifies the poem as a "domestic tragedy"; J. L. Kendall, "The Unity of Arnold's 'Tristram and Iseult,'" Victorian Poetry, 1 (April 1963), 142, believes that Arnold finds both forms of love superior to death through worldly experience.

<sup>29</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 196, headnote; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 98; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 140; Stange, p. 259.

<sup>30</sup> Stange, p. 259; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 145.

<sup>31</sup> Gottfried, p. 77; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 95; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 144; Roper Landscapes, pp. 169-71.

<sup>32</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 168-69; Robert A. Greenberg, "Matthew Arnold's Refuge of Art: 'Tristram and Iseult,'" Victorian Newsletter No. 25 (Spring 1964), 1, characterizes Tristram as a Byronic, Titanic "culture hero" and relates the idea here presented to "Memorial Verses."

<sup>33</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 96-97.



setting mirrors Tristram's mental state of alienation.<sup>34</sup> The narrator notes Tristram's "dark green forest-dress" (I. 16) and "gold harp" (I. 17), which, as W. S. Johnson points out,<sup>35</sup> are of colors associated with the imagination and the imagery of the sea in "The Forsaken Merman" and which symbolize Tristram's joyous springtime youth, when he possessed a spontaneous sense of harmony with nature and apparently possessed the artistic ability to sing of his unified vision.<sup>37</sup>

At this point, Tristram experiences and describes a series of dreams which review in sporadic fashion his history up to this point and which shed especial light upon the nature and implications of the passion which rules him.<sup>38</sup> In the first dream segment Tristram recalls that idyllic period in his youth when he fell in love with Iseult. It was a beautiful spring day when all nature seemed vital, harmonious, and at one with him:<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 167.      <sup>35</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 140; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 96; Roper, Landscapes, p. 168.

<sup>37</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 140.

<sup>38</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 140; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" pp. 2-3, identifies Tristram's dreams with the "fitful dream" of the modern world, which is described in "Memorial Verses."

<sup>39</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 140; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" pp. 1-2, points out that the Wordsworthian world did not take into account passion; and, therefore, it could not contribute to a resolution of Tristram's problems.

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sail;  
 Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,  
 And overhead the cloudless sky of May.

(I. 94-96)

Then their hearts were forever sealed in the "wild delicious pain" (I.151) of passion when they drank the magic potion. Thus there is a suggestion that passion is a darkly mysterious force taking man by surprise. In the second section, when Iseult of Ireland and Tristram are briefly united again, Tristram verbalizes his unfulfilled desire:<sup>40</sup>

Sit—sit by me! I will think, we've lived so  
 In the green wood all our lives, alone.

(II. 35-36)

The idea of the greenwood as a setting is more than incidental here. The return to the glade in which Tristram spent his innocent youth symbolizes a harmony with the universe which he wishes to achieve through the sexual love experience.<sup>41</sup> However, the next dream sequences demonstrate the temporary nature of the joy or sense of fulfillment to be derived through erotic love, which is a form of sensibility. The specific reason for the separation of the lovers is not so significant as the idea that it is fate, or a law of the universe, that passionate desires can not be permanently fulfilled in the human realm.<sup>42</sup> That this emotional longing is totally a

<sup>40</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 145.

<sup>42</sup> Stange, p. 264; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 141-42.

product of his imagination that can not come true in the real world is emphasized when it is referred to as a fantasy and a dream.<sup>43</sup> Tristram tells his page,

"—I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my page,  
Would take a score years from a strong man's age."  
(I. 304-05)

Indeed, as the narrator observes in the last section of the poem, passion, like "the gradual furnace of the world" (III. 119)

. . . leaves the fierce necessity to feel,  
But takes away the power . . .  
By drying up our joy in everything . . .  
(II. 123-25) <sup>44</sup>

This drying up of feeling is what is happening to both Tristram and Iseult of Ireland.<sup>45</sup> Even in his calm retreat in Brittany, he is unable to escape the pain of desire. In a moonlit glade set with a fountain and chapel, she appears to him:

—Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light;  
God! 'tis her face plays in the waters bright.  
(I. 283-84)

<sup>43</sup>

John R. Reed, "Matthew Arnold and the Soul's . Horizon," Victorian Poetry, 8 (Spring 1970), 17; M. G. Sundell, "The Intellectual Background and Structure of Arnold's 'Tristram and Iseult,'" Victorian Poetry, 1 (November 1963), 280, 282, finds the suggestion in the poem that the dream world is superior to reality.

<sup>44</sup>

Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 4, Stange, pp. 268-69, 272, and Baum, p. 40, find this didactic speech in keeping with the medieval narrator-persona; Kendall, p. 145, interprets the narrator as a Merlin-type wise man confounded by the ambiguity of reality; Sundell, p. 280, characterizes the narrator as the voice of logic confounded by illogical passion.

<sup>45</sup>

Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 1; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 98; Roper, Landscapes, p. 169; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 144;

In this passage is symbolized the temporary insight gained through the passionate approach to life. In his passionate state he is drawn to a moonlit forest glade where a spring wells up. Moonlight, Arnold has said, represents the innermost feelings of the self; and the spring is a rare visible manifestation of that river of the buried self which, Arnold has said in "The Buried Life," is throughout most of life hidden in "the soul's subterranean depth" (l. 73). The instability and ambiguity of the insight is underscored by the fact that Tristram sees the face of Iseult, the object of his passion, in the spring. It is through his passionate attachment to her that he gains the insight; however his unfulfilled desire "takes away the power"<sup>46</sup> to feel so that the insight gained through feeling is transitory.

As Tristram awakes from these disturbing dreams of fleeting joy, the narrator foreshadows the second section of the poem by saying that "only death can balm thy woe" (I.289).<sup>47</sup> The despairing Tristram sends his faithful wife off to bed; and the narrator follows her out and then switches his gaze to their children who sleep far off in the other side of the castle. His description of them forms an aesthetically pleasing tableau ending for

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Melvin L. Plotinsky, "Help from Pain: The Narrative Voice of Matthew Arnold," Victorian Poetry, 2 (Summer 1964), 172.

<sup>46</sup> Arnold, "Tristram and Iseult," III. 124.

<sup>47</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 170.

the section as well as a kind of summarizing coda.<sup>48</sup> Even within the heads of these innocent children, who are separated from the world by their protective nest, are the seeds of longing, of desire, of dreams too great to be fulfilled.<sup>49</sup> Although the glade outside their window is illuminated by moonlight, which perhaps represents the manifestation of the narrator's imagination in fashioning the scene, and is transformed into a "fairy sight," a beautiful unity of nature, these "madcaps" "see fairer" in their "dreams" (I. 371). Thus the seeds of futile desire which foreshadow self-destruction were planted within Tristram just as they are planted within all mortal children.<sup>50</sup>

As the second section of the poem opens, Iseult of Ireland arrives to die beside Tristram. In addition to being the object of his passion, on another level, she seems to be the very personification of passion.<sup>51</sup> She is described as having raven hair and dark eyes and having a haughty

<sup>48</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 146; Stange, p. 266; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 3, corroborates the present argument that the narrator functions as the Goethian artist bringing order out of chaos and points to the coda endings of the three sections as evidence.

<sup>49</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 146-47; Reed, p. 18; Kendall, p. 143.

<sup>51</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 142.

petulant attitude;<sup>52</sup> and she is associated with the magic of the love position. On the human level, she, too, has suffered from futile passion and is pale and wasted. She has exhibited only the unhealthy flush of passion.<sup>53</sup> But Tristram sees her through eyes of love which transform her into her former state of youthful loveliness.<sup>54</sup> "Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight!" (II..27), he declares. Tristram feels a momentary surge of happiness, of joyous unity, and then he dies, to be followed momentarily by Iseult. Thus the narrator's foreshadowing is borne out. As in others of Arnold's poems, the passionate life leads to death.<sup>55</sup>

Merely to say that the lovers are dead, however, is not accurate; for significant interpretation is given to their state by the narrator and by the young huntsman who scrutinizes the scene from an overhanging tapestry upon which he awakes. As Iseult sinks down beside her dead lover in the bright moonlight, she is finally relieved of the unfulfilled passion and she reclaims the beauty of her youth:<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Stange, p. 258.

<sup>53</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 168-69; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 97; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Reed, p. 18; Sundell, p. 281.

<sup>55</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 171; Reed, p. 19; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 97; Madden, pp. 106-07, relates the moonlit tomb setting to a condition of calm and peace of a dead soul, to Stoic calm, to the passionate condition, and to innocent youth; but he fails to draw the conclusion that it indicates an insight into the true self. Arnold

So healing is her quiet now.  
 So perfectly the lines express  
 A tranquil, settled loveliness,  
 Her younger rival's purest grace.  
 (II. 143-46)

The idea of achieving calm in death is one which Arnold tended toward in a related poem, "Youth and Calm" (1852), parts of which he incorporates here.<sup>57</sup> There he concludes rather sorrowfully,

Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.  
 'Tis all perhaps which man acquires,  
 But 'tis not what our youth desires.  
 (II. 23-25)

However, her apparent calmness as well as the fact that in the eyes of the narrator she takes on the appearance of Iseult of Brittany, who, as is demonstrated symbolically in the final section of the poem, experiences a unity with things through aesthetic consciousness, implies that, to the observer, contemplation of death brings a realization of man's elemental unity with nature. It is significant that the narrator describes the scene as bathed in moonlight; for it is the deep inner feelings of the narrator which are engaged by the scene before him, providing him with the sense of cosmic unity. This implication will be substantiated by the symbolism in the Merlin story in the final section. However, there is another dimension to the lovers' tableau. Through the narrator's eyes, the eyes of

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in the Yale MS., quoted in E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 157, makes a metaphorical comparison of "our remotest self" to the moon.

<sup>57</sup> Arnold, "Youth and Calm," Poems, Allott, p. 224, headnote; Baum, p. 41, note.

aesthetic consciousness, the figures are transformed into objects of art<sup>58</sup> in a manner analogous to the transforming power of love to create unity through beauty. Just before dying Iseult comments that she will be like "a statue . . . poured in prayer" (II. 62-63); and the huntsman of the tapestry describes them in similar fashion when he questions,

Who is that kneeling Lady fair?  
And on his pillows that pale Knight  
Who seems of marble on a tomb?  
(II. 165-67)

The pair is not only like beautiful marble statuary but also timeless, capable of retaining this attitude of love and beauty forever: the narrator says,

For these thou seest are unmoved;  
Cold, cold as those who lived and loved  
A thousand years ago.  
(II. 191-93)

This is reminiscent of Keats's figure of the lovers on the Grecian urn, whose timeless beauty embodied the truth of life.<sup>59</sup> In the same way, in transforming the lovers of this sorrowful experience into the beauty of art,<sup>60</sup> the narrator unites them with the universe.<sup>61</sup> Thus the source of the moonlight is ambiguous. Arnold has identified it as symbolic of one's

<sup>58</sup> Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" pp. 3-4; Reed, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 4; Stange, p. 267.

<sup>60</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 99; Reed, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> Sundell, p. 282, interprets the transformation process as a romantic artistic process of self-destruction in the process of passionate creation.



true self, or center of feeling. On one level, it represents the inner emotional experience of the narrator when he contemplates the notion of man's organic unity with the rest of nature in death. On another level, it is the symbol of the aesthetic consciousness, which performs the function of inducing a sense of cosmos that love had earlier performed in a fleeting manner.

The use of the tapestry figure at the end of the second section to comment on the dead couple in real life below is also significant.<sup>62</sup> He, like the children in the first section, suggests a stage of Tristram's development.<sup>63</sup> He is a vital young huntsman clad in green who is living in harmony with the universe. However, when he awakes to the sight before him, which he can not interpret because he is ignorant of passion, it is as if he is being beckoned into the strife and passion of life.<sup>64</sup> His gaze strays out the window to the "unquiet bright Atlantic plain" (II. 174), the superficial sea of life which tosses man about if he does not find a position of balance, as Tristram is unable to do. A final point is suggested through the juxtaposition of the point of view of the tapestry figure, who thinks that "some glamour" (II. 175) has transported him to this exotic, unreal place and the point of view that has been developed for the reader,

<sup>62</sup> W. S. Johnson, *Voices*, p. 97.

<sup>63</sup> Sundell, p. 281; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 3; Kendall, p. 144.

<sup>64</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 147-48.

who sees the Tristram-Iseult tableau as the real world and the tapestry as the fiction. The poet seems to be suggesting that the world of art, where the poetic imagination has created the eternally young and joyous huntsman is the real world and that the everyday world of mortal passion and death is the unreality.<sup>65</sup> This would support the opinion held by many critics that the third part of the poem contains the poet's true feelings.<sup>66</sup>

This leaning toward an artistic view of life is developed in the final section of the poem which is titled "Iseult of Brittany." Culler<sup>67</sup> has called the third section of the poem a kind of coda to the whole poem, comparable to that in "Mycerinus" and other poems and portraying the third phase of what Culler calls Arnold's poetic myth—the stage of a serene unity of man and nature and / or man and God. This section's Iseult is the personification of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, which is also embodied by the narrator and which is an adaptation of the orientation earlier introduced in Callicles.<sup>68</sup> Her general description implies an harmonious relationship with the universe. While Iseult of Ireland who represents passion is dark, this Iseult has golden hair and maintains

<sup>65</sup> Kendall, pp. 143-44; Sundell, pp. 282-83; and Stange, p. 267, find the question of the ambiguity of reality a central theme in the poem.

