
DEATH AS THE “REAL”: A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF MATTHEW ARNOLD’S “YOUTH AND CALM”

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ABSTRACT

Matthew Arnold was one of the poets who paid special attention to youth and the dynamics of youth culture in the Victorian era. Living in an era that stimulated modern times, Arnold produced writings that can be classified as historical records, although not factual, of society’s reactions to the fundamental social and cultural changes of the time. The literary arena was particularly affected, as the Victorian era marked the beginning for poets and artists alike to shed the romantic spirit that they had breathed into their works and adapt to the technological and industrial realities around them. This article explores Matthew Arnold’s poem entitled “Youth and Calm”. The poem explores a stream of consciousness that contemplates “the youth” and their dreams. This study aims to uncover the meaning of the poem based on its textual composition without correlating it with Arnold’s other works. Using theoretical phenomenology tools to dissect language phenomena and the Freud-Lacanian method in interpreting the theme, this study led to the revelation that the poem talks of “death” as a symbolically repressed object.

Keywords: *Death, phenomena, psychoanalysis, Victorian, youth*

ABSTRAK

Matthew Arnold merupakan salah satu penulis puisi yang menaruh atensi lebih pada pemuda dan juga dinamika kebudayaan muda-mudi pada era Victoria. Hidup di dalam yang era mendasari kultur modern, Arnold menghasilkan karya-karya yang dapat diklasifikasikan sebagai catatan historis, meskipun tidak faktual secara absolut, terkait reaksi masyarakat dalam menghadapi perubahan sosial dan kultural yang begitu mendasar di kala itu. Terlebih dalam arena literatur, kehadiran era Victorian merupakan awal penanda bagi penyair dan produser seni lainnya untuk mulai menanggalkan jiwa romantisme yang mereka hembuskan pada tiap karya dan beralih pada realita teknologi dan industri di sekitar mereka. Dalam artikel ini, puisi Matthew Arnold yang ditelaah secara mendalam berjudul “Youth and Calm”. Puisi tersebut mengeksplorasi arus pemikiran yang berisikan kontemplasi terhadap figur “pemuda” dan apa yang mereka impikan. Penulisan ini bertujuan untuk menggali makna puisi berdasarkan komposisi tekstualnya dan tanpa menghubungkannya dengan karya Arnold lainnya. Menggunakan paradigma fenomenologi untuk membedah struktur kebahasaan serta Freud-Lacanian dalam menginterpretasi tema menghasilkan sebuah makna bahwa “Death” atau kematian merupakan objek yang secara simbolis dipendam oleh subjek youth yang dibahas pada puisi ini.

Keywords: *Fenomena, kematian, pemuda, psikoanalisis, Victoria*

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian era is a significant period in that it not only served as a continuation to or the modernization of the classical age, but it also underlined the pessimism and gloominess of the modern and postmodern eras. These characteristics are visible in Victorian literary works (Gilmour, 2014). The general manifestation of Victorian era's cultural conditions can also be found in Matthew Arnold's body of work, such as his collection of essays *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). In this book, Arnoldian views toward society at that time mostly resonate with a sense of fear of the kinds of disruption that were taking place and might spill over into later times (Wheeler, 2014: 146). This matrix is embedded within Victorian poetic works. In this context, the writer aims to dissect Arnold's poem entitled "Youth and Calm" (1890: 22).

The works of Matthew Arnold are varied. Though extensive in terms of quantity, his works were generally derived from the same matrixes stimulated by his personal experience as a school inspector. These matrixes were presented in the form of critique towards a societal condition that he inhabited, a new societal structure of the Victorian era that promised a lot of technological and moral prolepses, becoming a critique to youth morals and culture at that time. His writings were delivered with varied intentions, such as for pedagogical purposes, humanizing civilization, and to incite further growth for societal moralities (Connell, 2002: 276-80). The latter is closely related to how Arnold linked an understanding of death to the subject's maturity in the poem in question. To him, poetry also served as a medium for producing tangible cultural texts which functioned more profoundly than philosophy or religion, which actually allowed him to incorporate the latter two into his poetic works and to provide texts that would not decay the way other values that preceded the Victorian era had (Mohamed, 2020) multi-scaled, long-term process allows for the analysis of (in. In other words, for Arnold, poetry was a form of effort to shape the course of history, and scholars should decipher various discourses to get a clear picture of different historical texts. Currently there has been little attention given to "Youth and Calm" through a specific theoretical lens, and the writer aims to add to the few that are available.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze how the poetic language system works within this

