

The Anglo-Saxon Or Old-English Period (670-1100)

The earliest phase of English literature started with Anglo-Saxon literature of the Angles and Saxons (the ancestors of the English race) much before they occupied Britain. English was the common name and tongue of these tribes. Before they occupied Britain they lived along the coasts of Sweden and Denmark, and the land which they occupied was called Engle-land. These tribes were fearless, adventurous and brave, and during the later years of Roman occupation of Britain, they kept the British coast in terror. Like other nations they sang at their feasts about battles, gods and their ancestral heroes, and some of their chiefs were also bards. It was in these songs of religion, wars and agriculture, that English poetry began in the ancient Engle-land while Britain was still a Roman province.

Though much of this Anglo-Saxon poetry is lost, there are still some fragments left. For example, *Widsith* describes continental courts visited in imagination by a far-wandering poet; *Waldhere* tells how Walter of Aquitaine withstood a host of foes in the passes of the Vosges; the splendid fragment called *The Fight at Finnesburg* deals with the same favourite theme of battle against fearful odds; and *Complaint of Deor* describes the disappointment of a lover. The most important poem of this period is Beowulf. It is a tale of adventures of Beowulf, the hero, who is an champion an slayer of monsters; the incidents in it are such as may be found in hundreds of other stories, but what makes it really interesting and different from later romances, is that is full of all sorts of references and allusions to great events, to the fortunes of kings and nations. There is thus an historical background.

After the Anglo-Saxons embraced Christianity, the poets took up religious themes as the subject-matter of their poetry. In fact, a major portion of Anglo-Saxon poetry is religious. The two important religious poets of the Anglo-Saxon period were Caedmon and Cynewulf. Caedmon sang in series the whole story of the fate of man, from the Creation and the Fall to the Redemption and the Last Judgment, and within this large framework, the Scripture history. Cynewulf's most important poem is the *Crist*, a metrical narrative of leading events of Christ's ministry upon earth, including his return to judgment, which is treated with much grandeur. Anglo-Saxon poetry is markedly different from the poetry of the next period—Middle English or Anglo-Norman period—for it deals with the traditions of an older world, and expresses another temperament and way of living; it breathes the influence of the wind and storm. It is the poetry of a stern and passionate people, concerned with the primal things of life, moody, melancholy and fierce, yet with great capacity for endurance and fidelity.

The Anglo-Saxon period was also marked by the beginning of English prose. Through the *Chronicles*, which probably began in King Alfred's time, and through Alfred's translations from the Latin a common available prose was established, which had all sorts of possibilities in it. In fact, unlike poetry, there was no break in prose of Anglo-Saxon period and the Middle English period, and even the later prose in England was continuation of Anglo-Saxon prose. The tendency of the Anglo-Saxon prose is towards observance of the rules of ordinary speech, that is why, though one has to make a considerable effort in order to read verse of the Anglo-Saxons, it is comparatively easy to understand their prose. The great success of Anglo-Saxon prose is in religious instructions, and the two great pioneers of English prose were Alfred the Great, the glorious king of Wessex, who translated a number of Latin *Chronicles* in English, and Aelfric, a priest, who wrote sermons in a sort of poetic prose.

The Angles and Saxons first landed in England in the middle of the fifth century, and by 670 A.D. they had occupied almost the whole of the country. Unlike the Romans who came as conquerors, these tribes settled in England and made her their permanent home. They became,

therefore, the ancestors of the English race. The Anglo-Saxon kings, of whom Alfred the Great was the most prominent, ruled till 1066, when Harold, the last of Saxon kings, was defeated at the Battle of Hastings by William the Conqueror of Normandy, France. The Anglo-Saxon or Old English Period in English literature, therefore, extends roughly from 670 A.D. to 1100 A.D. As it has been made clear in the First Part of this book that the literature of any country in any period is the reflection of the life lived by the people of that country in that particular period, we find that this applies to the literature of this period. The Angles and Saxons combined in themselves opposing traits of character—savagery and sentiment, rough living and deep feeling, splendid courage and deep melancholy resulting from thinking about the unanswered problem of death. Thus they lived a rich external as well as internal life, and it is especially the latter which is the basis of their rich literature. To these brave and fearless fighters, love of untarnished glory, and happy domestic life and virtues, made great appeal. They followed in their life five great principles—love of personal freedom, responsiveness to nature, religion, love for womanhood, and struggle for glory. All these principles are reflected in their literature. They were full of emotions and aspirations, and loved music and songs. Thus we read in *Beowulf*:

Music and song where the heroes sat—

The glee—wood rang, a song uprose

When Hrothgar's scop gave the hall good cheer.

The Anglo Saxon language is only a branch of the great Aryan or Indo-European family of languages. It has the same root words for father and mother, for God and man, for the common needs and the common relations of life, as we find in Sanskrit, Iranian, Greek and Latin. And it is this old vigorous Anglo-Saxon language which forms the basis of modern English.

Middle-English Or Anglo-Norman Period (1100-1500)

The Normans, who were residing in Normandy (France) defeated the Anglo-Saxon King at the Battle of Hastings (1066) and conquered England.

The Norman Conquest inaugurated a distinctly new epoch in the literary as well as political history of England. The Anglo-Saxon authors were then as suddenly and permanently displaced as the Anglo-Saxon king.

The literature afterwards read and written by Englishmen was thereby as completely transformed as the sentiments and tastes of English rulers. The foreign types of literature introduced after the Norman Conquest first found favour with the monarchs and courtiers, and were deliberately fostered by them, to the disregard of native forms. No effective protest was possible by the Anglo-Saxons, and English thought for centuries to come was largely fashioned in the manner of the French. Throughout the whole period, which we call the Middle English period (as belonging to the Middle Ages or Medieval times in the History of Britain) or the Anglo-Norman period, in forms of artistic expression as well as of religious service, the English openly acknowledged a Latin control.

It is true that before the Norman Conquest the Anglo-Saxons had a body of native literature distinctly superior to any European vernacular. But one cannot deny that the Normans came to their land when they greatly needed an external stimulus. The Conquest effected a wholesome awakening of national life. The people were suddenly inspired by a new vision of a greater future. They became united in a common hope. In course of time the Anglo-Saxons lost their initial hostility to the new comers, and all became part and parcel of one nation. The Normans not only brought with them soldiers and artisans and traders, they also imported scholars to revive knowledge, chroniclers to record memorable events, minstrels to celebrate victories, or

sing of adventure and love.

The great difference between the two periods—Anglo-Saxon period and Anglo-Norman period, is marked by the disappearance of the old English poetry. There is nothing during the Anglo-Norman period like *Beowulf* or *Fall of the Angels*. The later religious poetry has little in it to recall the finished art of Cynewulf. Anglo-Saxon poetry, whether derived from heathendom or from the Church, has ideas and manners of its own; it comes to perfection, and then it dies away. It seems that Anglo-Saxon poetry grows to rich maturity, and then disappears, as with the new forms of language and under new influences, the poetical education started again, and so the poetry of the Anglo-Norman period has nothing in common the Anglo-Saxon poetry.

The most obvious change in literary expression appears in the vehicle employed. For centuries Latin had been more or less spoken or written by the clergy in England. The Conquest which led to the reinvigoration of the monasteries and the tightening of the ties with Rome, determined its more extensive use. Still more important, as a result of foreign sentiment in court and castle, it caused writings in the English vernacular to be disregarded, and established French as the natural speech of the cultivated and the high-born. The clergy insisted on the use of Latin, the nobility on the use of French; no one of influence saw the utility of English as a means of perpetuating thought, and for nearly three centuries very few works appeared in the native tongue.

In spite of the English language having been thrown into the background, some works were composed in it, though they echoed in the main the sentiments and tastes of the French writers, as French then was the supreme arbiter of European literary style. Another striking characteristic of medieval literature is its general anonymity. Of the many who wrote the names of but few are recorded, and of the history of these few we have only the most meagre details. It was because originality was deplored as a fault, and independence of treatment was a heinous offence in their eyes.

(a) The Romances

The most popular form of literature during the Middle English period was the romances. No literary productions of the Middle Ages are so characteristic, none so perennially attractive as those that treat romantically of heroes and heroines of by-gone days. These romances are notable for their stories rather than their poetry, and they, like the drama afterwards, furnished the chief mental recreation of time for the great body of the people. These romances were mostly borrowed from Latin and French sources. They deal with the stories of King Arthur, The War of Troy, the mythical doings of Charlemagne and of Alexander the Great.