<sup>66</sup> Stange, p. 257; Baum, pp. 53-54; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 146.

<sup>67</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 146.

<sup>68</sup> Reed, pp. 18-19.

a youthful appearance of loveliness.<sup>69</sup> The idea of youth is emphasized in her association with her children.<sup>70</sup> This Iseult, too, maintains an innocence associated with harmonious childhood; she is incapable of passion, although she exhibits a kind of asexual love for Tristram and her children and compassion for both Tristram and Iseult of Ireland.<sup>71</sup> This entire section stands out in marked contrast to the others because of the prevalence of light and color instead of shadow and darkness; it is a kind of hope of spring in the middle of winter.<sup>72</sup> This is because of the setting in the "green circular hollow in the heath" (III.7). The green hollow indicates a circumscribed protected setting<sup>73</sup> analogous to the Wordsworthian glade. But from the edges of the hollow, where she oversees her children at play, Iseult has a view of the world: "far and near / The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear / Over the waste . . . " (III.11-13). From her detached position,<sup>74</sup> she can see all of the activity of the world; and she

<sup>69</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 98; Stange, p. 258.

<sup>70</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 168.

<sup>71</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 172; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 146.

<sup>72</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 97; Roper, Landscapes, p. 168.

<sup>73</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 168.

<sup>74</sup> Anderson, p. 168.

empathizes, for she feels great sorrow for Tristram.<sup>75</sup> The narrator comments that "she seems one dying in a mask of youth" (III. 75). Critics<sup>76</sup> often take the line, "Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will" (III. 68), out of the context of the question in which it is phrased and state that she is incapable of joy, of feeling. That this interpretation is incorrect may be seen when the quotation is examined within its context:

Joy has not found her yet nor ever will—  
Is it this thought which makes her mien so still,  
Her feature's so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,  
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet  
Her children's?

(III. 68-72)

That she appears tired and sad the narrator does indicate. However, he never acknowledges that her state actually arises from her inability to experience joy. Indeed he elsewhere declares that sorrow will not destroy the capacity for feeling. Rather, Iseult is the type of the poet of "Resignation" who must experience vicariously the pain of human experience and who, in order to transform this experience, must painfully relinquish the subjective point of view. The pleasure that she finds is that of a moderated life governed by the aesthetic consciousness and that of art. She finds happiness in her quiet life with her children and the few companions

<sup>75</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 172; Reed, p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Anderson, p. 138; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 144; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 1.

in her castle; for "these she loves" (III. 100). This life does not surpass her strength as the life of passion has surpassed that of Tristram and Iseult of Ireland.<sup>77</sup> She finds delight which also blocks out all else in the Breton tales which she has heard since childhood.<sup>78</sup>

Iseult of Brittany, then, exemplifies the orientation of aesthetic consciousness. She maintains a calm, resigned detachment from the world,<sup>79</sup> resulting from an inner Hellenic balance of all her faculties—moral, for she is "the sweetest Christian soul alive" (I. 54); intellectual; and emotional, for she is incapable of being ruled by passion.<sup>80</sup> Her detachment, although somewhat sober and stoical,<sup>81</sup> allows her to transmute sorrow into beautiful art as she does in the story of Merlin and Vivian which she tells her children.<sup>82</sup> The orientation also allows her and those whom she instructs, particularly her children, to control their desires, the boundaries of their frolic, and to experience the delight of a sense of oneness with nature. She and the children, who frolic in the hollow, are

<sup>77</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 144; Roper, Landscapes, p. 171; Stange, p. 272.

<sup>78</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 149; Roper, Landscapes, p. 168.

<sup>79</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 172; Reed, p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> Plotinsky, p. 172.

<sup>81</sup> Anderson, p. 138.

<sup>82</sup> Reed, pp. 18-19.

symbolized in their relationship to organic nature by the three hollies under which they gather to hear the tale of Merlin. This state, although it is not the active life, transcends the marbleized death and entombment of Tristram and the other Iseult, as is implied by the broken bits of quartz scattered in the hollow.<sup>83</sup> Through the art which she presents, in this case the tale of Merlin, she is able to avert the children's gaze from the world of passion and strife outside the hollow:

And still the children listened, their blue eyes  
Fixed on their mother's face in wide surprise,  
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side.  
(III. 46-48)

By following their mother's example, these become "Children of the Second Birth,"<sup>84</sup> those who are the hope for the future, who can live in the world but not be of it,<sup>85</sup> who can make a synthesis of experience through a naturalistic humanism.

The story of Merlin and Vivian, which forms a coda for the third section, is Iseult's lightly ironic, almost whimsical artistic rendering of the fate of Tristram and, implicitly, of every man.<sup>86</sup> Merlin, the paragon

<sup>83</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 170.

<sup>84</sup> Arnold, "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" (1852), l. 143.

<sup>85</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 146, 148-49; Reed, p. 18.

<sup>86</sup> E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, pp. 189-90; Kendall, p. 145; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 99; Roper, Landscapes, p. 173; Stange, pp. 276-77.

of human wisdom,<sup>87</sup> is ensnared by the fay Vivian.<sup>88</sup> As in some of the Marguerite poems where the object of passion is pictured as one who is identified with nature and thus is joyous, self-sufficient, and scornful of passionate attachment,<sup>89</sup> so the green-clad Vivian's

. . . 'havior had the morning's fresh clear grace,  
The spirit of the woods was in her face.

(III. 179-80)

When they come in their travels to a circular forest glade with a pleasant brook nearby and pleasing plants and animals all within, they stop to rest. Vivian, who is "passing weary of his love" (III. 224), casts a magic spell upon Merlin, encircling him with a grave of daisies, or appropriately for Arnold, Marguerites,<sup>90</sup> in which he must remain "prisoner till the judgment day" (III. 222). Passion, then, has led Merlin to death; but in death his union with material, organic nature has been consummated, as is symbolized by the flowery grave with the profuse natural surroundings of the glade complete with the brook of the buried self. On another level, the whole sorrowful affair of man's being mortally wounded by passion is

<sup>87</sup> Kendall, p. 144.

<sup>88</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 98; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 149.

<sup>89</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 169.

<sup>90</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 151; Baum, p. 51.

transformed into the permanent peaceful beauty of art<sup>91</sup> and, in this way, unified with the universal scheme.

This last reference to the glade reinforces the implication that the green glade is a symbol of cosmic union: it is the womb from which Tristram was born and the place which nurtured his innocent youth, as it does that of the knight of the tapestry. To live forever in the greenwood with Iseult of Ireland is the object of Tristram's futile desire in his period of passion. The enclosed circular glade becomes the impassioned Merlin's grave, where only by giving up his human life can he achieve a unity with things which he has sought to sense through passion. This, of course, glances back to the fate of the lovers in section two. Finally, the circular green hollow is the setting for the frolic and story telling of Iseult of Brittany and her children, who experience a sense of cosmos in life through embodiment of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, or moderated sensibility. This implication has affinities with the artistic effect produced by the narrator in his treatment of the poem as a whole.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 100-101; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 150-51; Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" p. 4; Sundell, pp. 279, 282; Kendall, p. 145.

<sup>92</sup> Greenberg, "'Tristram and Iseult,'" pp. 3-4; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 99-100, interprets this repetition of setting as symbolic of a peaceful escape from passion through art; however, he does not develop the implication of cosmic unity.



In this poem, then, Arnold is presenting two approaches to life. Although he seems to imply that the aesthetic consciousness of Iseult of Brittany is the only practical orientation,<sup>93</sup> he finds her deathlike, restricted calm little better consolation than death, which is the destiny of the passionate; and neither alternative seems a suitable substitute for the desired fulfillment in life, of which the sensibility-oriented man catches only fleeting glimpses.<sup>94</sup>

"The Church of Brou," written in 1852 or 1853,<sup>95</sup> is a poem which is in many ways quite similar to the earlier "Tristram and Iseult."<sup>96</sup> Here the suggestion of transforming sorrow into art<sup>97</sup> is developed in a more positive way than in "Tristram and Iseult." The poem tells the story of the Duke and Duchess of Savoy, a handsome, loving young couple who had enjoyed a gay social life and the vital life of the hunt until the day when the Duke was fatally gored by a wild boar. Thus the Duchess is introduced to the senseless tragedy of the human situation.<sup>98</sup> Although she had never known

<sup>93</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 145; Reed, p. 19; Plotinsky, p. 172.

<sup>94</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 171-72; Trilling, p. 122; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 143-44; Plotinsky, p. 173.

<sup>95</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 294, headnote.

<sup>96</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 121; Tinker and Lowry, p. 37; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 151.

<sup>97</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 151.

<sup>98</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 151.

sorrow before, this terrible experience "froze all her life" (I. 52).

As a direct result of the terrible tragedy, she determined to complete the mountainside Church of Brou, which had been abandoned before completion. The location of the church deserves special notice since Arnold deliberately fabricates a mountain setting for it when it was actually in a flat area near a city.<sup>99</sup> In Arnold's poem, the church is located in a mountainside meadow, or glade, bordered by a stream and surrounded by a thick pine forest. It is secluded from the town below, providing a delight for the few simple peasants who live nearby and for the city dwellers who now and then visit it more or less as a curiosity. As in "Tristram and Iseult," the green glade represents oneness with nature; and this symbol appears in conjunction with the stream, representing the buried self, which links the individual with the universe. The detachment from the day to day life of the strife-torn<sup>100</sup> city below and the association with the simple, intuitive life of the peasants suggest an association between the church and the attitude of aesthetic consciousness.

This association is substantiated in the commentary on the tomb in section one of the poem and in the final section of the poem, which was evidently the most significant to Arnold, who, after being criticized for inaccuracies of detail published this part separately in the 1887 volume.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Tinker and Lowry, p. 38.

<sup>100</sup> Madden, p. 105.

<sup>101</sup> Tinker and Lowry, pp. 37-38.

In the first section, it is explained that within the church the Duchess had ordered the erection of a marble tomb adorned with sculptures of both the Duke and herself, portraying them in their prime. Soon after it was completed the Duchess, too, had died. The tomb, which was finished "at Easter-tide" (I. 110), the Christian celebration of resurrection, is the vehicle, the art object, through which the poet is able to transcend time and circumstance.<sup>102</sup> The sorrowful experience of the pair's life is transformed into beauty<sup>103</sup> through the aesthetic consciousness which is the manifestation of nature in man. Again, as in "Tristram and Iseult" as well as in the Cadmus and Harmonia story, the implication is reminiscent of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."<sup>104</sup>

The significance of their state is emphasized in a much more positive manner in the last section of the poem than in "Tristram and Iseult." The narrator speculates upon the circumstances under which the pair might awaken. One possible circumstance would be when the setting sun sends a flood of color down through the stained glass windows; for then they might

Say: What is this? we are in bliss—forgiven—  
Behold the pavement of the courts of Heaven!  
(III. 30-31)

<sup>102</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 151.

<sup>103</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 184; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 152.

Through the beauty produced by nature and the beauty produced by art, they will know that they are at one with the universe.<sup>105</sup> Or they might awake on a rainy moonlit autumn evening. They would regard the marble forest in the moonlight and be sure that it represents the "columns of heavenly palaces" (III. 42), and they would hear

. . . on the lichen-crustled leads above  
The rustle of the eternal rain of love.  
(III. 45-46)

Here again the moonlight symbolizes the awareness of the deep intuitive emotions through which man is aware of his oneness with the universe.<sup>106</sup> In this case, the state is achieved through the aesthetic consciousness, the ordered poetic imagination, which permeates the scene produced by the artist's hand. The last two lines of the poem, which are quoted above, can be read as implying the Empedoclean stage in the universal cycle of nature, when all segments of the cosmos exist in harmonious unity.

According to Empedocles, the universe consists of four material elements—earth, air, fire, and water—which are controlled alternately by the dynamic principles of love and strife, which manifest themselves in nature, man as a part of that nature, culture, and religion.<sup>107</sup> This

<sup>105</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 152.

<sup>106</sup> Madden, pp. 104-06.

<sup>107</sup> Feshback, "Empedocles at Dover Beach," pp. 271, 273-74.

reading is substantiated by the fact that the "love" manifests itself through components of nature, through the rain on the "lichen-crustled leads." This is a particularly interesting reading when it is considered that otherwise the poem is set in the context of medieval Christian tradition. For the first time in his poetry, Arnold tends toward an equation of the truth, or sense of unity, derived through art with that of traditional religion;<sup>108</sup> and both are defined in terms of a deep intuitive sensuous-emotional experience which unites man with a force permeating all of nature including man.

"Sohrab and Rustum," composed between December, 1852, and May, 1853,<sup>109</sup> is the title poem of the 1853 volume, which was meant to demonstrate Arnold's new Hellenized theory of poetry as set forth in the "Preface." The poem's merits as an example of Arnold's ideal have often been debated. Critics have found it lacking not only epic quality<sup>110</sup> but also tragic grandeur<sup>111</sup> and a resolution to suffering.<sup>112</sup> These critics, few of whom have examined the symbolism in detail, have therefore found

<sup>108</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 152.

<sup>109</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 302, headnote.

<sup>110</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 243.

<sup>111</sup> Anderson, p. 55.