poem and how the poem's matrix revolves around the idea of death as something being contested, both desirable and undesirable at the same time. For the first part, the writer uses phenomenology as the basis for determining the significance of its language. As this philosophical school suggests, how language works within the literary arena exemplify a writer's psychological process in perceiving reality and the objects surrounding it (Zalipour, 2010). This method is significant in determining the meaning-making system inherently embedded within the text or even outside the text in the form of a highly influential external phenomenon. The poetic language structure within this poem will be dissected in terms of its use of figurative language and the imagery conveyed. The second part is an attempt at interpreting the theme based on its psychological projection, in which the writer combines Freudo-Lacanian paradigms in determining how the concepts of youth and death are represented and interrelated (Tyson, 2006: 21-30). These theoretical tools aim to uncover how Victorian youth, as reflected in this poem, psychologically viewed death as an unsatisfactory phenomenon, something that was partially desired and at the same time unwanted by the youth. Further, as described previously, the analysis section attempts to discover the notion of "fear" which underlies this fact and dominates the discussion of the poem.

For the psychological part of the poem, the writer aims to show the conception of the Lacanian "Real" within the text. As Žižek (2008 in Akmal, 2020: 114) explains, this concept

is an entity which, although it does not exist (in the sense of 'really existing', taking place in reality) has a series of properties — it exercises a certain structural causality, it can produce a series of effects in the symbolic reality of the subject.

Through such comprehension, it can be understood that the order of the "Real" in Lacanian psychoanalysis lies beyond the symbolic or even the extent of a language's capacity for vivid expressions. Language serves to allude to the existence of the "Real". It continuously manipulates the subject's desire to achieve this state (Hiasa, 2016). The order of the "Real" is a state of absolute perfection where one transcends into a complete wholeness with oneself

(Arum & Pujiharto, 2020). Specifically, the usage of metaphors and metonyms is important to define what is included and what is secluded in particular utterances. Metaphors and metonyms are signifiers that relate to other signifiers that are supposed to be enunciated by the speaker, but are instead repressed because the speaker intentionally avoid positioning himself/herself in the state of those signifiers due to certain psychological reasons (Lacan, 2010: 441). Through the interpretation of the literary devices used throughout the poem, how the "Real" is inferred can then be grasped.

This theoretical postulation intersects with another Lacanian idea, namely *objet petit a*. This term refers to the subject's senses continually searching for something that has been absent or unfulfilled throughout the subject's life (Knudsen, Rickly, & Vidon, 2016). It is a sense of loss that drives the construction of the dimension of the "Real". *Objet petit a* is an intangible object that is continuously being referred to through the articulation of language.

Further, the coinage of "death" is also considered a tool for interpreting the theme. The inevitable fate of death subconsciously drives humans to serve the life they are living. Their fear of death is due to how they perceive death; at least this is the essence of the Freudian *Thanatos*, or "death drive". As Tyson (Tyson, 2006: 23) points out:

If we complicate matters by realizing that our fear of death is not merely fear of biological death but translates for most of us into fear of loss in general — loss of my mate's attention, loss of my children's love, loss of my health, loss of my job, loss of my looks, loss of my money — then we can see how death, emotional death if not biological death, is so attractive, at least on the unconscious level.

The unconscious fear of this concept thus impacts how the human consciousness works, specifically in the youth and how Arnold perceives their connection within this poem, which will be dissected further based on the phenomena depicted in the text.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The poem's general theme

This section attempts to interpret the poem at

surface level. By means of the notion of heuristic reading, this section aims to break down the poem's message in a general way without getting into any deeper interpretation. The poem is built upon the Arnoldian view of the essence of youth in general. The characteristics and behaviors of youth are correlated mainly with the concept of death that is inevitable to any living being. Youth are constructed to be paradoxically wanting calmness in life. At the same time, as Arnold's perspective imposes in this poem, utmost calmness is destined to arrive at the end of one's existence in this realm. Youth challenge this notion of serenity that can be gained in the afterlife. They seek and work hard to realize this notion in their lifetime or earthly reality by trying to incorporate the traits death carries but not in an excessive fashion. Through initial interpretation, it can also be said that Arnold's emphasis on this modern cultural form is rooted back in the Victorian era, as his observation in this poem shows the readers.