(b) The Miracle and Morality Plays

In the Middle English period Miracle plays became very popular. From the growth and development of the Bible story, scene by scene, carried to its logical conclusion, this drama—developed to an enormous cycle of sacred history, beginning with the creation of man, his fall and banishment from the Garden of Eden and extending through the more important matters of the Old Testament and life of Christ in the New to the summoning of the quick and the dead on the day of final judgment. This kind of drama is called the *miracle play*—sometimes less correctly the *mystery play*—and it flourished throughout England from the reign of Henry II to that of Elizabeth (1154-1603).

Another form of drama which flourished during the Middle Ages was the Morality plays. In these plays the uniform theme is the struggle between the powers of good and evil for the mastery of the soul of man. The personages were abstract virtues, or vices, each acting and speaking in accordance with his name; and the plot was built upon their contrasts and influences on human nature, with the intent to teach right living and uphold religion. In a word, allegory is the distinguishing mark of the moral plays. In these moral plays the protagonist is always an abstraction; he is Mankind, the Human Race, the Pride of Life, and there is an attempt to compass the whole scope of man's experience and temptations in life, as there had been a corresponding effort in the Miracle plays to embrace the complete range of sacred history, the

life of Christ, and the redemption of the world.

(c) William Langland (1332 ?...?)

One of the greatest poets of the Middle Ages was William Langland, and his poem, *A Vision of Piers the Plowman* holds an important place in English literature. In spite of its archaic style, it is a classic work in English literature. This poem, which is a satire on the corrupt religious practices, throws light on the ethical problems of the day. The character assumed by Langland is that of the prophet, denouncing the sins of society and encouraging men to aspire to a higher life. He represents the dissatisfaction of the lower and the more thinking classes of English society, as Chaucer represents the content of the aristocracy and the prosperous middle class. Although Langland is essentially a satiric poet, he has decided views on political and social questions. The feudal system is his ideal; he desires no change in the institution of his days, and he thinks that all would be well if the different orders of society would do their duty. Like Dante and Bunyan, he ennobles his satire by arraying it in a garb of allegory; and he is intensely real.

(d) John Gower (1325?—1408)

Gower occupies an important place in the development of English poetry. Though it was Chaucer who played the most important role in this direction, Gower's contribution cannot be ignored. Gower represents the English culmination of that courtly medieval poetry which had its rise in France two or three hundred years before. He is a great stylist, and he proved that English might compete with the other languages which had most distinguished themselves in poetry. Gower is mainly a narrative poet and his most important work is *Confession Amantis*, which is in the form of conversation between the poet and a divine interpreter. It is an encyclopaedia of the art of love, and satirises the vanities of the current time. Throughout the collection of stories which forms the major portion of *Confession Amantis*, Gower presents himself as a moralist. Though Gower was inferior to Chaucer, it is sufficient that they were certainly fellow pioneers, fellow schoolmasters, in the task of bringing England to literature. Up to their time, the literary production of England had been exceedingly rudimentary and limited. Gower, like Chaucer, performed the function of establishing the form of English as a thoroughly equipped medium of literature.

(e) Chaucer (1340?...1400)

It was, in fact, Chaucer who was the real founder of English poetry, and he is rightly called the 'Father of English Poetry'. Unlike the poetry of his predecessors and contemporaries, which is read by few except professed scholars, Chaucer's poetry has been read and enjoyed continuously from his own day to this, and the greatest of his successors, from Spenser and Milton to Tennyson and William Morris, have joined in praising it. Chaucer, in fact, made a fresh beginning in English literature. He disregarded altogether the old English tradition. His education as a poet was two-fold. Part of it came from French and Italian literatures, but part of it came from life. He was not a mere bookman, nor was he in the least a visionary. Like Shakespeare and Milton, he was, on the contrary, a man of the world and of affairs.

The most famous and characteristic work of Chaucer is the *Canterbury Tales*, which is a collection of stories related by the pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. These pilgrims represent different sections of contemporary English society, and in the description of the most prominent of these people in the *Prologue* Chaucer's powers are shown at their very highest. All these characters are individualized, yet their thoroughly typical quality gives unique value to Chaucer's picture of men and manners in the England of his time. The *Canterbury Tales* is a landmark in the history of English poetry because here Chaucer enriched the English language and metre to such an extent, that now it could be conveniently used for any purpose. Moreover, by introducing a variety of highly-finished characters into a single action, and engaging them in an animated dialogue, Chaucer fulfilled every requirement of

the dramatist, short of bringing his plays on the stage. Also, by drawing finished and various portraits in verse, he showed the way to the novelists to portray characters.

Chaucer's works fall into three periods. During the first period he imitated French models, particularly the famous and very long poem *Le Roman de la Rose* of which he made a translation—*Romaunt of the Rose*. This poem which gives an intimate introduction to the medieval French romances and allegories of courtly love, is the embryo out of which all Chaucer's poetry grows. During this period he also wrote the *Book of the Duchess*, an elegy, which in its form and nature is like the *Romaunt of the Rose*; *Complaint unto Pity*, a shorter poem and ABC, a series of stanzas religious in tone, in which each opens with a letter of the alphabet in order.

The poems of the second period (1373-84) show the influence of Italian literature, especially of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Boccaccio's poems. In this period he wrote *The Parliament of Fowls*, which contains very dramatic and satiric dialogues between the assembled birds; *Troilus and Criseyde*, which narrates the story of the Trojan prince Troilus and his love for a damsel, Creseida; *The Story of Griselda*, in which is given a pitiful picture of womanhood; and *The House of Fame*, which is a masterpiece of comic fantasy, with a graver undertone of contemplation of human folly.

Chaucer's third period (1384-90) may be called the English period, because in it he threw off foreign influences and showed native originality. In the *Legend of Good Woman* he employed for the first time the heroic couplet. It was during this period that he wrote *The Canterbury Tales*, his greatest poetic achievement, which places us in the heart of London. Here we find his gentle, kindly humour, which is Chaucer's greatest quality, at its very best.

Chaucer's importance in the development of English literature is very great because he removed poetry from the region of Metaphysics and Theology, and made it hold as "twere the mirror up to nature". He thus brought back the old classical principle of the direct imitation of nature.

(f) Chaucer's Successors

After Chaucer there was a decline in English poetry for about one hundred years. The years from 1400 to the Renaissance were a period bereft of literature. There were only a few minor poets, the imitators and successors of Chaucer, who are called the English and Scottish Chaucerians who wrote during this period. The main cause of the decline of literature during this period was that no writer of genius was born during those long years. Chaucer's successors were Occieeve, Lydgate, Hawes, Skelton Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas. They all did little but copy him, and they represent an era of mediocrity in English literature that continues up to the time of the Renaissance.

The Renaissance Period (1500-1600)

The *Renaissance Period* in English literature is also called the *Elizabethan Period* or the *Age of Shakespeare*. The middle Ages in Europe were followed by the Renaissance. Renaissance means the Revival of Learning, and it denotes in its broadest sense the gradual enlightenment of the human mind after the darkness of the Middle Ages.

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453 A.D. by the invasion of the Turks, the Greek scholars who were residing there, spread all over Europe, and brought with them invaluable Greek manuscripts. The discovery of these classical models resulted in the Revival of Learning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The essence of this movement was that "man discovered himself and the universe", and that "man, so long blinded had suddenly opened his eyes and seen". The flood of Greek literature which the new art of printing carried swiftly to every school in Europe revealed a new world of poetry and philosophy. Along with the Revival of Learning, new discoveries took place in several other fields. Vasco da Gama circumnavigated the earth; Columbus discovered America; Copernicus discovered the Solar System and prepared the way

for Galileo. Books were printed, and philosophy, science, and art were systematised. The Middle Ages were past, and the old world had become new. Scholars flocked to the universities, as adventurers to the new world of America, and there the old authority received a death blow. Truth only was authority; to search for truth everywhere, as men sought for new lands and gold and the Fountain of Youth—that was the new spirit, which awoke in Europe with the Revival of Learning.