<sup>112</sup> E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, pp. 190, 193; Brick, p. 56.

the poem little different from Empedocles on Etna.<sup>113</sup> It is through the symbolism, however, that the poet's new orientation is affirmed. Here again, as in Empedocles on Etna and in "Tristram and Iseult," various approaches to experience, or modes of feeling are juxtaposed and analyzed.<sup>114</sup> Here the dichotomy may be characterized as Hebraic activism in the practical sphere as opposed to the detached orientation of aesthetic consciousness.<sup>115</sup> Unlike other such poems, here the collision of the two produces a change in both.

The poem, which is based on Persian lore, focuses upon the confrontation between the great old warrior Rustum, who is the Persian champion, and his unknown son Sohrab, the champion of the Tartars. Sohrab had been born after Rustum had left the kingdom of Afrasaib; and his mother, fearing that she would lose the boy to his warrior father, deceived Rustum by telling him their child was a girl. As both Trilling and Madden point out,<sup>116</sup> there seems to be autobiographical significance in the characters as well as in the situation. Rustum's environment is the low-lying

<sup>113</sup> Both Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 205-208, and Trilling, p. 124, find the poem subjective.

<sup>114</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 208-11.

<sup>115</sup> Madden, p. 32.

<sup>116</sup> Trilling, p. 124; Madden, pp. 27-28, 32-33.

"Oxus-sands" (l. 462), a setting which symbolizes the strife-torn modern world of cosmic alienation.<sup>117</sup> Appropriate to this setting is Rustum's vocation as a strong, courageous warrior. In this world of action, Rustum has been feared by his foes, depended upon by his followers, and respected by both. As a leader of men, however, he seems to represent the malady which Arnold describes in Culture and Anarchy (1869) as characteristic of his period. He asserts that in an hour which called for finding a philosophical basis for action, for Hellenic "seeing things as they are," his nation had relied upon Hebraism, upon "strictness of conscience," adherence to a strict ethical code of action.<sup>118</sup> So it is that Rustum wishes for a brave son like Sohrab, who might "fight beneath my banner till I die!" (l. 332). Because his nation had followed the course of action without a firm basis in widely accepted philosophical truths, Arnold believed,

In all directions our habitual causes of action seem to be losing efficaciousness, credit, and control, both with others and even with ourselves.<sup>119</sup>

Indeed, Rustum is first presented brooding listlessly in his tent at a distance removed from the rest of the Persian army. The description is reminiscent of lines in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" (1855), where

<sup>117</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 4, 209.

<sup>118</sup> Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, Works, Super, V, 175; Madden, pp. 28-29.

<sup>119</sup> Culture and Anarchy, Works, Super, V, 175.

Arnold describes those thinkers who experience depression and melancholia at the realization that there seems to be no powerful unifying faith left in the world:<sup>120</sup>

Achilles ponders in his tent,  
The kings of modern thought are dumb;  
Silent they are, though not content,  
And wait to see the future come.  
They have the grief men had of yore,  
But they contend and cry no more.  
(ll. 115-20)

Likewise, Rustum complains that he is not appreciated by his society; the King "honours younger men" (l. 224). Moreover, he himself has grown weary of his life of violent action. Because, he says,

. . . in blood and battles was my youth,  
And full of blood and battles is my age,  
And I shall never end this life of blood,  
(ll. 824-26)

he wishes for the peace of death.

That he has hardened himself against his inner stream of positive feeling is evidenced in his seeming lack of affection or even of tolerance for that "one slight helpless girl" (l. 230), who could not be a warrior to his own credit and whom he believed to be his only child. Driven by the passion to conquer, like some Alexander of the religious world, he allows his personal pride as a warrior<sup>121</sup> to get the better of the natural paternal

<sup>120</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 208, also characterizes Rustum as a "military version" of Empedocles.

<sup>121</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 130.



feeling of "pity" (l. 319) which he experiences when he sees Sohrab; and in a fit of anger for having been spared by Sohrab after having been overpowered by him, Rostum takes advantage of Sohrab, who will not defend himself.<sup>122</sup> As Culler puts it, Rostum lacks the "courtesy"<sup>123</sup> that Sohrab exhibits. This is an outward, stylistic manifestation of Rostum's lack of self-integration, the result of which is self-knowledge and a sense of the oneness of things. In the poem, Rostum is equated with "some single tower, which a chief / Hath builded on the waste in former years / Against the robbers" (ll. 337-39) and with one of those "black granite pillars once high-reared" (l. 860). These figures symbolically linked Rostum with the man-made world of traditional values, which separates itself from nature<sup>124</sup> just as the white-walled town and the castled height, in "The Forsaken Merman" (1849) and "Lines Written on the Seashore at Eaglehurst" (1836), respectively, separate themselves from the rest of nature. Rostum, who seems in some respects to reflect the image that Matthew Arnold had of his father, Thomas Arnold, the Rugby teacher of

<sup>122</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 243, points out the two opposing duties swaying each figure—that of a warrior and that of personal fulfillment; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 207, points out the aspects of irony and fate in the situation.

<sup>123</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 209.

<sup>124</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 209; Anderson, p. 54, compares the setting and intellectual background to that in "Dover Beach."

ethics, is the type of the practical activist.<sup>125</sup>

The landscape setting proper to Sohrab, who represents the aesthetic consciousness,<sup>126</sup> is a garden, which is analogous to the forest glade.<sup>127</sup> He is compared to

. . . some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
Its slight dark shadows on the moonlit turf,  
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—  
So slender Sohrab seemed, so softly reared.

(ll. 314-18)

The various associations of Sohrab with the natural setting seem to imply that Sohrab is at one with himself and thus at one with the universe. In the passage just quoted he is compared to the cypress tree; and later he is compared to a hyacinth and a violet. There is also repeated reference to his upbringing in a harmoniously beautiful cultivated garden secluded from everyday life. Finally, in the previously quoted passage, the presence of the moonlight represents the true stream of feeling characterizing the self. Since he is past childhood and not driven by passion and characterized in the detached garden cultivated by man, the implication is that he represents the orientation of aesthetic consciousness. In the mocking words concerning dancing and versifying which the angry Rustum hurls at

<sup>125</sup> Madden, pp. 27-28.

<sup>126</sup> Madden, p. 32.

<sup>127</sup> Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, pp. 208-209, develops a parallel analysis although he does not use the term aesthetic consciousness.

Sohrab are found references to the orientation of aesthetic consciousness which Sohrab represents:

Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!  
 Curled minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!  
 Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!  
 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance.  
(ll. 457-61)

This passage also suggests the disdain with which a man such as Rustum regards the poet, the detached especially sensitive man.<sup>128</sup> Just as the poet of "Resignation" (1849) understood that one must acquiesce to the natural order, so Sohrab observes that "we are all, like swimmers in the sea, / Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate" (ll. 390-91).<sup>129</sup> Finally, he is capable of filial love so great that he forsakes his own element to find his father Rustum and to prove himself "his not unworthy, not inglorious son" (l. 52). When he does unknowingly confront his father, he yields to the natural love which he feels and does not defend himself against Rustum's fatal blow. Sohrab, lying fatally wounded, says, "Something, I confess, in thee / . . . troubles all my heart, and made my shield / Fall" (ll. 548-50).<sup>130</sup> The figure of Sohrab may reflect to some extent the kind of conflict of roles experienced by Matthew Arnold, the

<sup>128</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 208, asserts that this is the central issue of the poem.

<sup>129</sup> Madden, p. 31; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 208; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 131.

<sup>130</sup> Madden, p. 31.

poet who sacrificed his detached life to follow his father's example and take the role as critic in the practical world.<sup>131</sup>

When Rustum remembers this lost part of himself, he feels a sense of grief which is compared to the moonlit tide of the ocean. This symbolism implies that the deep feelings at the center of Rustum's true self are awakened.

In the course of the confrontation, each of the warriors discovers the missing part of his personality.<sup>132</sup> When Rustum and Sohrab meet on the burning plain, where Arnold often portrays man in the state of alienation from himself and from others, Rustum, the warrior-activist in the world of ordinary experience, does not believe that he has a son and speaks derogatorily of the "puny girl" (l. 609), who he thinks is his child, as if he does not wish to claim her. He does not claim the gentle, sensitive part of his nature. When he sees Sohrab, who has assumed the role of warrior, Rustum asks him to come and be as a son to him. Rustum claims only the activist side of his nature. Feeling is gradually reawakened in Rustum.<sup>133</sup> When he first sees Sohrab, Rustum feels a strange "pity" (l. 319),

<sup>131</sup> Trilling, p. 124; Madden, pp. 32-33; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 127-28.

<sup>132</sup> Brick, p. 56, interprets the poem as implying a moment of union of two facets of personality just before Sohrab dies; however, his analysis of the two facets and the mode of unification are not consistent with the present argument.

<sup>133</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 211.

for the young man. Later, when Sohrab, lying mortally wounded, claims to be Rustum's son, Rustum remembers the idyllic period of his youth, when he had experienced love and a vigorous life in the forest glade in harmony with nature. He remembers the joys of

. . . . . that long-distant summer-time—  
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills  
In Ader-baijan.

(ll. 628-31)

When Rustum remembers this lost part of himself, he feels a sense of grief which is compared with the moonlit tide of the ocean. This symbolism implies that the deep feelings at the center of Rustum's true self are awakened. Finally, when he has seen his own seal pricked on the boy's shoulder, Rustum claims Sohrab, who is compared to an art object, a porcelain vase.<sup>134</sup> Rustum claims the artistic side of his own nature. He experiences a complete outpouring of his grief.<sup>135</sup> "he cast / His arm around his son's neck, and wept aloud, / and kissed him" (ll. 727-29). Rustum then wishes to change roles with Sohrab. He wishes to be a warrior no more. He cries,

What should I do with slaying anymore?  
For would that all whom I have ever slain  
Might be once more alive . . . .

(ll. 808-10)

134

Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 213-14.

135

Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 211.

Indeed he wishes to change places with his dying son:

. . . would that I, even I myself,  
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,  
Not thou of mine! And I might die, not thou.  
(ll. 816-19)

Finally, as the poem ends, Rustum, whose actions correspond to adoption of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, sits with Sohrab, apart and detached from the host of ordinary mankind.<sup>136</sup>

Sohrab, wishing to find the activist side of himself, represented by his warrior father, forsakes the garden of his mother to assume the role of warrior himself. Sohrab allows his father, or the activist self, to kill the detached artistic self which had stood alone within Sohrab himself. As Sohrab lies dying, he rejoices at having found the active side of his personality:<sup>137</sup> "I find / My father; let me feel that I have found!" (ll. 716-17). He asks his father to live for him, which indicates a merging of the two aspects of personality:

Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,  
And reap a second glory in thine age;  
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.  
(ll. 775-77)

<sup>136</sup> Sundell, p. 1, lists Rustum's release from the necessity of battle as one meaning of Rustum's death; Trilling, p. 124, and E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, pp. 190-91, note the Stoicism in Rustum's new attitude.

<sup>137</sup> Sundell, p. 1, finds the meaning of Sohrab's death ambiguous; it is the death of beauty as well as the fulfillment of Sohrab's quest.

That the two sides of personality are to be united, that the true self is to be found is symbolized in the opening image of the fog lifting from the Oxus, which is the background symbol for the entire poem. As the narrator describes the father and son, finally reunited, sitting alone together in the sand, his attention turns to the Oxus which moves out of the stagnating lowlands toward the sea. A comparison of the united pair to the river of the true self is the final implication of the poem.<sup>138</sup>

Sohrab teaches Rustum resignation to the course of fate and the use of art to transcend sorrow.<sup>139</sup> When Rustum wishes for his own death instead of that of his son, Sohrab counsels:

Desire not that, my father! thou must live.  
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,  
As some are born to be obscured, and die.  
(ll. 772-75)

Then, by instructing him to construct a monument over his grave—

And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above my bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all—  
(ll. 787-89)

—he is showing Rustum how to make a work of art from the sorrow of death. Indeed, Sohrab seems to become a work of art before the reader's

<sup>138</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 208, 211; Roper, Landscapes, p. 245, interprets the ending of the poem as signifying life becoming one with nature.

<sup>139</sup> Trilling, p. 124; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, pp. 190-91.

eyes.<sup>140</sup> It is said that he "lay, / Lovely in death" (ll. 638-39); and later, in a simile comparing the delicacy of the seal upon his shoulder to the design on a "clear porcelain vase" (l. 673), he is indirectly compared to the object of art itself. Like a Goethe, Sohrab counsels man to take refuge in art, in aesthetic consciousness, as Arnold himself is to do in his prose criticism;<sup>141</sup> this only will allow man to endure life until the peace of death comes. Taking the other alternative offering peace, Sohrab pulled his father's fatal spear from his side and died: "the blood / Came welling from the open gash, and life / Flowed with the stream" (ll. 840-42). Here again is the suggestion of the stream of the buried self. Thus, again, as in Empedocles on Etna and "Tristram and Iseult" two alternative resolutions to life's conflict—the peace of death, the contemplation of which provides the observer with a sense of man's unity with nature, or the detached artistic orientation, allowing one to transcend human experience—are implied.

The lovely and famous final passage provides a summation of the whole poem in a cosmic frame of reference, implying the kind of universal nature predicated by one's deliberate submission to oblivion and by aesthetic consciousness. It charts the progress of the moonlit Oxus stream

<sup>140</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 213-14.

<sup>141</sup> Wallace, p. 104.



from "his high mountain-cradle in Pamere" (l. 887) through the sandy plain where he is split and slowed and becomes "a foiled circuitous wanderer" (l. 888) until

The longed-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars  
Emerge and shine upon the Aral Sea.