This poem conveys its message through the stream of consciousness fashion. It builds a narrative in which the persona is contemplating the subject being discussed in the text. The poem starts with a declaration of the existence of death as if it has appeared right before persona. The persona then explains how death actually feels. Death is described as a peaceful moment that liberates everyone from any kind of disgrace and dread. As one arrives at death's door, there will be no more interference that can undo or disrupt its peacefulness. The persona then visualizes death through imagery of human body parts, at one point exclusively linking it with the visualization of a lucid eyebrow. Then, the persona shifts into a contemplative tone by asking about the essence of death or how death significantly affects one's life. Questions regarding how the calmness of death becomes the utmost purpose of life (*and youth*) and fully closes one's life to a satisfactory conclusion are raised.

The essence of youth is then discussed. The nature of youth is contradictory to that of ones who experience death. Youth have hearts that shine brightly and their actions are bold. The heart orientates the defying nature of existence; a nature that poses the question of what is it that the youth are actually pursuing at their age. The poem then concludes on a somewhat temporal note with an inferential remark on what the youth chase in their life. The persona

addresses that youth, as has been inferred earlier, first and foremost seek the experience that life entails rather than the peacefulness that death offers. For them, death is not a peak moment in one's life. Youth do seek peacefulness of various sorts, but they do not seek these in an equal or a greater capacity than death's offering. Life, then, is a paramount objective.

Reading the poem on the surface presents the poem's significance solely as an open discourse of two sets of oppositions between youth and people who embrace death, as well as life and death. The structure and psychological significance of the poem will be discussed further in the next section.

Language

The notion of language is an important gateway for a poem to be dissected further. In this section, parts of the poetic language that are examined deeper are the figures of speech and types of imagery.

Figures of speech

Metaphors

The poem utilizes metaphors to figuratively express the issue of "death" and "youth". These two things are uttered in various expressions and descriptions. First, the notion of death is associated with a "crown", delivered as an action verb derived from its physical concept and value, a symbol of reward for the completion of one's objective in life (*the crowning of life and youth* (line 6); *and when this boon rewards the dead* (line 7)). The state of dying in this poem is also made analogous to the physical act of someone taking a rest (*rest from fear*; line 2). This accentuates the poem's position in comparing death to the earthly action of someone intentionally resting, for they have fulfilled their paths in life. The emphasis on "crowning" also positions Arnold or the persona he employs to glorify the concept of death as a culmination.

On the opposing side, youth are portrayed through lively traits and progressing natures. For example, one of the symbolizations embedded in youth's identity is the construction of "wind" (*A wind of promise and repose*; line 12). Distinct to death pictured as a state where beings are rested in a static manner, youth have the nature of continuously moving like the wind. Through these metaphors, an opposition between death and youth is branched off to the opposition of static versus dynamic. The attitude

that is being presented in the poem has the persona leaning toward the former.

Metonymy

If the metaphors stimulate an oppositional formula, the metonyms share the same provision by employing body parts to encase meanings. The first visible metonym in this poem is the "brow", a signifier for the physicality of youth and for people who experience or are on the side of death. Youth is described as having an active brow. This interpretation is derived from the use of the word "hot" in line 11 (*Because on its hot brow there blows*). This description contrasts the way the poem describes the brow of people who experience or are already in the state of death. People who are included in this category are represented with the metonym of a clear and lucid brow (*The smoothness of that limpid brow*; line 4).

As for youth exclusively, there is an extensive use of metonyms in this poem. While the physical brow partly describes death, youth are described through other body parts. First, the youth are portrayed as having an undemanding heart (*And is the heart of youth so light*; line 9). This is followed by the descriptions of how their actions are definitive and their gazes are luminous (*Its step so firm, its eye so bright*; line 10). These metonyms are significant in the sense that they reflect a more lively state of youth compared to the ones used to emphasize death or, roughly interpreted, old age. The parts of the human body that serve to represent these two sides are shown to be unequal. It can be interpreted to be intentionally done so as youth have, in terms of usability, more active body parts in comparison with their older counterpart. The inequality shown by the metonyms reveals the ambivalence of the persona. Through the metaphors, it can be seen how he/she asserts his/her attitude toward which side of the death/youth polarity is more privileging. The explanation that he/she gives draws an inference in which he/she understands more about youth and their lively nature. The persona gives more concrete elaboration on youth and their attributes even though he/she places his/her alignment with death.