The chief characteristic of the Renaissance was its emphasis on Humanism, which means man's concern with himself as an object of contemplation. This movement was started in Italy by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, and from there it spread to other countries of Europe. In England it became popular during the Elizabethan period. This movement which focused its interest on 'the proper study of mankind' had a number of subordinate trends. The first in importance was the rediscovery of classical antiquity, and particularly of ancient Greece. During the medieval period, the tradition-bound Europe had forgotten the liberal tone of old Greek world and its spirit of democracy and human dignity. With the revival of interest in Greek Classical Antiquity, the new spirit of Humanism made its impact on the Western world. The first Englishman who wrote under the influence of Greek studies was Sir Thomas More. His *Utopia*, written in Latin, was suggested by Plato's *Republic*. Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie* accepted and advocated the critical rules of the ancient Greeks. The second important aspect of Humanism was the discovery of the external universe, and its significance for man. But more important than this was that the writers directed their gaze inward, and became deeply interested in the problems of human personality. In the medieval morality plays, the characters are mostly personifications: Friendship, Charity, Sloth, Wickedness and the like. But now during the Elizabethan period, under the influence of Humanism, the emphasis was laid on the qualities which distinguish one human being from another, and give an individuality and uniqueness. Moreover, the revealing of the writer's own mind became full of interest. This tendency led to the rise of a new literary form—the Essay, which was used successfully by Bacon. In drama Marlowe probed down into the deep recesses of the human passion. His heroes, Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus and Barabas, the Jew of Malta, are possessed of uncontrolled ambitions. Shakespeare, a more consummate artist, carried Humanism to perfection. His genius, fed by the spirit of the Renaissance, enabled him to see life whole, and to present it in all its aspects.

It was this new interest in human personality, the passion for life, which was responsible for the exquisite lyrical poetry of the Elizabethan Age, dealing with the problems of death, decay, transitoriness of life etc.

Another aspect of Humanism was the enhanced sensitiveness to formal beauty, and the cultivation of the aesthetic sense. It showed itself in a new ideal of social conduct, that of the courtier. An Italian diplomat and man of letters, Castiglione, wrote a treatise entitled *Il Cortigiano* (The Courtier) where he sketched the pattern of gentlemanly behaviour and manners upon which the conduct of such men as Sir Phillip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh was modelled. This cult of elegance in prose writing produced the ornate style called *Euphuism* by Lyly. Though it suffered from exaggeration and pedantry, yet it introduced order and balance in English prose, and gave it pithiness and harmony.

Another aspect of Humanism was that men came to be regarded as responsible for their own actions, as Casius says to Brutus in *Julius Caesar*:

The Fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,

But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

Instead of looking up to some higher authority, as was done in The Middle Ages, during the Renaissance Period guidance was to be found from within. Lyly wrote his romance of *Euphues* not merely as an exercise in a new kind of prose, but with the serious purpose of inculcating righteousness of living, based on self-control. Sidney wrote his *Arcadia* in the form of fiction in

order to expound an ideal of moral excellence. Spenser wrote his *Faerie Queene*, with a view “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle disposition”. Though we do not look for direct moral teaching in Shakespeare, nevertheless, we find underlying his work the same profoundly moral attitude.

(a) Elizabethan Drama

During the Renaissance Period or the Elizabethan Period, as it is popularly called, the most memorable achievement in literature was in the field of drama. One of the results of the humanist teaching in the schools and universities had been a great development of the study of Latin drama and the growth of the practice of acting Latin plays by Terence, Plautus and Seneca, and also of contemporary works both in Latin and in English. These performances were the work of amateur actors, school boys or students of the Universities and the Inns of Court, and were often given in honour of the visits of royal persons or ambassadors. Their significance lies in the fact that they brought the educated classes into touch with a much more highly developed kind of drama, than the older English play. About the middle of the sixteenth century some academic writers made attempts to write original plays in English on the Latin model. The three important plays of this type are Nicholas Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister*, John Still’s *Grummar Gurton’s Needle*, and Thomas Sackville’s *Gorboduc or Ferrex and Porrex*—the first two are comedies and last one a tragedy. All these plays are monotonous and do not possess much literary merit. The second period of Elizabethan drama was dominated by the “University Wits”, a professional set of literary men. Of this little constellations, Marlowe was the central sun, and round him revolved as minor stars, Lyly, Greene, Peele, Lodge and Nash.

Lyly (1554-1606)

The author of *Euphues*, wrote a number of plays, the best known of them are *Compaspe* (1581), *Sapho* and *Phao* (1584), *Endymion* (1591), and *Midas* (1592). These plays are mythological and pastoral and are nearer to the Masque (court spectacles intended to satisfy the love of glitter and novelty) rather than to the narrative drama of Marlowe. They are written in prose intermingled with verse. Though the verse is simple and charming prose is marred by exaggeration, a characteristic of *Euphuism*.

George Peele (1558-97?)

Formed, along with Marlowe, Greene and Nash, one of that band of dissolute young men endeavouring to earn a livelihood by literary work. He was an actor as well as writer of plays. He wrote some half dozen plays, which are richer in beauty than any of his group except Marlowe. His earnest work is *The Arraignment of Paris*, (1584); his most famous is *David and Bathsheba* (1599). *The Arraignment of Paris*, which contains an elaborate eulogy of Queen Elizabeth, is really a court play of the Masque order. *David and Bathsheba* contains many beautiful lines. Like Marlowe, Peele was responsible for giving the blank verse musical quality, which later attained perfection in the deft hands of Shakespeare.

Thomas Kyd (1558-95)

Achieved great popularity with his first work, *The Spanish Tragedy*, which was translated in many European languages. He introduced the ‘blood and thunder’ element in drama, which proved one of the attractive features of the pre-Shakespearean drama. Though he is always violent and extravagant, yet he was responsible for breaking away from the lifeless monotony of *Gorboduc*.

Robert Greene (1560-1592)

He lived a most dissolute life, and died in distress and debt. His plays comprise *Orlando Furioso*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *Alphonsus King of Aragon* and *George a Greene*. His most effective play is *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, which deals partly with the tricks of the Friar, and partly with a simple love story between two men with one maid. Its variety of interest and comic, relief and to the entertainment of the audience. But the chief merit of the play lies in

the lively method of presenting the story. Greene also achieves distinction by the vigorous humanity of his characterisation.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

The dramatic work of Lodge and Nash is not of much importance. Of all the members of the group Marlowe is the greatest. In 1587 his first play *Tamburlaine* was produced and it took the public by storm on account of its impetuous force, its splendid command of blank verse, and its sensitiveness to beauty. In this play Marlowe dramatised the exploits of the Scythian shepherd who rose to be “the terror of the world”, and “the scourge of God”. *Tamburlaine* was succeeded by *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, in which Marlowe gave an old medieval legend a romantic setting. The story of the scholar who sells his soul to the Devil for worldly enjoyment and unlimited power, is presented in a most fascinating manner. Marlowe’s Faustus is the genuine incarnation of the Renaissance spirit. *The Jew of Malta*, the third tragedy of Marlowe, is not so fine as *Doctor Faustus*, though it has a glorious opening. His last play, *Edward II*, is his best from the technical point of view. Though it lacks the force and rhythmic beauty of the earlier plays, it is superior to them on account of its rare skill of construction and admirable characterisation.

Marlowe’s contributions to the Elizabethan drama were great. He raised the subject-matter of drama to a higher level. He introduced heroes who were men of great strength and vitality, possessing the Renaissance characteristic of insatiable spirit of adventure. He gave life and reality to the characters, and introduced passion on the stage. He made the blank verse supple and flexible to suit the drama, and thus made the work of Shakespeare in this respect easy. He gave coherence and unity to the drama, which it was formerly lacking. He also gave beauty and dignity and poetic glow to the drama. In fact, he did the pioneering work on which Shakespeare built the grand edifice. Thus he has been rightly called “the Father of English Dramatic Poetry.”

Shakespeare (1564-1616)

The greatest of all Elizabethan dramatists was Shakespeare in whose hands the Romantic drama reached its climax. As we do not know much about his life, and it is certain that he did not have proper training and education as other dramatists of the period had, his stupendous achievements are an enigma to all scholars up to the present day. It is still a mystery how a country boy, poor and uneducated, who came to London in search of odd jobs to scrape a living, could reach such heights in dramatic literature. Endowed with a marvellous imaginative and creative mind, he could put new life into old familiar stories and make them glow with deepest thoughts and tenderest feelings.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare was a highly gifted person, but without proper training he could not have scaled such heights. In spite of the meagre material we have got about his life, we can surmise that he must have undergone proper training first as an actor, second as a reviser of old plays, and the last as an independent dramatist. He worked with other dramatists and learned the secrets of their trade. He must have studied deeply and observed minutely the people he came in contact with. His dramatic output must, therefore, have been the result of his natural genius as well as of hard work and industry.