(ll. 889-92)

This ending illustrates the stages in the life of the stream of man's true self.<sup>142</sup> Both Rustum and Sohrab have experienced the period of joy in unity with the self and with the universe, symbolized by the Afrasiab garden. On the plain they lose sight of their whole nature and are actually split. The alienation from the self leads to alienation from others, presented here in the extreme form of the "unnatural conflict" (l. 481) of father against son, and ultimately to cosmic alienation<sup>143</sup> which is symbolized by the dark cloud which envelops and blinds Sohrab and Rustum as they begin their fight.<sup>144</sup>

The last stage in the progress of the stream of the true self is union with the sea, union with the central force of all nature. The positive notion of fulfillment and unity with a larger self is implied in the

<sup>142</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 243, calls the poem a "nature myth."

<sup>143</sup> Anderson, p. 54, and E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, pp. 190, 192-93, assert that the ultimate message of the poem is cosmic alienation; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 212.

<sup>144</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 210, interprets the cloud as representing anger, which destroys both warriors.

symbol.<sup>145</sup> In particular, here the sea is associated with peace, vitality, and immortality, like that of the stars. The poet emerges to react to the description of Sohrab pulling the spear from his side from which the stream of life rushes out and to the culminating end symbol. In contemplating death, or oblivion in the elements, the poet realizes a sense of man's oneness with the universe. The poet has Sohrab prophesy that Rustum will experience the peace of death<sup>146</sup> while "returning home over the salt blue sea" (l. 833). However, it is also implied that man may experience a sense of unity with his true self and with the universe, through cultivation of the aesthetic consciousness which Sohrab prescribes, which implies a discovery of nature within the self. In another poem, "The Future," which was written and published in 1852, the poet employs the same symbolic scheme, although here the stream has an ambiguous significance, sometimes representing time and sometimes representing the buried self. Regardless of this ambiguity, in this poem the poet points

<sup>145</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 212, and Roper, Landscapes, p. 245, interpret the end-symbol as implying the reconciliation of Sohrab and Rustum and their merging with the natural cycle, while W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 131-34, also sets forth this interpretation as one of the voices of the poet. Stange, p. 164, asserts that the end-symbol relates to a "profound and ineffable truth of life and death" but does not relate it to nature. Coursen, p. 575, interprets the end symbol as implying a Wordsworthian "spiritual union." Although the present study grants affinities between the early Wordsworthian view of cosmic nature and Arnold's view, it does not define Wordsworth's view of nature in Coursen's terms.

<sup>146</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 131.

symbolically to a time in the future in which man, riding in this stream of time, will gain peace through a sense of harmony between his buried self and the sea of universal nature. The sense of peace will come

As the stars come out, and the night wind  
Brings up the stream  
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.  
(ll. 85-87)

This does not imply man's dissolution within the sea. Rather the poet is anticipating the state of culture, of naturalistic humanism which he as critic will try to bring to pass.<sup>147</sup>

In his criticism of Arnold's first two volumes of poetry, Clough mentions the great weight that the poet gives to "Nature" and his pre-occupation with "the dismal cycle of his rehabilitated Hindoo-Greek theosophy";<sup>148</sup> and it seems that these two elements well characterize the symbolic resolution of "Sohrab and Rustum," too. The notion of the poet-observer gaining a sense of fulfillment through contemplation of the prospect of death, a tendency found in the poetry again and again, emphasizes the concept of an elemental nature into which man may sink.<sup>149</sup>

The other approach to fulfillment, through the aesthetic consciousness

<sup>147</sup> Wallace, pp. 103-104, notes the implication in the poem that the general law of Hellenic balance may bring a fulfillment and transformation of the world.

<sup>148</sup> Arthur Hugh Clough, North American Review, 77, No. 160 (July 1853), quoted in Lowry, p. 141, note 2.

<sup>149</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 243.

is based on the Epicurean-type conception of a nature approachable through contact with the unself-conscious feelings.<sup>150</sup> This kind of nature is implied in Rustum's relation to the river-sea symbol at the end of this poem. The parallel between the aesthetic consciousness and the thought of the Bhagavad Gita has already been pointed out in connection with Empedocles on Etna; however, Madden<sup>151</sup> finds its application strongly suggested here in the oriental flavor of the entire poem. That Arnold does wish to imply a sense of cosmos is further evidenced in his use of Homeric similes, where the poet's unified sensibility equates certain human qualities and characteristics with those of natural objects and phenomena. The thrilled anticipation of the Tartar troops who stand waiting for Sohrab's fight with the Persian champion is compared to "a shiver which runs through the deep corn for joy" (l. 156). At the prospect of the fatal result of the unnatural conflict of father and son, the "Oxus curdled" (l. 508) and Ruksh, Rustum's steed, wept.<sup>152</sup> Through the creation of the Homeric framework for the action, Arnold sets the problem of alienation and reconciliation against the backdrop of a mythopoeic world which yields a view of one

<sup>150</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 212.

<sup>151</sup> Madden, pp. 29-30.

<sup>152</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 210, interprets these symbols as implications of nature convulsing as in the first fall of man from the Garden of Eden.

nature encompassing man and the universe.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, the end symbol, itself, can be viewed as a poetic transmutation of the pathos of death into the beauty of the vital sea. This poem does present a resolution to pain through the action of the artist.

In the group of poems just considered, a transition in the tendencies relating to the symbolism of oblivion and cosmos has been demonstrated. The symbols tend more and more to be the culmination of the application of aesthetic consciousness, which, like uncontrolled sensibility, maintains the key significance of the element of feeling in experiencing a sense of unity with nature. The terms of the symbols in this group of poems remain relatively consistent with earlier ones. Often they are symbols taken from external nature—moonlight, green glades, trees and flowers, rivers, and the ocean. All of these consistently carry the implications of freedom, vitality, transcendence, joy, peace, and beauty. The art object, as a symbol of cosmos, carries the implications of beauty, peace and transcendence and is often associated directly with the nature symbolism. Though the symbolism continues to substantiate the tendency toward a conception of nature with which man may unify himself through feeling, the method of approach to a sense of cosmos is modified in the course of the poems so that the cosmic force may be discovered and cultivated by man as a part of his human nature.

<sup>153</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 244-45; Anderson, p. 53.

## V. SYMBOLS OF COSMOS IN WORKS OF THE LATE POETIC PERIOD

The final group of poems to be considered spans the period between 1853, when "The Scholar Gipsy" and "Philomela" were published, and 1867, when "The Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön" was first published. This group of poems contains symbols which imply that one may achieve a sense of cosmic unity through the orientation of aesthetic consciousness. These symbols tend toward a conception of a cosmic force which may be discovered and cultivated as a part of man. Thus it will be demonstrated that the transition in the implications of the symbols of cosmos and oblivion, which was described in the previous chapter, is sustained throughout Arnold's final poetic period.

"The Scholar Gipsy," which was probably composed between 1852 and 1853,<sup>1</sup> has often been considered by critics to be incongruous with the new theory of poetry which Arnold develops in the 1853 "Preface."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, Poems, p. 331, headnotes.

<sup>2</sup> David L. Eggenschwiler, "Arnold's Passive Questers," Victorian Poetry, 5 (Spring 1967), 5; E. D. H. Johnson, Alien Vision, p. 199; A. E. Dyson, "The Last Enchantments," Review of English Studies, NS 8 (August 1957), 258-259 et passim; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 195, who concedes that there is a subjective note of melancholia in the poem, asserts that it points toward the Greek-style poetry and culture of Arnold's late period.

Indeed, Arnold, in an 1853 letter to Clough, criticizes the poem as unable to "animate and ennoble" its readers. It could, at best, he thought, "add zest to their melancholy."<sup>3</sup> However, it will be demonstrated that the symbolic implications of the figure of the Scholar Gipsy, are relevant to the poetic orientation toward experience delineated in the 1853 "Preface."<sup>4</sup>

The central figure in the poem is the Scholar Gipsy, the history and habits of whom are contemplated by the speaker from his secluded shady nook in the Cumner hills. Arnold prefaces his poem with a note condensed from Joseph Glanvill's The Vanity of Dogmatizing, where he had found the story of the Scholar Gipsy.<sup>5</sup> The quotation from Glanvill states that the figure was a young Oxford scholar who was compelled by poverty to leave school and who went to live among the gipsies who roamed the countryside. When encountered by former school acquaintances, he told them that the gipsies

had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company and give the world an account of what he had learned.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Lowry, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Eggenschwiler, p. 1, et passim, interprets the Scholar Gipsy as symbolizing a state of peaceful detachment; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 194-95.

<sup>5</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 332, headnote; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 178.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Glanvill, The Vanity of Dogmatizing, quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 333, headnote.

Such a figure had special significance to Arnold.

Although the recorded changes in the prospective title for the poem, from "The First Mesmerist" in 1849 and "?The Wandering Mesmerist" (question mark is Arnold's) in 1850 and 1851 lists of poems to compose, to "The Scholar Gipsy" when the poem was finished,<sup>7</sup> seem to indicate a decline in any possible interest in the character's hypnotic abilities, the gipsies probably do have significance for Arnold.<sup>8</sup> An important clue to the significance of the Scholar Gipsy is his association with Oxford and the countryside surrounding it.<sup>9</sup> In an 1857 letter to his brother Tom, Arnold says that the poem is an elegy for "the freest and most delightful part" of his life when he and Oxford friends "shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgettable Oxfordshire and Berkshire country." He goes on to state that "the sentiment of the place is overpowering" to him.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 332, headnote.

<sup>8</sup> David R. Carroll, "Arnold's Tyrian Trader and Grecian Coaster," Modern Language Review, 64 (January 1969), 29; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 180, states that Arnold first thought of mesmerism as a joke.

<sup>9</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 180-82; J. P. Curgenvin, "'The Scholar Gipsy': A Study of the Growth, Meaning, and Integration of a Poem," Litera (Istanbul), No. 2 (1959), pp. 47-48; Paul Edwards, "Hebraism, Helenism, and 'The Scholar-Gipsy,'" Durham University Journal, 23 (1962), 124, 126, cites quotations from Arnold stating that although he felt an emotional attachment for Oxford, it was lacking in activity.

<sup>10</sup> Mrs. Humphry Ward, A Writer's Recollection (London, 1918), pp. 53-54, quoted in Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 181.



Indeed, in the "Preface" to the Essays in Criticism he describes Oxford in related terms:

And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection,—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, then, Arnold associates Oxford and this poem about the Oxford country with the world of intuitive emotion and of beauty, which represents a fusion of emotion and thought and of emotion and form. It is the childhood world of united sensibility.<sup>12</sup> In his essay on Emerson in 1883, Arnold specifies even more the connotations which Oxford has for him:

Oxford has more criticism now, more knowledge, more light, but such voices as those of our youth it has no longer. The name of Cardinal Newman is a great name to the imagination still; his genius and his style are still things of power.<sup>13</sup>

It is the Oxford of Newman with which Arnold associates the Scholar Gipsy; and Newman represents for him genius and style, ingredients of aesthetic balance. Thus the setting here associated with the Scholar

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Arnold, "Preface," Essays in Criticism (1865), Works, Super, III, 290.

<sup>12</sup> A. E. Dyson, pp. 261-62; G. Wilson Knight, "'The Scholar Gipsy': An Interpretation," Review of English Studies, NS 6, No. 21 (1955), 56.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Arnold, "Emerson," Works, IV, 349.

Gipsy has significance.

Another important facet of the meaning of the Scholar Gipsy is the implication of the gipsies' art itself. G. Wilson Knight observes that gipsies have a Hindu background and are, therefore, "associated with the mysterious arts and wisdom of the East"<sup>14</sup> of the kind referred to in the Bhagavad Gita.<sup>15</sup> The Gita, it will be remembered, presents the ideal of a state produced through the poise of intellect and feeling—indeed, of all one's faculties—through which one is united with a cosmic force. This resultant state is one of "absorption" on the intuitive level, not merely a state of "contemplation."<sup>16</sup> The idea of the ideal state of integration of the faculties presented in the Bhagavad Gita is analogous to the ideal of balance or poise of the faculties which is necessary to the poetic orientation of aesthetic consciousness, which is central to Arnold's

<sup>14</sup> Knight, p. 56, narrowly interprets Eastern thought as based solely upon the idea of intuitive wisdom; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 183, also relates the gipsies to intuitive wisdom which is strongly associated with nature.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, p. 125, associates the insight of the Scholar Gipsy with the idea of knowing rather than doing, which he finds to be a dominant idea of Hellenism and of the Bhagavad Gita; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 192, interprets the cargo of the Tyrian Trader as symbolic of the wisdom of the Gita; J. P. Curgenvén, "'The Scholar Gipsy': A Study of Growth, Meaning, and Integration of the Poem," Litera (Istanbul), No. 3 (1959), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> V. S. Seturaman, "'The Scholar Gipsy' and Oriental Wisdom," Review of English Studies, NS 9 (November 1958), 412-13; Curgenvén, No. 3 (1959), p. 9.

mature poetic theory. Thus the idea of the gipsies' use of the imagination is probably analogous, in Arnold's thinking, to the art of the poet.<sup>17</sup>

In the description of the Scholar Gipsy himself, the previously mentioned implications are borne out. From the name Scholar Gipsy it would seem that the central figure of the poem is meant to represent a fusion of the senses and understanding and the heart and imagination, which are the elements of Arnold's poetic orientation of aesthetic consciousness.<sup>18</sup> He is both a scholar, a man "of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain" (l. 34), and a gipsy, a man of deep intuitive feeling, of unified sensibility, and of faith in his quest of the secret of the use of the imagination: he pursued his quest with "unclouded joy" (l. 199), with "unconquerable hope" (l. 211).<sup>19</sup> This would lead one to believe that the Scholar Gipsy is the type of the poet Callicles<sup>20</sup> and the poet of

<sup>17</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 180, 182-83; Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), p. 46; Carroll, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Curgenvén, No. 3 (1959), p. 2; Carroll, pp. 27-29, and Eggenschwiler, p. 3, define the orientation of the Scholar Gipsy in terms which are analogous to Arnold's description of the poetic orientation; Edwards, pp. 124, 127 et passim, asserts that Arnold consciously meant to present a fusion of Hellenism and Hebraism, which are the elements of aesthetic consciousness; however, he interprets the Scholar Gipsy as representing only Hellenism and the Tyrian Trader as representing only Hebraism.