Further interpretation to be made is how Arnold uses human body parts as a parameter for one to be deemed as "alive". The more they lose control of their body parts, the more they become detached from reality and unconsciously associate this loss of

control with eternal calmness.

Paradox

Arnoldian poetry and his legacy are highly influenced by the characteristics of the epoch they inhabited and whence they originated. The Victorian era is highly associated with its paradoxical representations of various things (Connell, 2002: 60). As Arnold's belief in the essence of poetry represents, the work of poems should fundamentally put the core thematic elements into a parallel showcase in which one cannot obtain a joyful tone without the presence of gloominess (Smuts, 2007: 73). In this work, Arnold delivers a paradoxical nature of youth's desire through his exposition of the essence of death. As previously mentioned, for Arnold, death offers nothing more than eternal bliss for its action that liberates humans from any earthly indebtedness. Victorian youth, historically known for rebelling the *status quo* that offered no liberation (Boone, 2005; Davies, 1998, 2011), are portrayed vaguely by the allusion that they seek calmness but not the calmness that death fully offers (*It dreams a rest, if not more deep, / More grateful than this marble sleep.*; line 20-21). This statement presents further ambivalence on what the youth are seeking in life. Through these two lines, Arnold suggests that what youth seek are something utopian, or things that exist outside his comprehension of reality, a notion poked at through a few metonyms and metaphors. He is convinced that death is an inevitable state that one may encounter unexpectedly in life. However, his remarks on youth in lines 20 and 21 paradoxically confirm that he and the youth he observes exist in different spatial realities. As he describes people who gladly embrace death perceive death as the sole source of desirable calmness, he also states that there is something complicated to grasp in what the youth perceive as earthly serenity. He does not fully articulate what the youth truly want in their dreams of "a rest". When assessed only through the paradox perspective, the poem does not offer the satisfactory conclusion that one may seek in Arnold's ideological or psychological intention. This opens up the question of the kind closure he intends to achieve.

Personification

A personified statement can be found in this poem in its 12th line (*A wind of promise and repose*). The natural

entity of wind becomes personified and humanized by embedding it with the expressions of "promise" and "repose". These two characteristics stimulate how wind signifies a living subject at play, which Arnold uses to describe "youth".

Types of imagery

Visual

The first visual imagery employed in this poem occurs in the 4th line, which goes "*The smoothness of that limpid brow*". The use of this visual imagery significantly influences the conception of the subjects being discussed as analogous to human body parts. This line signifies the start of more visual imageries to come.

The second visual imagery occurs in line 10 (*... its eye so bright*). This specific imagery is used to visualize that the youth have vibrant vision during their time on the side of earthly reality. This association of enthusiastic youth with the nature of a bright sight is parallel to the modern notion of metaphorical interpretation of this state, as it is found that people universally perceive brightness as a common symbolism for positive affection (Meier, Robinson, Crawford, & Ahlvers, 2007).

The third imagery occurs right in the following line (*... because on its hot brow there it blows*). This line actually carries several types of imagery, but here the focus of the visual imagery is another depiction of "brow" that balances young people with people of old age. It is a further extension of the use of body parts in this poem.

The fourth visual imagery occurs in line 17 (*For daylight, for the cheerful sun*). This imagery corroborates the tone that has been built up by the imagery in the 10th line. It brings out another semantic comprehension of something bright that is now embedded in a natural atmosphere. It is as if both the youth and their surrounding natural landscape reciprocally emanate positive energy. The youth dream for this circumstance. They wish to be able to get their natural surroundings to encourage them to live life to its fullest.

The final visual imagery occurs in the last two lines of the poem. *'Tis all perhaps which man acquires. But 'tis not what our youth desires*. The imageries here consist of the image of "man" and "youth" as if these two are distinct entities. This division portrays

how death is wholly undesirable for youth, but they will acquire it at a point where they have achieved the so-called title of “man”. In other words, to fully comprehend the beauty of death, one must undergo the initiation phase.

Auditory

There is only one auditory imagery employed in this poem. It occurs in the 22nd line and then corroborated by the following line (*It **hears a voice** within it say: “Calm’s not life’s crown, though calm is well.”*; line 22-23). The use of this auditory imagery is significant as a part of the conclusive resolution of this poem. The voice referred to in this line has an unclear subject; it is unclear as to who utters the statement. The location of the utterer, being undefined or metaphysical, poses the question of liminality and verticality on the side of the youth. If the metaphysical argument is taken into account, it further connotes how the youth paradigm is constructed by an extraneous entity that penetrates the dimension of the “Real”.