Besides non—dramatic poetry consisting of two narrative poems, *Venice and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, and 154 sonnets, Shakespeare wrote 37 plays. His work as a dramatist extended over some 24 years, beginning about 1588 and ending about 1612. This work is generally divided into four periods.

(i) 1577-93

This was the period of early experimental work. To this period belong the revision of old plays as the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*; his first comedies—*Love’s Labour Lost*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; his first chronicle play—*Richard III*; a youthful tragedy—*Romeo and Juliet*.

(ii) 1594-1600

To the second period belong Shakespeare's great comedies and chronicle plays – Richard II, King John, The Merchant of Venice, Henry IV, Part I and II, Henry V, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It and Twelfth Night. These plays reveal Shakespeare's great development as a thinker and technician. They show the maturity of his mind and art.

(iii) 1601-1608

To the third period belong Shakespeare's greatest tragedies and sombre or bitter comedies. This is his peak period characterised by the highest development of his thought and expression. He is more concerned with the darker side of human experience and its destructive passions. Even in comedies, the tone is grave and there is a greater emphasis on evil. The plays of this period are—*Julius Caesar, Hamlet, All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure; Troilus and Cressida, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, and Timon of Athens.*

(iv) 1608-1612

To the fourth period belong the later comedies or dramatic romances. Here the clouds seem to have been lifted and Shakespeare is in a changed mood. Though the tragic passions still play their part as in the third period, the evil is now controlled and conquered by good. The tone of the plays is gracious and tender, and there is a decline in the power of expression and thought. The plays written during this period are—*Cymbeline, The Tempest and The Winter's Tale*, which were completely written in collaboration with some other dramatist.

The plays of Shakespeare are so full of contradictory thoughts expressed so convincingly in different contexts, that it is not possible to formulate a system of philosophy out of them. Each of his characters—from the king to the clown, from the most highly intellectual to the simpleton—judges life from his own angle, and utters something which is so profound and appropriate, that one is astonished at the playwright's versatility of genius. His style and versification are of the highest order. He was not only the greatest dramatist of the age, but also the first poet of the day, and one of the greatest of all times. His plays are full of a large number of exquisite songs, and his sonnets glowing with passion and sensitiveness to beauty reach the high water mark of poetic excellence in English literature. In his plays there is a fine commingling of dramatic and lyric elements. Words and images seem to flow from his brain spontaneously and they are clothed in a style which can be called perfect.

Though Shakespeare belonged to the Elizabethan Age, on account of his universality he belongs to all times. Even after the lapse of three centuries his importance, instead of decreasing, has considerably increased. Every time we read him, we become more conscious of his greatness, like the charm of Cleopatra,

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale

Her infinite variety.

the appeal of Shakespeare is perennial. His plays and poetry are like a great river of life and beauty.

Ben Jonson (1573-1637)

Ben Jonson a contemporary of Shakespeare, and a prominent dramatist of his times, was just the opposite of Shakespeare. Jonson was a classicist, a moralist, and a reformer of drama. In his comedies he tried to present the true picture of the contemporary society. He also made an attempt to have the 'unities' of time, place and action in his plays. Unlike Shakespeare who remained hidden behind his works, Jonson impressed upon the audience the excellence of his works and the object of his plays. He also made his plays realistic rather than romantic, and introduced 'humours' which mean some peculiar traits in character, which obsess an individual and govern all his faculties.

Jonson was mainly a writer of comedies, and of these the four which attained outstanding success are *Volpone; The Silent Woman; The Alchemist; and Bartholomew Fair*. Two other

important comedies of his, which illustrate his theory of 'humour' are—*Every Man in His Humour* and *Every Man Out of Humour*. *The Alchemist*, which is the most perfect in structure, is also the most brilliant realistic Elizabethan comedy. Volpone is a satirical study of avarice on the heroic scale. *Bartholomew Fair* presents a true picture of Elizabethan 'low life'. *The Silent Woman*, which is written in a lighter mood, approaches the comedy of manners. Ben Jonson wrote two tragic plays. *Sejanus* and *Cataline* on the classical model, but they were not successful.

Ben Jonson was a profound classical scholar who wanted to reform the Elizabethan drama, and introduce form and method in it. He resolved to fight against cheap romantic effects, and limit his art within the bounds of reason and common sense. He was an intellectual and satirical writer unlike Shakespeare who was imaginative and sympathetic. His chief contribution to dramatic theory was his practice to construct plays based on 'humour', or some master passion. In this way he created a new type of comedy having its own methods, scope and purpose. Though he drew his principles from the ancients, he depicted the contemporary life in his plays in a most realistic manner. In this way Jonson broke from the Romantic tendency of Elizabethan drama.

Poetry in the Renaissance period took a new trend. It was the poetry of the new age of discovery, enthusiasm and excitement. Under the impact of the Renaissance, the people of England were infused with freshness and vigour, and these qualities are clearly reflected in poetry of that age. The poetry of the Elizabethan age opens with publications of a volume known as *Tottel's Miscellany* (1577). This book which contained the verse of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503?-1542) and the Earl of Surrey, (1577?-1547) marks the first English poetry of the Renaissance. Wyatt and Surrey wrote a number of songs, especially sonnets which adhered to the Petrarchan model, and which was later adopted by Shakespeare. They also attempted the blank verse which was improved upon by Marlowe and then perfected by Shakespeare. They also experimented a great variety of metres which influenced Spenser. Thus Wyatt and Surrey stand in the same relation to the glory of Elizabethan poetry dominated by Spenser and Shakespeare, as Thomson and Collins do to Romantic poetry dominated by Wordsworth and Shelley.

Another original writer belonging to the early Elizabethan group of poets who were mostly courtiers, was Thomas Sackville (1536-1608). In his *Mirror for Magistrates* he has given a powerful picture of the underworld where the poet describes his meetings with some famous Englishmen who had been the victims of misfortunes. Sackville, unlike Wyatt and Surrey, is not a cheerful writer, but he is superior to them in poetic technique.

The greatest of these early Elizabethan poets was Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586). He was a many-sided person and a versatile genius—soldier, courtier and poet—and distinguished himself in all these capacities. Like Dr. Johnson and Byron he stood in symbolic relation to his times. He may be called the ideal Elizabethan, representing in himself the great qualities of that great age in English history and literature. Queen Elizabeth called him one of the jewels of her crown, and at the age of twenty-three he was considered 'one of the ripest statesmen of the age'.

As a literary figure, Sidney made his mark in prose as well as in poetry. His prose works are *Arcadia* and the *Apologie for Poetrie* (1595). With *Arcadia* begins a new kind of imaginative writing. Though written in prose it is strewn with love songs and sonnets. The *Apologie for Poetrie* is first of the series of rare and very useful commentaries which some English poets have written about their art. His greatest work, of course, is in poetry—the sequence of sonnets entitled *Astrophel and Stella*, in which Sidney celebrated the history of his love for Penelope Devereaux, sister of the Earl of Essex, - a love which came to a sad end through the intervention of Queen Elizabeth with whom Sidney had quarrelled. As an example of lyrical poetry expressing directly in the most sincere manner an intimate and personal experience of love in its deepest passion, this sonnet sequence marks an epoch. Their greatest merit is their sincerity. The

sequence of the poet's feelings is analysed with such vividness and minuteness that we are convinced of their truth and sincerity. Here we find the fruit of experience, dearly bought:

*Desire; desire; I have too dearly bought
With price of mangled mind. Thy worthless ware.
Too long, too long, asleep thou hast me brought,
Who should my mind to higher prepare.*

Besides these personal and sincere touches, sometimes the poet gives a loose reign to his imagination, and gives us fantastic imagery which was a characteristic of Elizabethan poetry.

Spenser (1552-1599)

The greatest name in non-dramatic Elizabethan poetry is that of Spenser, who may be called the poet of chivalry and Medieval allegory. The Elizabethan Age was the age of transition, when the time-honoured institutions of chivalry, closely allied to Catholic ritual were being attacked by the zeal of the Protestant reformer and the enthusiasm for matters of the European humanists. As Spenser was in sympathy with both the old and the new, he tried to reconcile these divergent elements in his greatest poetic work—*The Faerie Queene*. Written in the form of an allegory, though on the surface it appears to be dealing with the petty intrigues, corrupt dealings and clever manipulations of politicians in the court of Elizabeth, yet when seen from a higher point of view, it brings before us the glory of the medieval times clothed in an atmosphere of romance. We forget the harsh realities of life, and lifted into a fairy land where we see the knights performing chivalric deeds for the sake of the honour Queen Gloriana. We meet with shepherds, sylvan nymphs and satyrs, and breathe the air of romance, phantasy and chivalry.