<sup>19</sup> Trilling, p. 105; W. S. Johnson, Voices, pp. 59-61; Seturaman, p. 412; Curgenvén, No. 3 (1959), p. 2; Knight, p. 58, asserts that the title of the poem and the explanation of the "falling" spark indicate Arnold's desire to present a fusion of the thought of the East and West; however, elsewhere, pp. 59-60, Knight interprets the Scholar Gipsy and the Tyrian Trader as representing wild nature and intuition only.

<sup>20</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 194.

"Resignation." As David L. Eggenschwiler observes,

Arnold's poets and gipsies live in two worlds at once; intellectually, they contemplate the changing life that unrolls before them; but emotionally, because of the disinterested steadiness of their visions, they are part of a secluded Arcadia.<sup>21</sup>

In subsequent paragraphs where the description and the activity of the Scholar Gipsy will be analyzed, it will be demonstrated that he does, indeed, maintain the poetic orientation just described.

The qualities of the Scholar Gipsy stand out in contrast to those of nineteenth-century men.<sup>22</sup>

Who fluctuate idly without term of scope,  
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,  
And each half-lives a hundred different lives;  
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.  
(ll. 67-70)

These are the faithless, unhappy men who do not know their true selves, who suffer the divided aims brought about by the dialogue of the mind.<sup>23</sup> These are the people "who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed" (l. 173), because of the intellectual dialectic which leaves even the wisest of them adopting a kind of Stoic resignation to the temporal natural order.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Eggenschwiler, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), p. 53; Seturaman, pp. 411-12; Madden, pp. 67-68.

<sup>23</sup> Roper, Landscapes, pp. 221, 223; Eggenschwiler, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, pp. 148-49.

This orientation, Arnold says, is "too near neighbor to despair" (l. 195) and causes them to wish for death,<sup>25</sup> to wish that "the long unhappy dream would end" (l. 192). The Scholar Gipsy on the other hand, was "born in days when wits were fresh and clear" (l. 201), when men had a united sensibility. It may have been significant to Arnold that the Scholar Gipsy is a seventeenth-century figure. For it has been argued that the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets are the last to enjoy the unified sensibility. That is, they live in a world where there is "little difference between scientific and aesthetic truth, as data and responses are not sharply differentiated."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the Scholar Gipsy has had the good sense to flee to solitude, to become "a truant boy" (l. 198), before he was contaminated by the intellectual dialectic of modern man:<sup>27</sup>

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers  
 Fresh, undiverted to the world without . . . .  
 (ll. 161-62)

Thus the Scholar Gipsy maintains all his faculties intact. Detached from the world of personal experience, the Scholar Gipsy tranquilly pursues his "one aim, one business, one desire" (l. 152) with his whole being,

<sup>25</sup> Madden, pp. 67-68; Seturaman, pp. 411-12.

<sup>26</sup> Gottfried, p. 212; Madden, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Trilling, pp. 105-106; Eggenschwiler, p. 8; W. S. Johnson, *Voices*, pp. 59, 61; and Dyson, p. 26 *et passim*, all interpret the Scholar Gipsy as an ideal remote from the experience of modern man.

his faculties unified and poised.<sup>28</sup> It is through this detached, poised orientation to experience that the poetic imagination works, transforming experience into a beautiful unified whole. This unifying and harmonizing view of things is the "spark from heaven" (l. 120), which the Scholar Gipsy constantly pursues and, indeed must constantly pursue since the experience is not static.<sup>29</sup>

The description of the Scholar Gipsy's activity through the poem in the secluded setting is consistent with this orientation of aesthetic consciousness which Arnold seems to be describing. The Scholar Gipsy exists only in a pastoral setting, "retired ground" (l. 71). He was spotted by shepherds "on the Hurst in spring, / At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors" (ll. 57-58). But wishing to remain detached from involvement in life, "mid their drink and clatter, he would fly" (l. 61).

<sup>28</sup> Seturaman, p. 412; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 187-88, 194, finds the Scholar Gipsy in a state of poise only after a transformation occurring at approximately line 141 of the poem.

<sup>29</sup> Madden, p. 68; Curgenvin, No. 2 (1959), pp. 47, 54-56, No. 3 (1959), pp. 8-9; Knight, p. 58, compares the spark to the Atman, the element making possible the condition of illumination and unity; however, he relates the Atman only to intuition; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 60, interprets the spark as the hope for a sense of wholeness to triumph over time; Anderson, p. 149, relates the spark to Stoicism, which is a facet of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness; Eggenschwiler, pp. 5-6, asserts that the quest of truth, or of the gipsies' secret, is merely the vehicle for the cultivation of the mental state of detachment and balance; he does not equate the state of detached tranquility, which is not static, with discovery of the use of the imagination, as the writer of this paper does.

Those who see him are closely involved with external nature; they are also involved with cosmic nature because they are people whose intuitive feelings have not been obscured by intellectual dialectic.<sup>30</sup> For example, he has been seen by "boys who in lone wheat fields scare the rooks" (l. 64). He is glimpsed by gay Oxford riders in the summer. He has silently given May flowers to girls who have "come / to dance around the Fyfield elm" (l. 83). He has also been seen by the country housewife. Always he is seen by "the young and happy, the simple, and the innocent."<sup>31</sup> Like the poet of "Resignation" (1849), he is able to see all the varied aspects of life as a whole from his detached perspective.<sup>32</sup> He has been seen

hanging on a gate  
 To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.  
 Children, who early range these slopes and late  
     For cresses from the rills,  
 Have known thee /the Scholar Gipsy/, eyeing, all an April-day,  
 The springing pastures and the feeding kine;  
 And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,  
 Through the long dewy grass move slowly away.  
(ll. 103-110)

The Scholar Gipsy experiences vicariously all of life and makes an harmonious whole of it.

Indeed the Scholar Gipsy's view is "deep."<sup>33</sup> The narrator

<sup>30</sup> Knight, p. 57; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 182.

<sup>31</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 336, note; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 182.

<sup>32</sup> Eggenschwiler, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Arnold, "Resignation," l. 214.

recalls to the figure that he has been observed

Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
 . . . . .  
 And leaning backward in a pensive dream,  
 And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers;  
 Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,  
 And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.  
(ll. 75, 77-88)

The harmoniously beautiful natural settings through which the Scholar Gipsy roams are analogous to the Wordsworthian forest glades found elsewhere in Arnold's poetry.<sup>34</sup> By transforming the external world through the application of the poetic imagination, the artist produces a work of beauty and achieves a sense of unity with cosmic nature. The Scholar Gipsy symbolizes this type of artist for the narrator. That the narrator describes the Scholar Gipsy coming in contact with his true self, the stream of the deep buried self,<sup>35</sup> is more specifically symbolized in the line stating that his eyes were "resting on the moonlit stream" (l. 80). These symbols, the stream of the self and the moonlight, representing the deep self usually manifesting itself through the poetic imagination or feeling have been seen elsewhere. Indeed, the Scholar Gipsy is often

<sup>34</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 191, 194; Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), pp. 48-49, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Curgenvén, No. 3 (1959), pp. 8-9; Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 183-84; Stange, pp. 161-62, interprets the Scholar Gipsy's orientation as a representation of a feeling for nature which could be achieved only in the past; Madden, p. 68, interprets the spark as a poetic truth which is never attained.



pictured near water.<sup>36</sup> Arnold's "mediator between man and the inanimate."<sup>37</sup> From a boat on the river the narrator looks for the Scholar Gipsy in the adjacent summer meadow because he has been seen "sitting on the river bank o'ergrown" (l. 97). A. Dwight Culler<sup>38</sup> has said that the figure represents an embodiment of the spirit of nature, of the countryside. He is so much a part of nature that his passing does not frighten the birds:<sup>39</sup>

The blackbird, picking food,  
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;  
So often has he known thee past him stray,  
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,  
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.  
(ll. 116-120)

The Scholar Gipsy's harmony with the universe, which, the poet seems to feel, results from application of the aesthetic consciousness to experience, is symbolically represented by the timelessness, the immortality of the Scholar Gipsy.<sup>40</sup> The unchanged presence of the figure is recorded in every season, from spring through winter, when the speaker himself has seen him "wrapped in thy cloak and battling with the snow" (l. 124).

<sup>36</sup> Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, p. 183. <sup>37</sup> Lowry, p. 92.

<sup>38</sup> Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, pp. 182-83; Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> Eggenschwiler, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Seturaman, p. 412; Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), pp. 56-57.

Although the narrator realizes, in the midst of his musings upon the Scholar Gipsy, that the figure has ceased his temporal existence—<sup>41</sup>

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown  
 Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,  
 . . . . .  
 And thou from earth art gone  
 Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—  
 Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave  
 Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,  
 Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade—  
 (ll. 131-32, 136-140)

he later reaffirms the Scholar Gipsy's existence as a symbol of cosmos for himself and for the reader.<sup>42</sup> The Scholar Gipsy has been symbolically portrayed in life, experiencing his true self, which he has found through his "passive quest."<sup>43</sup> He has clutched the "inviolable shade" (l. 212) which is analogous to the "all"<sup>44</sup> that Empedocles strives to feel.<sup>45</sup> This is the cosmic force at the center of things. When conceived of as dead the Scholar Gipsy seems to become one with the universe on the

<sup>41</sup> W. S. Johnson, *Voices*, p. 59, and Dyson, pp. 264-65, interpret the Scholar Gipsy as mortal and subject to time.

<sup>42</sup> Seturaman, p. 412; Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, pp. 184-85; Eggenschwiler, p. 8; W. S. Johnson, *Voices*, p. 58, insists that the Scholar Gipsy is alive to the imagination; Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), pp. 48-49, states that the poem implies a resurrection of the Gipsy in the noumenal aspect.

<sup>43</sup> Eggenschwiler, p. 6, uses this phrase but does not relate the implied orientation to a sense of cosmos.

<sup>44</sup> Arnold, *Empedocles on Etna* (1852), II. i. 353.

<sup>45</sup> Baum, p. 112, associates the "inviolable shade" with the life of poetry; Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), pp. 55-56, No. 3 (1959), p. 8, compares the Gipsy's search to that of Empedocles.

material level. The idea of unity here is symbolized in the sensuously beautiful setting of his grave.<sup>46</sup> Thus the point of view shifts from that of the figure or what the narrator thinks to be the figure's point of view to that of the narrator and reader. In this way, the poem, which Arnold classes as an elegy, performs the function of the classical pastoral elegy: "The traditional elegist celebrated the connection between man and nature, . . . supporting by her perpetual regeneration man's hope of his own continuing life."<sup>47</sup> Whether the Scholar Gipsy is conceived of as alive or dead, then, he is a symbol, for the narrator and the reader, of man's potential unity with the universe.<sup>48</sup>

Although A. Dwight Culler<sup>49</sup> does not explain the Scholar Gipsy's rebirth in the poet-narrator's mind in the same way that is described here, his idea is very much related to what has been developed and serves to amplify it. Culler says that the Scholar Gipsy is reborn in

<sup>46</sup> Eggenchwiler, p. 8, presents a judgment that is harmonious with the present analysis when he states that the beauty of grave is in some way related to the reversal of the narrator's decision that the Gipsy is dead; however, he is not specific in his analysis.

<sup>47</sup> Stange, p. 162, provides this rendering of the elegy's purpose; however, he does not believe that the present poem reflects this type of unity; Trilling, p. 107.

<sup>48</sup> Curgenvén, No. 2 (1959), pp. 54-56.

<sup>49</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 187-192.

a form which can be made use of in the real, modern world. He compares Arnold's use of the Scholar Gipsy myth to Arnold's use of the Bible myths, which though perhaps untrue, contain a moral truth necessary for life. Culler, who fails to interpret the early Scholar Gipsy figure as the embodiment of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness as this writer does, does find him transformed into the Greek type of culture, or one having the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, in the latter part of the poem.<sup>50</sup>

Returning once again to the point of view of the Scholar Gipsy, as the narrator conceives it, one must consider whether his activity has been merely an aimless wandering, an escape into sensuous indulgence.<sup>51</sup> That it has not been aimless is particularly evidenced in that the Scholar Gipsy has wished to impart his knowledge to the world,<sup>52</sup> to teach modern man how to use the imagination "to rule . . . the workings of men's brains" (ll. 45-46). That is, he wishes to show man how to attain the tranquil detached orientation toward experience which will provide him with a sense of cosmos. But, of course, it has been pointed out that the

<sup>50</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 194.