Thermal

The thermal imagery used in this poem occurs in the 11th line (*Because on its hot brow, there blows*). The use of the adjective “hot” signifies how youth are internally motivated to pursue their goals. The term “hot” can also be perceived as the persona’s assumption in his/her observation of how the youth tend to behave in more negative and emotional ways. If the latter interpretation is legitimized, then the use of this thermal imagery can be deduced to an application of euphemism employed by Arnold to subtly criticize youth.

Tactile

The tactile imagery can be found in the 4th line (*The **smoothness** of that limpid brow*). The noun “smoothness” is used to describe the physicality of people who seek or are already in the state of death. This line can be put in contrast with the 11th line that also discusses “brow”. Whilst youth is reflected through a thermal imagery that signifies a burst of energy, those who are included in this category are defined as possessing a rather contradictive nature: as they are more assured, they can be fully understood by physically touching them.

Kinesthetic

The first kinesthetic imagery in this poem can be found in the 10th line (*Its step so firm, its eye so bright*). The verb “step” signifies a sense of movement and thus can be correlated to a larger scope of “action”. This use is in line with the concept of metonymy, namely the representation of a larger thing at play.

The second kinesthetic imagery is in the 12th line (*A wind of promise and repose*). There is no active verb in this line that replicates an action. However, the mentioning of “wind” leads readers to directly and psychologically visualize the nature of wind which signifies a moving entity.

Contestation of Death and Youth

In interpreting the psychological nature that underlies this poem, we may focus on how the youth perceive death, as has been explained in the second section. Matthew Arnold has asserted his views on youth that they not only oppose the tangible aspects offered by certain epochs, but they also oppose the natural conception of one’s penultimate journey. The last two lines of this poem, “*Tis all perhaps which man acquires, But ‘tis not what our youth desires*”, are conclusively uncertain. Arnold does not state what specifically youth aim to gain in this world. They do not seek an everlasting serenity that death, naturally and definitely, provides for them in their existence. They do not orient themselves toward a certain conception of beliefs that campaign the idea of a satisfactory outcome of death as delineated by Arnold in this poem. However, Arnold’s suggestions about youth in this poem stimulates a scratch of the youth’s psychological condition, specifically the way they respond to death. The unresolved two last lines in this poem represent the youth’s uncertainty in how they describe death in verbal composition, as Arnold also tries to construct in this poem. In a Lacanian perspective, a state in which one is inadequate in expressing clearly or symbolically how they feel about a certain thing puts the object being discussed as a “Real” object that metaphysically distinguishes itself from other concrete matters (Cauwe, Vanheule, & Desmet, 2017; Eyers, 2011; Newman, 2004). Death becomes a thing that is contested by people both old and young. The old people, as described here, figuratively express that death softens their physical embodiments. They are also positioned at a level of

maturity due to their embrace of death. It is defined so based on the glorifying metaphors used to define them and the metonyms, though unequal, that stimulate a sense of immaculacy. It differs from the youth in that a lot of active literary counterparts are presented as a sign for their embrace of life within this realm. They psychologically put the focus on earthly things and imprison the idea of death, which many people of old age would view as liberating as they are aware of how the youth are complacent with what reality is offering. A further relation between this psychological state and the spatio-social condition they inhabit needs to be explored with regards to how their historical epoch treated them.

The poem can also be described from Arnold's point of view in terms of uncertainty and fear. Similar to Arnold's other works regarding youth that derive mainly from his empirical experience (Gottfried, 2016: 219), "Youth and Calm" can be placed within the same discourse as the rest. His vagueness and the way he somewhat only hints at nature in describing youth without giving a precise answer leads him to be skeptical in explaining what the youth essentially and descriptively hope. Granted, the use of poetic language can hinder direct revelations. However, the idea that the poet tries to excavate can be interpreted using psychological axioms. Through a Lacanian perspective, the concept of "youth" becomes something that is "Real" for Arnold in this poem. He phenomenologically roams into this matter subconsciously without delving into the core of it. He leaves the final line to be mysterious and unanswered. He continuously pokes at the idea of youth, and in the end he only gives a drop of the ocean for the readers. Both he and the readers whirl around the liminal space that Arnold himself creates within this poem. Although all of this may be subsequently a result of his displeasure on youth (Bush, 1971: 50), the options of an answer can also be expanded through the Lacanian perspective.