Though Spenser's fame rests mainly on *The Faerie Queene*, he also wrote some other poems of great merit. His *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) is a pastoral poem written in an artificial classical style which had become popular in Europe on account of the revival of learning. Consisting of twelve parts, each devoted to a month of the year, here the poet gives expression to his unfruitful love for a certain unknown Rosalind, through the mouth of shepherds talking and singing. It also deals with various moral questions and the contemporary religious issues. The same type of conventional pastoral imagery was used by Spenser in *Astrophel* (1586), an elegy which he wrote on the death of Sidney to whom he had dedicated the *Calendar*. *Four Hymns* which are characterised by melodious verse were written by Spenser in honour of love and beauty. His *Amoretti*, consisting of 88 sonnets, written in the Petrarchan manner which had become very popular in those days under the influence of Italian literature, describes beautifully the progress of his love for Elizabeth Boyle whom he married in 1594. His *Epithalamion* is the most beautiful marriage hymn in the English language.

The greatness of Spenser as a poet rests on his artistic excellence. Though his poetry is surcharged with noble ideas and lofty ideals, he occupies an honoured place in the front rank of English poets as the poet of beauty, music and harmony, through which he brought about a reconciliation between the medieval and the modern world. There is no harsh note in all his poetry. He composed his poems in the spirit of a great painter, a great musician. Above all, he was the poet of imagination, who, by means of his art, gave an enduring to the offsprings of his imagination. As a metrist his greatest contribution to English poetry is the Spenserian stanza which is admirably suited to descriptive or reflective poetry. It is used by Thomson in *The Castle of Indolence*, by Keats in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, by Shelley in *The Revolt of Islam* and by Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. On account of all these factors, Spenser has been a potent influence on the English poets of all ages, and there is no exaggeration in the remark made by Charles Lamb that "Spenser is the poets' poet."

(c) Elizabethan Prose

The Elizabethan period was also the period of the origin of modern English prose. During the reign of Elizabeth prose began to be used as a vehicle of various forms of amusement and information, and its popularity increased on account of the increased facility provided by the printing press. Books on history, travel, adventures, and translations of Italian stories appeared in a large number. Though there were a large number of prose-writers, there were only two-Sidney and Lyly who were conscious of their art, and who made solid contributions to the English prose style when it was in its infancy. The Elizabethan people were intoxicated with the use of the English language which was being enriched by borrowings from ancient authors. They took delight in the use of flowery words and graceful ,grandiloquent phrases. With the new wave of patriotism and national prestige the English language which had been previously eclipsed by Latin, and relegated to a lower position, now came to its own, and it was fully exploited. The Elizabethans loved decorative modes of expression and flowery style.

John Lyly (1554-1606)

The first author who wrote prose in the manner that the Elizabethans wanted, was Lyly, whose *Euphues*, popularized a highly artificial and decorative style. It was read and copied by everybody. Its maxims and phrases were freely quoted in the court and the market-place, and the word 'Euphuism' became a common description of an artificial and flamboyant style.

The style of *Euphues* has three main characteristics. In the first place, the structure of the sentence is based on antithesis and alliteration. In other words, it consists of two equal parts which are similar in sound but with a different sense. For example, *Euphues* is described as a young man "of more wit than wealth, yet of more wealth than wisdom". The second characteristic of this style is that no fact is stated without reference to some classical authority. For example, when the author makes a mention of friendship, he quotes the friendship that existed between David and Jonathan. Besides these classical allusions, there is also an abundance of allusion to natural history, mostly of a fabulous kind, which is its third characteristic. For example, "The bull being tied to the fig tree loseth his tale; the whole herd of deer stand at gaze if they smell sweet apple."

The purpose of writing *Euphues* was to instruct the courtiers and gentlemen how to live, and so it is full of grave reflections and weighty morals. In it there is also criticism of contemporary society, especially its extravagant fashions. Though Puritanic in tone, it inculcates, on the whole, a liberal and humane outlook.

Sidney's *Arcadia* is the first English example of prose pastoral romance, which was imitated by various English authors for about two hundred years. The story related in *Arcadia* in the midst of pastoral surrounding where everything is possible, is long enough to cover twenty modern novels, but its main attraction lies in its style which is highly poetical and exhaustive. One word is used again and again in different senses until its all meanings are exhausted. It is also full of pathetic fallacy which means establishing the connection between the appearance of nature with the mood of the artist. On the whole, *Arcadia* goes one degree beyond *Euphues* in the direction of Sfreedom and poetry.

Two other important writers who, among others, influenced Elizabethan prose were: Malory and Hakluyt. Malory wrote a great prose romance *Morte de Arthur* dealing with the romantic treasures of the Middle Ages. It was by virtue of the simple directness of the language, that it proved an admirable model to the prose story-tellers of the Renaissance England. Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages* and other such books describing sea adventures were written in simple and unaffected directness. The writer was conscious of only that he had something to tell that was worth telling.

The Puritan Age (1600-1660)

The Literature of the Seventeenth Century may be divided into two periods—*The Puritan Age* or the *Age of Milton* (1600-1660), which is further divided into the Jacobean and Caroline periods after the names of the ruled James I and Charles I, who rules from 1603 to 1625 and 1625 to 1649 respectively; and the Restoration Period or the Age of Dryden (1660-1700).

The Seventeenth Century was marked by the decline of the Renaissance spirit, and the writers either imitated the great masters of Elizabethan period or followed new paths. We no longer find great imaginative writers of the stature of Shakespeare, Spenser and Sidney. There is a marked change in temperament which may be called essentially modern. Though during the Elizabethan period, the new spirit of the Renaissance had broken away with the medieval times, and started a new modern development, in fact it was in the seventeenth century that this task of breaking away with the past was completely accomplished, and the modern spirit, in the fullest sense of the term, came into being. This spirit may be defined as the spirit of observation and of preoccupation with details, and a systematic analysis of facts, feelings and ideas. In other words, it was the spirit of science popularized by such great men as Newton, Bacon and Descartes. In the field of literature this spirit manifested itself in the form of criticism, which in England is the creation of the Seventeenth Century. During the Sixteenth Century England expanded in all directions; in the Seventeenth Century people took stock of what had been acquired. They also analysed, classified and systematised it. For the first time the writers began using the English language as a vehicle for storing and conveying facts.

One very important and significant feature of this new spirit of observation and analysis was the popularisation of the art of biography which was unknown during the Sixteenth Century. Thus whereas we have no recorded information about the life of such an eminent dramatist as Shakespeare, in the seventeenth century many authors like Fuller and Aubrey laboriously collected and chronicled the smallest facts about the great men of their own day, or of the immediate past. Autobiography also came in the wake of biography, and later on keeping of diaries and writing of journals became popular, for example Pepy's *Diary* and Fox's *Journal*. All these new literary developments were meant to meet the growing demand for analysis of the feelings and the intimate thoughts and sensations of real men and women. This newly awakened taste in realism manifested itself also in the 'Character', which was a brief descriptive essay on a contemporary type like a tobacco-seller, or an old shoe-maker. In drama the portrayal of the foibles of the fashionable contemporary society took a prominent place. In satire, it were not the common faults of the people which were ridiculed, but actual men belonging to opposite political and religious groups. The readers who also had become critical demanded facts from the authors, so that they might judge and take sides in controversial matters.

The Seventeenth Century upto 1660 was dominated by Puritanism and it may be called the Puritan Age or the Age of Milton who was the noblest representative of the Puritan spirit. Broadly speaking, the Puritan movement in literature may be considered as the second and greater Renaissance, marked by the rebirth of the moral nature of man which followed the intellectual awakening of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Though the Renaissance brought with it culture, it was mostly sensuous and pagan, and it needed some sort of moral sobriety and profundity which were contributed by the Puritan movement. Moreover, during the Renaissance period despotism was still the order of the day, and in politics and religion unscrupulousness and fanaticism were rampant. The Puritan movement stood for liberty of the people from the shackles of the despotic ruler as well as the introduction of morality and high ideals in politics. Thus it had two objects—personal righteousness and civil and religious liberty. In other words, it aimed at making men honest and free.

