The study of poetry is a vital practice for a democratic age. Matthew Arnold, a 19th-century English poet, essayist, and cultural critic, emphasized the importance of literary criticism in shaping society. In his seminal work, "The Study of Poetry," Arnold argued that poetry should not be isolated from the context of its time but should be understood within the broader framework of social and political issues. He believed that poetry was a means of critiquing the moral and intellectual climate of a society, particularly in the face of the industrial and social transformations of his era.

Arnold's critical legacy is evident in the works of later thinkers and critics, who continued to explore the relationship between poetry and democracy. Mary W. Schneider, in her book "Poetry in the Age of Democracy: The Literary Criticism of Matthew Arnold," examines Arnold's thought and its relevance to contemporary debates on the role of poetry in a democratic age. Schneider's careful study of Arnold's ideas provides a comprehensive overview of his contributions to literary criticism and their continuing importance for understanding the role of poetry in society.

Arnold was influenced by the work of other contemporary thinkers, including Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche, whose ideas on the role of art and culture in shaping society resonated with Arnold's own social and political concerns. Arnold's critique of the "anarchist" tendencies of his own age anticipated the more radical political and social movements of the 20th century, including socialism and feminism.

In conclusion, Matthew Arnold's legacy of literary criticism continues to inform our understanding of the role of poetry in a democratic age. His emphasis on the importance of a healthy cultural life and his commitment to the cultivation of moral and intellectual values remain as relevant today as they were in his own time. Through his writings, Arnold reminds us of the power of poetry to shape and critique society, and the importance of maintaining a rich and vital poetic tradition in a democratic age.