If the state of death becomes a realm that language cannot capture vividly or cannot serve full justice in explaining, then the notion of death as an object becomes something desirable for Arnold and the youth he explains. The notion of something highly desirable but unattainable for the subjects that pursue it conforms to the Lacanian corpus of *objet petit a*. The youth subconsciously seek to absorb parts of death's traits as suggested by the poem whilst at the same time rejecting the desire of fully attaining it. They

seek calm as the title of the poem makes clear, and the discussion reveals it as being another word for "death." The same goes with Arnold's manner in hinting at this fact without giving full disclosure to it. The poem stops at a point which highlights a difference in perception and emphasizes that what the youth are seeking is a concrete earthly life. More explanation lies beyond the symbolic, hinted at through the articulation of various imageries and the uncertainty of the last line.

Age as a Variable of Death Drive

Freud conceptualizes the idea of "death drive" as a neurological phenomenon that paradoxically drives people to live in ways that allow them a satisfactory death (Black, 2001). Everything that people do in life is stimulated by their senses on the inevitable outcome that is death. Lacan continues this concept and enriches it by adding that this motivation is applied to material actions (Ragland, 2013: 88). It makes one become more dependent on earthly offerings and value them as an illusionary main drive. So much of this postulation is poetically realized in this poem. As has been mentioned several times, youth and "others" are differentiated based on their orientation. What this poem adds to the equation is the construction of age that it represents. However, this also brings out further urgency to be examined. The representations of age difference are not clearly articulated, raising the question of whether the construction of this matter is cultural or natural, and whether the signifier "man" can be appreciated in a modern context.

CONCLUSION

This poem can be defined as Arnold's efforts to raise an initial question on the nature of youth and to postulate a comprehension of death in an appeasing manner. The poem subconsciously puts youth in a state of the "Real" and advocates the notion of death's serenity. Through the analysis of the figures of speech and types of imageries, it has been discovered that Arnold gives more attention to the particularities of youth. He roams around to describe the physicality of youth and only alludes to what youth really want. The lack of his explanation of the latter results in his inability to articulate the idea. His desire to comprehend youth through his ideological comprehension is his *objet petit a* in this poem. It is something unattainable to him.

The youth are implied as ambivalent as their natures oppose the conception of death but at the same time subconsciously embrace partial qualities of it. They want to earn the calmness, not equal to or more than the capacity of death, and they also want to relish the materiality that earthly reality offers. While the Freudian *Thanatos* describes how a human's death drive leads to acts of self-harm, the Lacanian view puts forward the notion that this drive also leads to acts for the attainment of material pleasure or *jouissance*. The tangible materiality is what the youth are pursuing in their life. They reject the notion of death and only recognize calmness through their comprehension of the symbolic. Arnold's incomprehension towards youth is represented in his projection of youth as being the ones who lack such mature understanding of death as the one he possesses. The idea of death is being contested here.

The revelation brought about by this poem may bear resonance to the modern discourses of youth. Nowadays, many young people are generatively classified into the area of subcultures for their nature to culturally oppose what the dominant sides are offering (Longhurst, Smith, Bagnall, Crawford, & Ogborn, 2008: 242). This fact intersects with the present-day commoditization of advanced technological operations, which arranges for the youth demographics to continuously consume artificial or earthly objects (Sugihartati, 2020), unlike in Arnold's era. The "calmness" which Arnold questions in this poem may be answered by this modern dynamic, though unsatisfying as it sounds from the pedagogic and pious point of view that is the Arnoldian perspective. Again, this contemporary fact may not carry substantial weight in the overall interpretation of the text. However, by juxtaposing it to the current condition, the interpretation may lie further in the concept of how the youth are somewhat inherently and historically inclined to the nature of opposing things that oppress them. This leads to the fact and corroboration of how death, a natural and inevitable moment for all human beings, becomes the thing that they prominently fear and yet they selectively absorb. The Victorian age, as Arnold implicitly describes in this poem, saw the youth as frontrunners in efforts to counter this fate. Later in history, these counteractive traits would still be present, although the oppositional spirits would mostly be placed within and/or projected into cultural, societal, and governmental spheres.

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