<sup>51</sup> Dyson, p. 263; Roper, Landscapes, p. 211; Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 297; Edwards, p. 126, states that, because of his inactivity, the Scholar Gipsy of the first part of the poem implies an attitude of escape, which is corrected by the substitution of the Tyrian Trader in the second part of the poem.

<sup>52</sup> Eggenschwiler, p. 5; Carroll, p. 28-29.

Scholar Gipsy does not actually go back into the world to explain the mystery to men;<sup>53</sup> and since he is always in the attitude of waiting, some critics conclude that he never achieves the "heaven-sent moments (l. 50) of poetic insight."<sup>54</sup> It is significant that the narrator in the poem entreats the Scholar Gipsy to remain aloof from the modern men who are slaves to intellect and who lack integration and who are the really aimless people.<sup>55</sup> Much as the narrator of "Tristram and Iseult" instructs the innocent youth of the tapestry to remain in the beautiful Wordsworthian glade, to maintain his unified sensibility which unites him with the universe, so here the narrator cries,

Fly hence, our contact fear!  
 Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!  
 Averse, as Dido did with gestures stern  
 From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,  
 Wave us away and keep thy solitude!  
(ll. 206-210)

It is only by maintaining his detachment that the Scholar Gipsy can maintain contact with the cosmic force; and thus, it is in this attitude only that he can remain a symbol of unity for the narrator and reader.

The comparison of the Scholar Gipsy to Dido and of nineteenth-century man to Aeneas in the passage just quoted is significant. Dido

<sup>53</sup> Carroll, p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> Dyson, p. 263; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 60; Eggenschwiler, p. 2; Madden, p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> Trilling, pp. 105-106; Carroll, p. 28; Eggenschwiler, pp. 8-9.

was the Queen of Carthage, a Tyrian colony, and thus a representative of the ancient Eastern culture.<sup>56</sup> The figure has connotations of the united sensibility and absorption in cosmic nature. Such a state is analogous to the goal of the Bhagavad Gita. One critic has called Dido the embodiment of ideal love.<sup>57</sup> Aeneas, on the other hand, was the founder of Rome, which, to Arnold, represents a continuation of the intellectual tradition as well as the roots of Western efficiency and organization which began to develop in the Hellenistic period of Greece, a period which, to Arnold, represents a continuation of the intellectual tradition as well as the roots of Western efficiency and organization which began to develop in the Hellenistic period of Greece, a period which, to Arnold, was distinctly inferior to the Golden Age of Greece with its integrated ideal of imaginative reason.<sup>58</sup> Aeneas is analogous to the intellectual slaves of the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> The kinds of interpretations given to Dido and Aeneas here do not preclude the kind of conclusion reached by G. Wilson Knight<sup>60</sup> that the chief dichotomy of the poem is between Dionysian

<sup>56</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 189.

<sup>57</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 189.

<sup>58</sup> Arnold, "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment" (1864), Works, Super, III, 230-31.

<sup>59</sup> Trilling, pp. 106-107; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 189.

<sup>60</sup> Knight, pp. 53, 55, 61; Curgenvin, No. 3 (1959), pp. 4-5, supports Knight's conclusion.

feeling and Apolline reason. However, this writer feels that the concluding simile of the poem elaborates upon the significance of the Tyrian element to the extent that the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, which is a fusion of feeling and reason, seems to be the ideal represented by the Scholar Gipsy and against which over-intellectualization and sensuality work.<sup>61</sup>

The link between the Scholar Gipsy and Tyre is developed in the summarizing simile which concludes the poem:<sup>62</sup>

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!  
 —As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,  
 Descried at sunrise an emerging prow  
 Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily  
 The fringes of a southward-facing brow  
 Among the Aegean isles;  
 And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
 Freightened with amber grapes, and Chian wine,  
 Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine—  
 And knew the intruders on his ancient home  
 The young light-hearted masters of the waves—  
 And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail;  
 And day and night held on indignantly  
 O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,  
 Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily  
 To where the Atlantic raves  
 Outside the western straits; and unbent sails  
 There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,  
 Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;  
 And on the beach undid his corded bales.

(ll. 231-50)

<sup>61</sup> Seturaman, p. 412.

<sup>62</sup> Knight, p. 54; Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, p. 189; Carroll, pp. 32-33; W. S. Johnson, *Voices*, pp. 60-61.

To begin with, the Tyrian represents the ancient Eastern-rooted culture which was supplanted by the Greeks.<sup>63</sup> Just as the Scholar Gipsy must flee "the infection of our modern man's mental strife" (l. 222), he would also have to flee imbalance in the form of devotion to the other half of the Apolline dualism, the senses.<sup>64</sup> Just so he flees the noisy "smock-frocked boors" (l. 59), the gay Oxford riders, and summer bathers. This same idea of devotion to the senses is represented by the "merry Grecian coaster" (l. 237) from which the Tyrian flees.<sup>65</sup> Their cargo is perishable goods<sup>66</sup> appealing to the senses: "amber grapes, and Chian wine, / Green, bursting figs and tunnies steeped in brine" (l. 238-39). In addition, the Greeks are described as "young light-hearted masters of the waves" (l. 241). They are superficial sensuous revellers who do not recognize and deal with the pain of life.<sup>67</sup> This, of course, is Arnold's chief complaint against the Greeks of the Hellenistic age.<sup>68</sup> These mariners also lack the courage and prowess of the Tyrian; for their boat

<sup>63</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 190; Knight, p. 54.

<sup>64</sup> Knight, p. 54; Roper, Landscapes, p. 222; Curgenvin, No. 3 (1959), pp. 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> E. K. Brown, Revue Anglo-Americaine, 12 (1934-5), 224-25, quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 343, note.

<sup>66</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 222; Seturaman, p. 412.

<sup>67</sup> Knight, p. 54.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, p. 57; Edwards, p. 127.



is merely a "coaster" (l. 237). They sail only within the circumscribed, relatively safe boundaries of the Mediterranean<sup>69</sup> and hide "stealthily" (l. 234) away in "cool-haired creepers" (l. 234) along the shores of the Aegean. As A. Dwight Culler points out, although this natural setting is somewhat like the pastoral retreat of the Scholar Gipsy, which symbolizes his oneness with nature, this is merely an "imitation constructed by Revel-  
lers on the burning plain,"<sup>70</sup> that is, in the midst of a world of strife and alienation. This alienated Reveller is what the Tyrian is not, what he fights against. The Tyrian Trader, as compared to the Greeks, is "grave" (l. 232); he is intent upon a serious purpose, an individual aim.<sup>71</sup> An orientation of calm detachment is necessary in order for him to maintain the balance of faculties which is his ideal.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, he guards his solitude by acting with forceful resolution.<sup>73</sup> He "snatched his rudder" and "held on indignantly . . . / To where the Atlantic raves / Outside the western straits" (ll. 242-43, 246-47). This moral self-discipline, which takes the form of positive action based upon strong emotional conviction, has Hebraistic overtones, as Paul Edwards has pointed out.<sup>74</sup> However,

<sup>69</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 190; Carroll, p. 31.

<sup>70</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 190-92.

<sup>71</sup> Knight, p. 54.

<sup>72</sup> Seturaman, p. 412.

<sup>73</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 188, 191.

<sup>74</sup> Edwards, p. 124; Anderson, p. 57.

this writer, unlike Edwards, interprets moral resolve as only one element present in the Tyrian Trader, who represents the idea of aesthetic consciousness which consists of perfection of the self in all one's faculties. That the moralistic note is present is corroborated by the fact that Arnold used a quite similar figure to explain his attitude toward Clough who, he said, did not seem "sufficiently to desire and earnestly strive toward an assured knowledge—activity—happiness . . . . That is why, with you," Arnold said, "I feel it necessary to stiffen myself and hold fast my rudder."<sup>75</sup> In a much less dramatic way, every time the Scholar Gipsy eludes the intrusions of everyday life, he asserts the same kind of renunciation; however, the figure is not solely Hebraic, but rather a combination of the Hebraic and Hellenic, like that which Arnold prescribes in Culture and Anarchy.<sup>76</sup>

Consistent with the idea that the Tyrian represents the orientation of aesthetic consciousness is the fact that the Tyrian's mission is much more ambitious than that of the Greeks. For one thing, he is out upon the open sea, which symbolizes, for one who has not found his buried self, the inexplicable experience of floundering at the mercy of the natural cycle as the romantic madman does in Arnold's "A Summer

<sup>75</sup> Lowry, pp. 122-23.

<sup>76</sup> Works, Super, V, 170-71.

Night" (1852). However, for one such as the Tyrian who sees below the surface of the flux into the deep buried stream of the self, the sea symbolizes his unification with cosmic nature.<sup>77</sup> There is also an important contrast between the perishable cargo of the Grecian coaster<sup>78</sup> and the "corded bales" (l. 250) of the Tyrian trader. Although many conjectures—including the alphabet, the Bhagavad Gita, and silk cloth—can be made as to the contents of the bales, the implication seems to be that what the Tyrian, like the Scholar Gipsy, offers the world is not perishable, but is beyond the temporal realm.<sup>79</sup> What the Scholar Gipsy and the Tyrian, with whom he is compared, are offering is the attitude of aesthetic consciousness,<sup>80</sup> an orientation toward experience which allows one to create harmonious beauty from the tragedy of life. This, in essence, constitutes the gipsy art for ruling "as they desired / The workings of men's brains" and for binding "them to what thoughts they will" (ll. 45-47). The poet, represented by the Scholar Gipsy and the Tyrian, may aid man by transforming his experience imaginatively; and most significantly, in

<sup>77</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 191; Knight, pp. 60-61.

<sup>78</sup> Carroll, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 222; Knight, pp. 54-55.

<sup>80</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 192, interprets the Tyrian Trader as a transmitter of ancient culture; Madden, pp. 67, 69, finds the role of Tyrian analogous to that of the poet-narrator; Knight, p. 55, associates the Tyrian with oriental powers, such as those referred to in Bhagavad Gita, which are harmonious with the poetic powers.

the case of the Scholar Gipsy, he may serve as a model, or symbol, of the orientation which one should adopt in order to perfect himself and to transform his own experience.

Whether acting as a transforming agent or as a symbol of cosmos himself, the poet must remain aloof and detached and maintain his own inner poise. David R. Carroll<sup>81</sup> points out a relevant description of the trading habits of the Phoenicians and the Greeks, which are symbolic of the two ways of influencing society between which the Scholar Gipsy must choose. Although the discussion is found in Grote's History of Greece, which was not on Arnold's reading list until March, 1857, Arnold may have had a general knowledge of the trading habits of these groups much earlier. The Greek tradition of communication and of trade required one to disperse, or abandon, the self:

If he sought . . . to act upon this mingled and diverse audience, the Greek was forced to shake off what was peculiar to his own town or community, and to put forth matter in harmony with the feelings of all.<sup>82</sup>

Carroll analyzes this behavior as "capitulation to the world."<sup>83</sup> In contrast, the Phoenicians confined their contacts to the business of "purchase and sale" and avoided "intimate communion with a multiplicity of fellows

<sup>81</sup> Carroll, pp. 31-32.

<sup>82</sup> George Grote, History of Greece (1846-56), II, 301-302, quoted in Carroll, p. 31.

<sup>83</sup> Carroll, p. 31.

in blood and language."<sup>84</sup> They preferred to deal with society through withdrawal.<sup>85</sup> The reference in the poem to the Tyrian trader's dealings with the "shy traffickers, the dark Iberians" (l. 249) is an example of the Tyrian's detached method of dealing with the world, a method analogous to that used by the Phoenicians. Another similar description of the Carthaginian trading missions is found in the writings of Herodotus, with which Arnold was probably familiar:

The Carthaginians also relate the following: There is . . . a nation beyond the Pillars of Hercules, which they are wont to visit, where they no sooner arrive but forthwith they unlade their wares, and, having disposed them after an orderly fashion along the beach, leave them, and, returning aboard their ships, raise a great smoke. The natives, when they see the smoke, come down to the shore, and, laying out to view so much gold as they think the worth of the wares, withdraw to a distance. The Carthaginians upon this come ashore and look. If they think the gold enough, they take it and go their way . . . .<sup>86</sup>

This may explain the reference to the "shy traffickers." Not only does the Tyrian poet-trader attempt to deal with the world through his state of detachment but also those who receive his treasure must achieve a detached, contemplative orientation to do so. They must emulate the attitude of the symbol of cosmic unity. It is the "shy" Spaniards, perhaps

<sup>84</sup> Grote, II, 301-02, quoted in Carroll, p. 31.

<sup>85</sup> Carroll, pp. 31-32.

<sup>86</sup> Herodotus, trans. G. Rawlinson (1858), IV, 196, quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 344, note for ll. 246-50; both Allott and Carroll, p. 32, relate this quotation from Herodotus to the Tyrian's orientation.

Spanish gipsies, to whom he brings his treasure.<sup>87</sup> In like manner, the Scholar Gipsy is seen by those who live a simple life of "moderate desire,"<sup>88</sup> and by those who retain their youthful united sensibility.<sup>89</sup>

The outstanding example of how one goes about discovering the Scholar Gipsy and his secret is given by the narrator of the poem. This process is delineated in the parts of the poem where the narrator moves from description of the Scholar Gipsy's point of view to his own point of view. The narrator gains a glimpse of the Scholar Gipsy by assuming the Scholar Gipsy's orientation toward experience.<sup>90</sup> It is only when the narrator has done this that he realizes the Scholar Gipsy's immortality. The narrator begins to meditate upon the subject of Glanvill's book when he takes his place in a circumscribed hillside retreat:

Screened is this nook o'er the high, half-reaped field,  
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.  
(ll. 21-22)

Here he is detached from direct experience of everyday life; however,

<sup>87</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 193.