Though during the Restoration period the Puritans began to be looked down upon as narrow-

mind, gloomy dogmatists, who were against all sorts of recreations and amusements, in fact they were not so. Moreover, though they were profoundly religious, they did not form a separate religious sect. It would be a grave travesty of facts if we call Milton and Cromwell, who fought for liberty of the people against the tyrannical rule of Charles I, as narrow-minded fanatics. They were the real champions of liberty and stood for toleration.

The name Puritan was at first given to those who advocated certain changes in the form of worship of the reformed English Church under Elizabeth. As King Charles I and his councillors, as well as some of the clergymen with Bishop Laud as their leader, were opposed to this movement, Puritanism in course of time became a national movement against the tyrannical rule of the King, and stood for the liberty of the people. Of course the extremists among Puritans were fanatics and stern, and the long, protracted struggle against despotism made even the milder ones hard and narrow. So when Charles I was defeated and beheaded in 1649 and Puritanism came out triumphant with the establishment of the Commonwealth under Cromwell, severe laws passed. Many simple modes of recreation and amusement were banned, and an austere standard of living was imposed on an unwilling people. But when we criticize the Puritan for his restrictions on simple and innocent pleasures of life, we should not forget that it was the same very Puritan who fought for liberty and justice, and who through self-discipline and austere way of living overthrew despotism and made the life and property of the people of England safe from the tyranny of rulers.

In literature of the Puritan Age we find the same confusion as we find in religion and politics. The medieval standards of chivalry, the impossible loves and romances which we find in Spenser and Sidney, have completely disappeared. As there were no fixed literary standards, imitations of older poets and exaggeration of the 'metaphysical' poets replaced the original, dignified and highly imaginative compositions of the Elizabethan writers. The literary achievements of this so-called gloomy age are not of a high order, but it had the honour of producing one solitary master of verse whose work would shed lustre on any age or people—John Milton, who was the noblest and indomitable representative of the Puritan spirit to which he gave a most lofty and enduring expression.

(a) Puritan Poetry

The Puritan poetry, also called the Jacobean and Caroline Poetry during the reigns of James I and Charles I respectively, can be divided into three parts –(i) Poetry of the School of Spenser; (ii) Poetry of the Metaphysical School; (iii) Poetry of the Cavalier Poets.

(i) The School of Spenser

The Spenserians were the followers of Spenser. In spite of the changing conditions and literary tastes which resulted in a reaction against the diffuse, flamboyant, Italianate poetry which Spenser and Sidney had made fashionable during the sixteenth century, they preferred to follow Spenser and considered him as their master.

The most thorough-going disciples of Spenser during the reign of James I were Phineas Fletcher (1582-1648) and Giles Fletcher (1583-1623). They were both priests and Fellows of Cambridge University. Phineas Fletcher wrote a number of Spenserian pastorals and allegories. His most ambitious poem *The Purple Island*, portrays in a minutely detailed allegory the physical and mental constitution of man, the struggle between Temperance and his foes, the will of man and Satan. Though the poem follows the allegorical pattern of the *Faerie Queene*, it does not lift us to the realm of pure romance as does Spenser's masterpiece, and at times the strain of the allegory becomes to unbearable.

Giles Fletcher was more lyrical and mystical than his brother, and he also made a happier choice

of subjects. His *Christ's Victorie and Triumph in Heaven and Earth over and after Death* (1610), which is an allegorical narrative describing in a lyrical strain the Atonement, Temptation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ, is a link between the religious poetry of Spenser and Milton. It is written in a flamboyant, diffuse style of Spenser, but its ethical aspect is in keeping with the seventeenth century theology which considered man as a puny creature in the divine scheme of salvation.

Other poets who wrote under the influence of Spenser were William Browne (1590-1645). George Wither (1588-1667) and William Drummond (1585-1649).

Browne's important poetical work is *Britannia's Pastorals* which shows all the characteristics of Elizabethan pastoral poetry. It is obviously inspired by Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Sidney's *Arcadia* as it combines allegory with satire. It is a story of wooing and adventure, of the nymphs who change into streams and flowers. It also sings the praise of virtue and of poets and dead and living.

The same didactic tone and lyrical strain are noticed in the poetry of George Wither. His best-known poems are *The Shepherd's Hunting* a series of personal eulogues; *Fidella* an heroic epistle of over twelve hundred lines; and *Fair Virtue*, the *Mistress of Philarete*, a sustained and detailed lyrical eulogy of an ideal woman. Most of Wither's poetry is pastoral which is used by him to convey his personal experience. He writes in an easy, and homely style free from conceits. He often dwells on the charms of nature and consolation provided by songs. In his later years Wither wrote didactic and satirical verse, which earned for him the title of "our English Juvenal".

Drummond who was a Scottish poet, wrote a number of pastorals, sonnets, songs, elegies and religious poems. His poetry is the product of a scholar of refined nature, high imaginative faculty, and musical ear. His indebtedness to Spenser, Sidney and Shakespeare in the matter of fine phraseology is quite obvious. The greatest and original quality of all his poetry is the sweetness and musical evolution in which he has few rivals even among the Elizabethan lyricists. His well-known poems are *Tears on the Death of Maliades* (an elegy), *Sonnets*, *Flowers of Sion* and *Pastorals*.

(ii) The Poets of the Metaphysical School

The metaphysical poets were John Donne, Herrick, Thomas Carew, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, George Herbert and Lord Herbert of Cherbury. The leader of this school was Donne. They are called the metaphysical poets not because they are highly philosophical, but because their poetry is full of conceits, exaggerations, quibbling about the meanings of words, display of learning and far-fetched similes and metaphors. It was Dr. Johnson who in his essay on Abraham Cowley in his *Lives of the Poets* used the term 'metaphysical'. There he wrote:

"About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets. The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour: but, unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables."

Though Dr. Johnson was prejudiced against the Metaphysical school of poets, and the above statement is full of exaggeration, yet he pointed out the salient characteristics of this school. One important feature of metaphysical school which Dr. Johnson mentioned was their "discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike." Moreover, he was absolutely right when he further remarked that the Metaphysical poets were perversely strange and strained: 'The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for

illustrations, comparisons, and allusions... Their wish was only to say what had never been said before”.

Dr. Johnson, however, did not fail to notice that beneath the superficial novelty of the metaphysical poets lay a fundamental originality:

“If they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth; if the conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think, No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume to dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and volubility of syllables.”

The metaphysical poets were honest, original thinkers. They tried to analyse their feelings and experience—even the experience of love. They were also aware of the life, and were concerned with death, burial descent into hell etc. Though they hoped for immortality, they were obsessed by the consciousness of mortality which was often expressed in a mood of mawkish disgust.

John Donne (1537-1631),

The leader of the Metaphysical school of poets, had a very chequered career until he became the Dean of St. Paul. Though his main work was to deliver religious sermons, he wrote poetry of a very high order. His best-known works are *The Progress of the Soul; An Anatomy of the World, an elegy; and Epithalamium*. His poetry can be divided into three parts: (1) Amorous (2) Metaphysical (3) Satirical. In his amorous lyrics which include his earliest work, he broke away from the Petrarchan model so popular among the Elizabethan poets, and expressed the experience of love in a realistic manner. His metaphysical and satirical works which form a major portion of his poetry, were written in later years. *The Progress of the Soul* and *Metempsychosis*, in which Donne pursues the passage of the soul through various transmigrations, including those of a bird and fish, is a fine illustration of his metaphysical poetry. A good illustration of his satire is his fourth satire describing the character of a bore. They were written in rhymed couplet, and influenced both **Dryden and Pope**.

Donne has often been compared to Browning on account of his metrical roughness, obscurity, ardent imagination, taste for metaphysics and unexpected divergence into sweet and delightful music. But there is one important difference between Donne and Browning. Donne is a poet of wit while Browning is a poet of ardent passion. Donne deliberately broke away from the Elizabethan tradition of smooth sweetness of verse, and introduced a harsh and staccato method. His influence on the contemporary poets was far from being desirable, because whereas they imitated his harshness, they could not come up to the level of his original thought and sharp wit. Like Browning, Donne has no sympathy for the reader who cannot follow his keen and incisive thought, while his poetry is most difficult to understand because of its careless versification and excessive terseness.

Thus with Donne, the Elizabethan poetry with its mellifluousness, and richly observant imagination, came to an end, and the Caroline poetry with its harshness and deeply reflective imagination began. Though Shakespeare and Spenser still exerted some influence on the poets, yet Donne's influence was more dominant.

