

**Prompt:** Arnold and Hopkins do some similar and different things with nature in their poems. What differences/similarities do you see? Also, how does their use of nature compare with that of any of the Romantic poets?

### **Different Uses of Nature**

I found that both poets took unique approaches when incorporating nature into their works, but Gerard Manley Hopkins's use of nature is wholly unique when compared to our previous readings. Our text explains that he is using two techniques which he called *inscape*—which is “always searching to grasp the essential particularity of a thing, its inner landscape” (1701)—and *instress*, which “makes the inscape cohere but also projects it outward toward the observer” (1702). It is as if, in their descriptions, Hopkins's objects of nature momentarily become the subject. This is much different than the poetry we have read before this in that objects are not so completely individualized; instead they complement one another in setting a scene or painting a picture.

Matthew Arnold's method of using nature in his poems is a bit more conventional, but there is an important difference in how and when he brings it up: nature seems to be the agent by which the magnitude of loss or absence is communicated. This is much different than the restorative version of nature of Wordsworth in “Tintern Abbey” and the impartial force that is communicated by Shelley in “Mont Blanc”. From Arnold's “Dover Beach”, when he is discussing the sea he refers to “its melancholy, long withdrawing roar” and “of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear” (1562). Likewise, in “To Marguerite—Continued” he describes the beauty of a remote island of the sea and uses it as a metaphor for the severe distances that exist in a relationship: “Oh! Then a longing like despair / Is to their farthest caverns sent; For surely once, they feel, we were / Parts of a single continent!” (1561). Arnold takes the inherent grandness of nature and applies it to somber and mournful ideas.

### **Re: Week 10 discussion (by Jeremiah Johnson)**

*On the other hand I think Arnold wishes he believed that he was created in God's image but his experience with life and science lead him to believe that God and religion (with regards to nature) isn't what he once believed and that makes him sad and questioning. His poems tend to read as though if he is questioning his view on religion that he must also question his true desire and love towards nature which of course is supposed to be a creation of God.*

Interesting points. I will add that the pieces we read from Charles Darwin and David Friedrich Strauss brought up questions on Christianity, but I did not get the impression that Matthew Arnold belonged to this camp of sentiments or ideas (as best as I can judge from our assigned readings).

I would like to comment that when Wordsworth and Shelley invoked nature, its power and magnitude were pronounced, though in very distinct ways. Wordsworth's nature was healing and restoring while Shelley's was fierce and impartial. For Arnold, I feel his version of it has landed somewhere in between these other two poets: nature is no longer the familiar force which restores man—instead it is a distant and increasingly disconnected part of people's lives which he uses as a means to express a failing connection with God.

Something that struck me while reading Arnold's poems is that he might be cynically hinting that many of our previous notions of nature were merely “romantic” and never really accurate at all. This is the closest detail I was able to find related to what you mentioned about how “he is questioning his view on religion.”

**Re: Week 10**

*Arnold seems to have doubts about his faith*

I don't know if he was being so personal in these particular poems. The doubting or questioning of faith was possibly a commentary on the things that were occurring at the time as he saw them. His introduction pages in our textbook brought up how strongly he felt about society and the ways it was changing. My impression is that he was expressing these particular ideas on faith as his personal observations made of English society in the Victorian Age.