<sup>88</sup> Arnold, Empedocles on Etna (1852), I. ii. 171.

<sup>89</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 182.

<sup>90</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 183-84; Roper, Landscapes, pp. 218-19; Madden, p. 67, notes that although the narrator tries to escape into the Scholar Gipsy's age, he cannot; Eggenschwiler, pp. 7-8, interprets the narrator's state as a false and temporary sense of union with the Scholar Gipsy, resulting from an "imaginative act" rather than from searching for knowledge as the Scholar Gipsy does.

he may vicariously experience a wide view of the reality of everyday activity, represented by the reaper and the shepherd at their work:

Here will I sit and wait,  
While to my ear from uplands far away  
The bleating of the folded flocks is born,  
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—  
All the live murmur of a summer's day.  
(ll. 16-20)

The setting from which the narrator views experience symbolically suggests that through his orientation he can imaginatively transform the experience which he intellectually perceives<sup>91</sup> and thus produce an harmoniously beautiful whole of his experience. Such an ability indicates a sense of cosmos on the part of the one involved in the creative act. The setting is a secluded circumscribed nook filled with lush, harmoniously beautiful vegetation; it is analogous to the Wordsworthian glade:

Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,  
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;  
And air-swept lindens yield  
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers  
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
And bower me from the August sun with shade;  
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.  
(ll. 23-30)

In this passage, in addition to the details of beautiful external nature, the narrator mentions his awareness of Oxford, which, as has been

<sup>91</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 183-84.

pointed out previously, seems to Arnold to connote a sense of aesthetic balance, which he feels to be the operative force in the poet. It is embodiment of this state which leads the poet to a sense of cosmos. Thus the narrator gains a view of the Scholar Gypsy and a sense of cosmos by assuming the orientation of aesthetic consciousness himself.

The introductory stanza of the poem goes a step further, in implying a practical implementation of the Scholar Gypsy's orientation. Here the speaker exhorts the shepherd to go and tend his flock by day:

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;  
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!  
(ll. 1-2)

It has been conjectured that here the narrator is addressing Thyrsis, the character who represents Clough in the elegy called "Thyrsis"<sup>92</sup> (1866) which is a companion poem to "The Scholar Gypsy." However, the important point is that here the narrator is addressing a shepherd, one who lives and works in the everyday world of experience and one who leads and guides others. He exhorts the shepherd to go about his duty of caring for his flock by day;

But when the fields are still,  
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,  
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen  
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green,  
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!  
(ll. 6-10)



At night when the shepherd's worldly strife is done, he must renew his quest for the Scholar Gipsy. It is implied that the shepherd is to seek him in the same way that the narrator does, by assuming the Scholar Gipsy's orientation toward experience. The ultimate implication of the stanza is that in order to be a shepherd, or guide, in the practical world, one must possess the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, which is the key to living in society without being of it.<sup>93</sup> The shepherd in the poem is instructed to assume the kind of role which Obermann instructs the poet-narrator to assume in "Obermann Once More."<sup>94</sup> "The Scholar Gipsy" then points in the direction of Arnold's entire critical canon, which represents the effort of a poet to contribute to the betterment of man in the practical sphere by developing a concept of religion and culture which is an expansion of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness.<sup>95</sup>

In this poem the Scholar Gipsy symbolizes a sense of unity with the universe, a state which is achieved through implementation of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness. In the poem, the point of view

<sup>93</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 216, attributes the shepherd's abilities as a guide to his night quest; however, this critic is inexact in describing the nature of the night quest.

<sup>94</sup> Arnold, "Obermann Once More" (1867), ll. 301-324.

<sup>95</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 194-95, interprets the Tyrian Trader as a representation of the ideal of culture and of Christ, which ideals have been demonstrated in this study to be directly related to the orientation of aesthetic consciousness.

of the Scholar Gipsy is developed as well as that of the narrator, who views the Scholar Gipsy as a symbol of cosmic unity. The relationship of the narrator and shepherd to the Scholar Gipsy implies that the orientation exemplified by the Scholar Gipsy is a basis for living in the everyday world and not an aimless escape. The poem is not an elegy for an irretrievable attitude, as Dyson asserts,<sup>96</sup> but an elegy for a lost sense of cosmos which Arnold believes may be re-captured in the contemporary world if man adopts the orientation of aesthetic consciousness.<sup>97</sup>

Another symbolic rendering of a sense of cosmos achieved through the orientation of aesthetic consciousness is presented in "Philomela" (1853), which was probably composed between 1852 and 1853.<sup>98</sup> By employing the classical myth of the transformation of the woeful mortal into the nightingale,<sup>99</sup> Arnold produces what is perhaps his most emphatic symbolic statement of the value of the attitude of aesthetic consciousness.

Use of the nightingale to represent the complexities of the poetic task is not unique here with Arnold. Indeed, such poets as Coleridge and

<sup>96</sup> Dyson, p. 261.

<sup>97</sup> Curgenvin, No. 2 (1959), p. 53, interprets the Scholar Gipsy as a vision produced through the "exaltation of the imagination" rather than as an escape.

<sup>98</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 347, headnote.

<sup>99</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 347, headnote.

Keats had already utilized the myth in this way.<sup>100</sup> That the nightingale had had significance for Arnold prior to his writing this poem can be supported by his references to it in "To Marguerite—Continued" (1852), which was probably written in 1849, and in "The Scholar Gipsy," which was written in 1852 or 1853. In the former poem, in which the narrator explains his sense of cosmic isolation, he describes man's fleeting awareness of a former state of unity of the islands of nature.

. . . when the moon their hollows lights,  
And they are swept by balms of spring,  
And in their glens, on starry nights,  
The nightingales divinely sing.

(ll. 7-10)

Here the song of the nightingale is associated with a beautiful setting, which is often associated with a sense of cosmic unity, and the moonlight, which Arnold habitually uses to symbolize an awareness of the true, or central, self. However, at this point in Arnold's poetic development he had not yet arrived at a definition of the artistic orientation which he could accept as the proper vehicle for achieving a sense of oneness with the universe. It will be remembered that in this early period he unsuccessfully seeks a sense of cosmos through total involvement in sensibility.

Again, quite a bit later, the nightingale appears in "The Scholar Gipsy," which has just been discussed as a symbolic expression of the

<sup>100</sup> Stange, p. 79.

power enabling one to transcend the temporal and to unite himself with the central cosmic force of the universe. In the narrator's final address to the Scholar Gipsy he prescribes that the immortal figure continue his solitary moonlit wanderings through the forest glades:

On some mild pastoral slope  
 Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales  
 Freshen thy flowers as in former years  
 With dew, or listen with enchanted ears.  
 From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!  
 (ll. 216-220)

It would be quite natural for him to listen to the nightingale, for the wisdom of aesthetic consciousness, which the Scholar Gipsy symbolizes, is also symbolized, for Arnold, by the nightingale.

It is in the poem, "Philomela," which is devoted solely to the symbol of the nightingale that Arnold sets out without equivocation his concept of the proper poetic attitude and its result. The basis for the poem is the Greek myth of the sisters Philomela and Prokne, the latter of whom was married to Tereus, King of Thrace. But Tereus, led by passion, raped Philomela and cut out her tongue so that he would not be betrayed. Still the victim managed to apprise her sister of the situation. Prokne, in revenge, murdered her son and fed him to Tereus. Tereus then pursued them both to kill them; but the gods transformed them to protect them forever from the torment of passion and pain of the human realm. Philomela became a swallow and Prokne, the

nightingale.<sup>101</sup> As has been repeatedly noted by critics of the poem, Arnold's poem follows the popular Latin version of the myth, which makes Philomela the nightingale and Prokne the swallow.<sup>102</sup> What is of significance here is not the switch of names but the fact that in the myth Philomela directly experiences the violence and pain of life.<sup>103</sup> The entire poem deals with the narrator's encounter with the nightingale after "the feathery change" (l. 24) and its symbolic significance to him.

The bird sits in a "moonlit cedar" (l. 3) in the midst of an isolated lush English glade—

. . . this fragrant lawn  
 With the cool trees, and night,  
 And the sweet, tranquil Thames,  
 And moonshine, and the dew.  
 (ll. 10-13)

Again the figure is set in the unifying natural setting; and the moonlight; implying an awareness of the true self, covers all. However, from her detached perch, the nightingale sees through the idealized landscape to the once directly experienced world of passion and pain. The narrator asks:

Dost thou to-night behold,  
 Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,

<sup>101</sup> H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology (1928), pp. 262-63, quoted in Poems, Allott, p. 347, headnote.

<sup>102</sup> Poems, Allott, p. 347, headnote; Stange, p. 80, footnote 51; Tinker and Lowry, p. 164.

<sup>103</sup> W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 71; Anderson, pp. 31, 55.

The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?  
 Dost thou again peruse  
 With hot cheeks and seared eyes  
 The too clear web, and thy dumb sister's shame?  
 (ll. 16-21)

The key to the significance of the poem lies in the fact that in her transformed state, the nightingale seems, to the narrator, to remain forever in the idealized natural setting, vicariously experiencing the passion of life and transforming it into a beautiful, melancholy song.<sup>104</sup> The narrator again addresses the nightingale:

Dost thou once more assay  
 Thy flight, and feel come over thee,  
 Poor fugitive, the feathery change  
 Once more, and once more seem to make resound  
 With love and hate, triumph and agony,  
 Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?  
 (ll. 22-27)

But the narrator concludes by reminding his hearers, as the young Reveler does in the "Strayed Reveller,"<sup>105</sup> that the price of such transcendent beauty is

Eternal passion!  
 Eternal pain!  
 (ll. 31-32)

The bird symbolizes the poetic problem of retaining a state of detachment and balance.

<sup>104</sup> Culler, *Imaginative Reason*, p. 33, and Coursen, p. 581, misinterprets the idealized setting as mere illusion in a world alienation because the nightingale seems to see through the beauty into her former pain.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, p. 56; Donovan, pp. 1-2; Stange, p. 80.

The "Philomela theme" of the pain of poetic creation, which Robert A. Donovan traces through many of Arnold's poems dealing with poetry,<sup>106</sup> results from the nature of aesthetic consciousness. Not only must the artist vicariously experience both the pain and pleasure of life, but also, most significantly, the artist must maintain his own detachment and inner balance. He must remain objective in order to combine the content of emotional experience with form satisfactorily to create a beautiful work of art which transcends human experience<sup>107</sup> as Arnold prescribes in the 1853 "Preface."<sup>108</sup> The process of depersonalization on the part of the artist is suggested in the metamorphosis of the mortal into the immortal nightingale.<sup>109</sup> Arnold himself discusses the difficulty of achieving the balanced perfection of form and content in a work of art without destroying himself:

To attain or approach perfection in the region of thought and feeling, and to unite this with perfection of form, demands not merely an effort and a labour, but an actual tearing of oneself to pieces, which one does not readily consent to (although one is sometimes forced to it) . . . .<sup>110</sup>

This is the continual experience of the nightingale.

In addition to demonstrating the pain of poetic creation, the Philomela myth itself is an example of the transforming ability of the

<sup>106</sup> Donovan, p. 4 et passim      <sup>107</sup> Donovan, pp. 4-6.

<sup>108</sup> Works, Super, I, 2.      <sup>109</sup> Donovan, p. 6.

<sup>110</sup> Arnold, Letters, I, 72.

poet; for the mythopoeic age, transforming pain into beauty, immortalized Philomela as the symbol of the eternal poet. For modern man, who may still partake of the myth, who may still hear the song, Philomela represents man's potential unity with the cosmos. Philomela allows her hearers to transcend ordinary human life and gain a sense of oneness with the "general life,"<sup>111</sup> of which she is a part.<sup>112</sup> He who can hear the nightingale, or recall her story, and emulate her example of the attitude of aesthetic consciousness will achieve a sense of cosmic unity in the Wordsworthian glade and the moonlight of his true self, despite the "old-world" (l. 8) pain which he observes. As the poem closes, the narrator charges his companion to listen to Philomela's song. The companion is Eugenia, who was the companion of the narrator in "Horatian Echo" (1887), a poem proclaiming the value of sensuous self-indulgence.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps by using this name again, Arnold is contrasting his former attitude to the

<sup>111</sup> Arnold, "Resignation" (1849), l. 191.

<sup>112</sup> Although none of the critics interpret the nightingale figure as symbolic of the sense of cosmic unity, many interpret the figure in a roughly analogous terms: Donovan, p. 5; Benziger, p. 221, discusses the nightingale image as a representation of the grand style which purifies passion as the incarnation of Christ does for Christianity; Stange, pp. 82-83, and Anderson, p. 31, assert that recreation of experience through art, as is represented in "Philomela," demonstrates the eternal in the changing.

<sup>113</sup> Brick, pp. 48-49.



now more satisfactory attitude of aesthetic consciousness which provides for those who utilize it a lasting sense of cosmic unity.