Robert Herrick (1591-1674) wrote amorous as well as religious verse, but it is on account of the poems of the former type—love poems, for which he is famous. He has much in common with the Elizabethan song writers, but on account of his pensive fantasy, and a meditative strain especially in his religious verse, Herrick is included in the metaphysical school of Donne.

Thomas Carew (1598-1639), on whom the influence of Donne was stronger, was the finest lyric writer of his age. Though he lacks the spontaneity and freshness of Herrick, he is superior to him

in fine workmanship. Moreover, though possessing the strength and vitality of Donne's verse, Carew's verse is neither rugged nor obscure as that of the master. His *Persuasions of Love* is a fine piece of rhythmic cadence and harmony.

Richard Crashaw (1613?-1649) possessed a temperament different from that of Herrick or Carew. He was a fundamentally religious poet, and his best work is *The Flaming Heart*. Though less imaginative than Herrick, and intellectually inferior to Carew, at times Crashaw reaches the heights of rare excellence in his poetry.

Henry Vaughan (1622-1695), though a mystic like Crashaw, was equally at home in sacred as well as secular verse. Though lacking the vigour of Crashaw, Vaughan is more uniform and clear, tranquil and deep.

George Herbert (1593-1633) is the most widely read of all the poets belonging to the metaphysical school, except, of course, Donne. This is due to the clarity of his expression and the transparency of his conceits. In his religious verse there is simplicity as well as natural earnestness. Mixed with the didactic strain there is also a current of quaint humour in his poetry.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury is inferior as a verse writer to his brother George Herbert, but he is best remembered as the author of an autobiography. Moreover, he was the first poet to use the metre which was made famous by Tennyson in *In Memoriam*.

Other poets who are also included in the group of Metaphysicals are Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), Andrew Marvel (1621-1672) and Edmund Waller (1606-1687). Cowley is famous for his 'Pindaric Odes', which influenced English poetry throughout the eighteenth century. Marvel is famous for his loyal friendship with Milton, and because his poetry shows the conflict between the two schools of Spenser and Donne. Waller was the first to use the 'closed' couplet which dominated English poetry for the next century.

The Metaphysical poets show the spiritual and moral fervour of the Puritans as well as the frank amorous tendency of the Elizabethans. Sometimes like the Elizabethans they sing of making the best of life as it lasts—*Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may*; and at other times they seek more permanent comfort in the delight of spiritual experience.

(iii) The Cavalier Poets

Whereas the metaphysical poets followed the lead of Donne, the cavalier poets followed Ben Jonson. Jonson followed the classical method in his poetry as in his drama. He imitated Horace by writing, like him, satires, elegies, epistles and complimentary verses. But though his verse possess classical dignity and good sense, it does not have its grace and ease. His lyrics and songs also differ from those of Shakespeare. Whereas Shakespeare's songs are pastoral, popular and 'artless', Jonson's are sophisticated, particularised, and have intellectual and emotional rationality.

Like the 'metaphysical', the label 'Cavalier' is not correct, because a 'Cavalier' means a royalist—one who fought on the side of the king during the Civil War. The followers of Ben Jonson were not all royalists, but this label once used has stuck to them. Moreover, there is not much difference between the Cavalier and Metaphysical poets. Some Cavalier poets like Carew, Suckling and Lovelace were also disciples of Donne. Even some typical poems, of Donne and Ben Jonson are very much alike. These are, therefore, not two distinct schools, but they represented two groups of poets who followed two different masters—Donne and Ben Jonson. Poets of both the schools, of course, turned away from the long, Old-fashioned works of the Spenserians, and concentrated their efforts on short poems and lyrics dealing with the themes of love of woman and the love or fear of God. The Cavalier poets normally wrote about trivial subjects, while the Metaphysical poets wrote generally about serious subjects.

The important Cavalier poets were Herrick, Lovelace, Suckling and Carew. Though they wrote generally in a lighter vein, yet they could not completely escape the tremendous seriousness of

Puritanism. We have already dealt with Carew and Herrick among the metaphysical group of poets. Sir John Suckling (1609-1642), a courtier of Charles I, wrote poetry because it was considered a gentleman's accomplishment in those days. Most of his poems are trivial; written in doggerel verse. Sir Richard Lovelace (1618-1658) was another follower of King Charles I. His volume of love lyrics—*Lucasta*—are on a higher plane than Suckling's work, and some of his poems like "To Lucasta", and "To Althea, from Prison", have won a secure place in English poetry.

(iv) John Milton (1608-1674)

Milton was the greatest poet of the Puritan age, and he stands head and shoulders above all his contemporaries. Though he completely identified himself with Puritanism, he possessed such a strong personality that he cannot be taken to represent any one but himself. Paying a just tribute to the dominating personality of Milton, Wordsworth wrote the famous line:

They soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

Though Milton praised Spenser, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson as poets, he was different from them all. We do not find the exuberance of Spenser in his poetry. Unlike Shakespeare Milton is superbly egoistic. In his verse, which is harmonious and musical, we find no trace of the harshness of Ben Jonson. In all his poetry, Milton sings about himself and his own lofty soul. Being a deeply religious man and also endowed with artistic merit of a high degree, he combined in himself the spirits of the Renaissance and the Reformation. In fact no other English poet was so profoundly religious and so much an artist.

Milton was a great scholar of classical as well as Hebrew literature. He was also a child of the Renaissance, and a great humanist. As an artist he may be called the last Elizabethan. From his young days he began to look upon poetry as a serious business of life; and he made up his mind to dedicate himself to it, and, in course of time, write a poem "which the world would not let die."

Milton's early poetry is lyrical. The important poems of the early period are: *The Hymn on the Nativity* (1629); *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso* (1632); *Lycidas* (1637); and *Comus* (1634). *The Hymn*, written when Milton was only twenty-one, shows that his lyrical genius was already highly developed. The complementary poems, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, are full of very pleasing descriptions of rural scenes and recreations in Spring and Autumn. *L'Allegro* represents the poet in a gay and merry mood and it paints an idealised picture of rustic life from dawn to dusk. *Il Penseroso* is written in serious and meditative strain. In it the poet praises the passive joys of the contemplative life. The poet extols the pensive thoughts of a recluse who spends his days contemplating the calmer beauties of nature. In these two poems, the lyrical genius of Milton is at its best.

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy and it is the greatest of its type in English literature. It was written to mourn the death of Milton's friend, Edward King, but it also contains serious criticism of contemporary religion and politics.

Comus marks the development of the Milton's mind from the merely pastoral and idyllic to the more serious and purposive tendency. The Puritanic element antagonistic to the prevailing looseness in religion and politics becomes more prominent. But in spite of its serious and didactic strain, it retains the lyrical tone which is so characteristic of Milton's early poetry. Besides these poems a few great sonnets such as *When the Assault was intended to the City*, also belong to Milton's early period. Full of deeply-felt emotions, these sonnets are among the noblest in the English language, and they bridge the gulf between the lyrical tone of Milton's early poetry, and the deeply moral and didactic tone of his later poetry.

When the Civil War broke out in 1642, Milton threw himself heart and soul into the struggle against King Charles I. He devoted the best years of his life, when his poetical powers were at

their peak, to this national movement. Finding himself unfit to fight as a soldier he became the Latin Secretary to Cromwell. This work he continued to do till 1649, when Charles I was defeated and Commonwealth was proclaimed under Cromwell. But when he returned to poetry to accomplish the ideal he had in his mind, Milton found himself completely blind. Moreover, after the death of Cromwell and the coming of Charles II to the throne, Milton became friendless. His own wife and daughters turned against him. But undaunted by all these misfortunes, Milton girded up his loins and wrote his greatest poetical works—*Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.

“The subject-matter of *Paradise Lost* consists of the casting out from Heaven of the fallen angels, their planning of revenge in Hell, Satan’s flight, Man’s temptation and fall from grace, and the promise of redemption. Against this vast background Milton projects his own philosophy of the purposes of human existence, and attempts “to justify the ways of God to men.” On account of the richness and profusion of its imagery, descriptions of strange lands and seas, and the use of strange geographical names, *Paradise Lost* is called the last great Elizabethan poem. But its perfectly organized design, its firm outlines and Latinised diction make it essentially a product of the neo—classical or the Augustan period in English Literature. In *Paradise Lost* the most prominent is the figure of Satan who possesses the qualities of Milton himself, and who represents the indomitable heroism of the Puritans against Charles I.

What though the field be lost?

All is not lost; the unconquerable will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield

And what is else, not to be overcome.