The commentary on the role of the poet which is rendered symbolically in "Philomela" is more directly discussed in the much later "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön" (1867). Although this poem is sometimes considered an inferior piece,<sup>114</sup> it is significant to the present discussion because it once again utilizes the water symbolism which Arnold has used throughout the development of his poetic theory to represent man's conception of the central cosmic force which unifies all things. The circumstance of the poem is a discussion between two friends who are walking through Hyde Park. They are considering the relative merits of the arts—painting, music, and poetry. Each area of the landscape through which they pass represents the sphere of one art form. The painter captures the "outward semblance" (l. 57) of the idealized pastoral settings.<sup>115</sup> For the musician who captures the emotional implications of the moment, "the feeling of the moment" (l. 132), the proper setting is the bridge over the Thames, where the songs of the wind, water, and Westminster Abbey blend.<sup>116</sup> But for the poet, who must portray "life's movement" (l. 140), the throngs of "men with their stream of life" (l. 112)

<sup>114</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 39; Stange, p. 86.

<sup>115</sup> Stange, p. 90.

<sup>116</sup> Stange, p. 91.

in Rotten Row is the correct sphere. Arnold's idea of the poet's sphere is an extension from Lessing's idea of poetry's portrayal of an action, which is distinguished from the work of a painter who only portrays the result of an action.<sup>117</sup> From Lessing's description of the poetic office, Arnold moves to his own idea of the poet's ability to make from the pain and disorder of the less than ideal human state an order.<sup>118</sup> The poet must produce

The thread which binds it life all in one,  
And not its separate parts alone.  
(ll. 141-42)

This fusion produced by the poet makes man's individual experience harmonious with the universe.<sup>119</sup>

Just how the poet goes about harmonizing experience and what he achieves when he has done it are implied in the poem's symbolic descriptions. The average person lives subjectively for a time within the "stream of life" (l. 112), being tossed around precariously so that he can not

<sup>117</sup> Stange, p. 88; "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön," Poems, Allott, p. 513, footnote for ll. 129-42.

<sup>118</sup> Stange, p. 91; Roper, Landscapes, p. 42; Trilling, p. 268, interprets the poem as meaning that the poet, unlike other artists, creates beauty from that which is less than perfect in experience.

<sup>119</sup> "Epilogue," Poems, Allott, p. 513, footnote for ll. 145-52; W. S. Johnson, Voices, p. 104; and Trilling, p. 268, are three critics who associate the function of the poet described in the "Epilogue" with that described in "Resignation."

perceive the stream as a whole nor grasp the meaning of its relationship to him.<sup>120</sup> Finally, he is tossed out into a wilderness where he gains an occasional glimpse of the stream and dies:<sup>121</sup>

The stream of life's majestic whole  
Hath ne'er been mirrored on their soul.  
(ll. 187-88)

Thus the ordinary man rarely overcomes his sense of alienation. But for the few, such as Homer and Shakespeare, the experience is different. These are the ones who assume the poetic attitude of aesthetic consciousness.<sup>122</sup> Instead of being blindly tossed within the stream of life, they remain detached observers, having a broad view of the entire human experience:<sup>123</sup>

Only a few the life-stream's shore  
With safe unwandering feet explore;  
Untired its movement bright attend,  
Follow its windings to the end.  
(ll. 189-92)

Because of the artist's unique perception, made possible by his own inner balance and detachment, he gains an insight into the "buried stream"<sup>124</sup> of the self and thus achieves a joyous sense of the unity of experience:<sup>125</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Roper, Landscapes, p. 45.

<sup>121</sup> Stange, p. 95, interprets this as symbolic of romantic excess.

<sup>122</sup> Madden, pp. 129-30.

<sup>123</sup> Stange, pp. 92, 94; Roper, Landscapes, p. 46.

<sup>124</sup> Matthew Arnold, "The Buried Life" (1852), l. 42.

<sup>125</sup> Madden, p. 128; Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 78.

Then from its /the stream's/ briny waves their eye  
 Drinks up delighted ecstasy,  
 And the deep-toned, melodious voice  
 For ever makes their ear rejoice.  
 They speak! the happiness divine  
 They feel, runs o'er in every line;  
 Its spell is round them like a shower—  
 It gives them pathos, gives them power.

(ll. 193-200)

Because the poet has the insight into the core of life which unifies all of the universe, he has the "creative inspiration"<sup>126</sup> to produce poems which combine the objective view of the painter and the subjective emotional experience of the musician to produce a piece of art which encompasses all of life,<sup>127</sup> "all this eddying, motley throng" (l. 157). The product is a piece of art which raises human experience to the level of the universal and the immortal:

No painter yet hath such a way,  
 Nor no musician made, as they,  
 And gathered on immortal knolls  
 Such lovely flowers for cheering souls.

(ll. 201-204)

This harmoniously beautiful piece of art brings a joyous sense of cosmic unity to its hearers, as Arnold believes art should.<sup>128</sup>

The use in this poem of the water symbolism, "the lifestream" (l. 189) is especially revealing when compared to the poet's earlier

<sup>126</sup> Matthew Arnold, "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön," Poems, Allott, p. 514, footnote for ll. 177-78.

<sup>127</sup> Culler, Imaginative Reason, p.78.

<sup>128</sup> Stange, p. 95.

portrayals of man's symbolic relationship to the water. It will be remembered that in "The Forsaken Merman" one could not approach the sea of nature on the purely human level. Communion with it required submission to the subconscious level of feeling. In "The Buried Life," the narrator, under the influence of love, achieves only fleeting insights into the buried stream of the self. Finally, here, the artist may achieve a sustained communion with the buried stream of life by employing the orientation toward experience which, in this study, is designated aesthetic consciousness. One may conclude that at this point Arnold's poetry implies that the attitude of aesthetic consciousness—which requires a balancing and perfecting of reason and imagination and of all one's faculties and which thus allows one to regard experience from a detached, aesthetic point of view—is a manifestation of nature brought to perfection in man. For cultivation of human wholeness, which is man's potential natural condition, provides the individual with the capability of experiencing a sense of cosmos. In other symbolic terms, the immortal Scholar Gipsy and the immortal Philomela imply the same kind of cosmic unity, which may be achieved through the attitude of aesthetic consciousness.

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The hypothesis with which this study began is that while Matthew Arnold does not directly express a conception of a central natural force with which man may experience a sense of unity, he does express a tendency toward such a conception in a rather consistent vocabulary of symbols of oblivion and cosmos, which is present in his poetry. Each of the two poetic theories which influenced Arnold—romanticism and German Hellenism—allows the individual employing the prescribed orientation toward experience to gain a sense of unity with the universe and thus to have a sense of meaning and truth of existence. Indeed, the two orientations toward experience are based upon related concepts of nature as a cosmic force permeating the universe.

According to the romantic poetic theory, one gains a sense of cosmos by dispersing the self in feeling, or sensibility. This subjective involvement in experience may be observed in romantic art as well as in the lives of romantic artists. The German Hellenic modification of the romantic theory provides for an orientation toward experience which is here designated aesthetic consciousness. This orientation demands that one aesthetically balance the sensing, emotional, intellectual and moral faculties in order to produce an harmonious perfection of all his faculties. Such an individual, unlike the passionate romantic, remains detached

from experience and thus balances his emotional, intellectual, and moral responses with artistic form to produce an aesthetically beautiful whole. It is only after one has cultivated aesthetic perfection of the self that he is then able to produce a synthesis of experience and thus gain a sense of cosmos. The German Hellenic orientation implies a concept of nature manifesting itself in man through the aesthetic perfection of all human faculties. This, of course, contrasts with the romantic conception which provides that man may approach nature upon the level of emotion only.

Both of these poetic theories and their attendant orientations toward experience have affinities with basic Epicurean thought. According to Epicureanism, nature is defined as a generative force permeating a corporeal universe. Man may gain a sense of unity with nature, and thus have a sense of the truth of existence, by utilizing his senses, emotions, and imagination. In the theories under consideration, the senses and emotions or aesthetically controlled and distanced emotion and sensuous response are the vehicles for allowing one to experience a sense of cosmos.

A roughly chronological sampling of Arnold's poems shows that the poet's employment of the orientation toward experience consonant with his developing poetic theory results in symbolic representations of cosmos and oblivion. The early poems portray personae who are devoted to the orientation of sensibility in their attempts to gain a sense of cosmos. In the early poems, the persona may at best gain an unsatisfactorily fleeting

sense of cosmos through a human love experience, as in "Parting" (1852) and "A Farewell" (1852) and turn for comfort to contemplation of death and dissolution in nature, while at worst, as in "The Forsaken Merman" (1849) and "Mycerinus" (1849) the persona is compelled to abandon completely the sophisticated human world which obscures feeling, in order to experience a sense of cosmos. Finally, in Empedocles on Etna (1852), Empedocles, who prescribes an orientation of detachment and inner balance which he can not sustain himself, finds that the intellectual dialectic has caused him to lose all touch with feeling and, thus, all sense of unity with the cosmic force, which he nevertheless intellectually preceives. Thus his despair leads him to the edge of the volcano where he contemplates suicide. Upon comtemplation of dissolution in nature, he gains a sense of ecstasy. In this moment of triumphant emotion, he leaps into the crater, becoming another symbol of the unity of man with nature on the elemental level. The foil of Empedocles throughout the poem is Callicles, the poet, who maintains his orientation of aesthetic consciousness by which he transforms experience into beautiful transcendent mythical art. However, it is not until he writes the 1853 "Preface" that Arnold's sympathies consciously shift to the orientation introduced by Callicles orientation of sensibility, which so often manifests itself in symbols of oblivion in the early poems.

Having faced, with Empedocle's suicide, the consequence of reliance upon unfulfilling sensibility as a means of unifying one's self



with nature, Arnold begins to move gradually toward the orientation of aesthetic consciousness. In "The Buried Life" (1852), the persona of the poem again gains a fleeting sense of cosmos through a love experience. Here, however, unlike in the other love poems, the symbol of cosmos, the stream of the true self, is emphasized. Thus in this poem the symbol of cosmos is related directly to the inner man in his human state. Another transitional poem, "The Neckan" (1853), picks up the symbolism introduced in "The Forsaken Merman." Here the sea creature, which is symbolic of a sense of cosmos, attempts to survive in the human realm as a detached poet and singer; therefore, he is a representation of the orientation of aesthetic consciousness. Through this symbolism, Arnold seems to be implying, one may cultivate a sense of unity with nature while remaining in the possession of all his human faculties and functioning in the world of men.

Another major transitional poem, "Tristram and Iseult" (1852), includes the entire gamut of orientations toward experience which Arnold considers and symbolic renderings of their results. Tristram, who had experienced a sense of cosmos in his youth and who had again experienced a fleeting sense of cosmos, during his love experience, is brought to premature death by his longings. One level of interpretation of his fate, oblivion in elemental nature, is echoed in Iseult of Brittany's rendering of the Merlin myth. But just as the narrator, through art, transforms the ill-fated lovers, Tristram and Iseult of Ireland, into the

immortal beauty of sculpture, so Iseult of Brittany, who represents the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, transforms the Merlin story into the immortal beauty of poetic mythical art. In both cases, the resultant art object becomes, for the narrator and reader, a symbol of man's potential sense of cosmos. Another transitional poem, "Sohrab and Rustum" (1853), makes use of both the glade symbolism and the water symbolism, which Arnold uses elsewhere to imply a sense of cosmos. The portrayal of Sohrab's early youth in the glade is directly related to the orientation of aesthetic consciousness which he represents. The Oxus, which flows out to sea, represents the buried self of which, it is implied, Rustum gains a renewed awareness by regaining his ability to feel and his sense of inner balance. It is also implied that Sohrab merges with the sea in death and is, thus, united with nature on the elemental level. The symbolism in this group of poems implies that Arnold is moving toward a feeling for a cosmic force manifesting itself in man when he achieves the aesthetically balanced perfection of all his faculties.

In a group of later poems the orientation of aesthetic consciousness is the only one developed. The Scholar Gipsy, symbolizes one who is experiencing a sense of cosmos through the orientation of aesthetic consciousness as does the poet narrator of the "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon" (1867). "Philomela" (1853) tells the story of the mythical nightingale which represents the transformation of tragic experience into

beautiful art, and in Arnold's later poetry there is the implication of nature as a force which is innate in the human make-up. Man may discover it when he has achieved the balance and perfection of all his faculties; and it allows him to produce a synthesis of experience which manifests itself in art. This ultimate development of Arnold's symbolism having implications concerning nature and man's relationship to it is harmonious with Arnold's naturalistic definition of God as the "stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfill the law of their being."<sup>1</sup> It is also harmonious with Arnold's idea of culture, which prescribes the implementation of the poetic ideal, the orientation of aesthetic consciousness, to lead man to a sense of self-perfection and, ultimate, to a sense of cosmos.

Although critics such as Joseph Warren Beach and Lionel Trilling have found Matthew Arnold's tendencies toward a definition of nature contradictory and confused, they have failed to study his symbolism systematically, as it relates to the development of his poetic theory. Therefore, they have failed to see the poet's consistent tendency toward an implicit definition of a unifying natural force. It has been demonstrated in the present study that during the course of Arnold's poetic development symbols of oblivion and cosmos in his poetry imply the poet's tendency toward a concept of cosmic nature. Although within the development of

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism (1870), in Works, Super, VI, 10.

the symbols there is an implicit shift in the relationship between man and the natural force and therefore an implicit redefinition of the concept of nature itself, throughout the poetry there is the consistent implication of a tendency toward a concept of nature, which is approachable through the senses, emotions, and imagination and which is, therefore, never far from the related Epicurean, romantic, and German Hellenic conceptions which influenced the poet.

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