It is written in blank verse of the Elizabethan dramatist, but it is hardened and strengthened to suit the requirements of an epic poet.

Paradise Regained which deals with subject of *Temptation in the Wilderness* is written, unlike *Paradise Lost*, in the form of discussion and not action. Not so sublime as *Paradise Lost*, It has a quieter atmosphere, but it does not betray a decline in poetic power. The mood of the poet has become different. The central figure is Christ, having the Puritanic austere and stoic qualities rather than the tenderness which is generally associated with him.

In *Samson Agonistes* Milton deals with an ancient Hebrew legend of Samson, the mighty champion of Israel, now blind and scorned, working as a slave among Philistines. This tragedy, which is written on the Greek model, is charged with the tremendous personality of Milton himself, who in the character of the blind giant, Samson, surrounded by enemies, projects his own unfortunate experience in the reign of Charles II.

Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves.

The magnificent lyrics in this tragedy, which express the heroic faith of the long suffering Puritans, represent the summit of technical excellence achieved by Milton.

(b) Jacobean and Caroline Drama

After Shakespeare the drama in England suffered a decline during the reigns of James I and Charles I. The heights reached by Shakespeare could not be kept by later dramatists, and drama in the hands of Beaumont and Fletcher and others became, what may be called, ‘decadent’. In other words, the real spirit of the Elizabethan drama disappeared, and only the outward show and trappings remained. For example, sentiment took the place of character; eloquent and moving speeches, instead of being subservient to the revelation of the fine shades of character, became important in themselves; dreadful deeds were described not with a view to throwing light on the working of the human heart as was done by Shakespeare, but to produce rhetorical effect on the audience. Moreover, instead of fortitude and courage, and sterner qualities, which were held in

high esteem by the Elizabethan dramatists, resignation to fate expressed in the form of broken accents of pathos and woe, became the main characteristics of the hero. Whereas Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists took delight in action and the emotions associated with it, the Jacobean and Caroline dramatists gave expression to passive suffering and lack of mental and physical vigour. Moreover, whereas the Elizabethan dramatists were sometimes, coarse and showed bad taste, these later dramatists were positively and deliberately indecent. Instead of devoting all their capacity to fully illuminating the subject in hand, they made it as an instrument of exercising their own power of rhetoric and pedantry. Thus in the hands of these dramatists of the inferior type the romantic drama which had achieved great heights during the Elizabethan period, suffered a terrible decline, and when the Puritans closed the theatres in 1642, it died a natural death.

The greatest dramatist of the Jacobean period was Ben Jonson who has already been dealt with in the Renaissance Period, as much of his work belongs to it. The other dramatists of the Jacobean and Caroline periods are John Marston (1575-1634); Thomas Dekker (1570-1632); Thomas Heywood (1575-1650); Thomas Middleton (1580-1627); Cyril Tourneur (1575-1626); John Webster (1575-1625?); John Fletcher (1579-1625); Francis Beaumont (1584-1616); Philip Massinger (1583-1640); John Ford (1586-1639); and James Shirley (1596-1666).

John Marston wrote in a violent and extravagant style. His melodramas *Antonia and Mellida* and *Antonia's Revenge* are full of forceful and impressive passages. In *The Malcontent*, *The Dutch Courtesan*, and *Parasitaster, or Fawne*, Marston criticised the society in an ironic and lyrical manner. His best play is *Eastward Hoe*, an admirable comedy of manners, which portrays realistically the life of a tradesman, the inner life of a middle class household, the simple honesty of some and the vanity of others.

Thomas Dekker, unlike Marston, was gentle and free from coarseness and cynicism. Some of his plays possess grace and freshness which are not to be found even in the plays of Ben Jonson. He is more of a popular dramatist than any of his contemporaries, and he is at his best when portraying scenes from life, and describing living people with an irresistible touch of romanticism. The gayest of his comedies is *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, in which the hero, Simon Eyre, a jovial London shoemaker, and his shrewish wife are vividly described. In *Old Fortunates* Dekker's poetical powers are seen at their best. The scene in which the goddess Fortune appears with her train of crowned beggars and kings in chains, is full of grandeur. His best-known work, however, is *The Honest Whore*, in which the character of an honest courtesan is beautifully portrayed. The most original character in the play is her old father, Orlando Friscoboldo, a rough diamond. This play is characterised by liveliness, pure sentiments and poetry.

Thomas Heywood resembles very much Dekker in his gentleness and good temper. He wrote a large number of plays—two hundred and twenty—of which only twenty-four are extant. Most of his plays deal with the life of the cities. In *The Foure Prentices of London, with the Conquest of Jerusalem*, he flatters the citizens of London. The same note appears in his *Edward VI*, *The Troubles of Queene Elizabeth* and *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*. In the *Fair Maid of the West*, which is written in a patriotic vein, sea adventures and the life of an English port are described in a lively fashion. His best known play is *A Woman Kilde with Kindness*, a domestic tragedy written in a simple form, in which he gives us a gentle picture of a happy home destroyed by the wife's treachery, the husband's suffering and his banishment of his wife, her remorse and agony, and death at the moment when the husband has forgiven her. Instead of the spirit of vengeance as generally prevails in such domestic plays, it is free from any harshness and vindictiveness. In *The English Traveller* we find the same generosity and kindness. On account of his instinctive goodness and wide piety, Heywood was called by Lamb as a "sort of prose Shakespeare."

Thomas Middleton, like Dekker and Heywood, wrote about the city of London. But instead of flattering the citizens, he criticised and ridiculed their follies like Ben Jonson. He is mainly the writer of comedies dealing with the seamy side of London life, and the best-known of them are: *Michaelmas Terms*; *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, *A Mad World*, *My Masters*, *Your Five Gallants*, *A Chaste Mayd in Cheapside*. They are full of swindlers and dupes. The dramatist shows a keen observation of real life and admirable dexterity in presenting it. In his later years Middleton turned to tragedy. *Women beware Women* deals with the scandalous crimes of the Italian courtesan Bianca Capello. Some tragedies or romantic dramas as *A Faire Quarrel*, *The Changeling* and *The Spanish Gipsie*, were written by Middleton in collaboration with the actor William Rowley.

Cyril Tourneur wrote mostly melodramas full of crimes and torture. His two gloomy dramas are: *The Revenge Tragedies*, and *The Atheist's Tragedie*, which, written in a clear and rapid style, have an intense dramatic effect.

John Webster wrote a number of plays, some in collaboration with others. His best-known plays are *The White Devil* or *Vittoria Corombona* and the *Duchess of Malfi* which are full of physical horrors. In the former play the crimes of the Italian beauty Vittoria Accorambona are described in a most fascinating manner. *The Duchess of Malfi* is the tragedy of the young widowed duchess who is driven to madness and death by her two brothers because she has married her steward Antonio. The play is full of pathos and touches of fine poetry. Though a melodrama full of horror and unbearable suffering, it has been raised to a lofty plane by the truly poetic gift of the dramatist who has a knack of coining unforgettable phrases.

John Fletcher wrote a few plays which made him famous. He then exploited his reputation to the fullest extent by organising a kind of workshop in which he wrote plays more rapidly in collaboration with other dramatists in order to meet the growing demand. The plays which he wrote in collaboration with Francis Beaumont are the comedies such as *The Scornful Ladie* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*; tragi-comedies like *Philaster*; pure tragedies such as *The Maides Tragedy* and *A King and no King*. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is the gayest and liveliest comedy of that time and it has such freshness that it seems to have been written only yesterday. *Philaster* and *The Maides Tragedy* are written in Shakespearean style, but they have more outward charm than real merit.

Fletcher alone wrote a number of plays of which the best known are *The Tragedies of Valentinian*, *The Tragedie of Bonduca*, *The Loyal Subject*, *The Humorous Lieutenant*. His *Monsieur Thomas* and *The Wild Goose Chase* are fine comedies.

Philip Massinger wrote tragedies as *Thierry* and *Theodoret* and *The False One*; comedies as *The Little French Lawyer*, *The Spanish Curate* and *The Beggar's Bush*, in collaboration with Fletcher. Massinger combined his intellectualism with Fletcher's lively ease. It was Massinger who dominated the stage after Fletcher. He wrote thirty seven plays of which eighteen are extant. In his comedies we find the exaggerations or eccentricities which are the characteristics of Ben Jonson. In his tragedies we notice the romanticism of Fletcher. But the most individual quality of Massinger's plays is that they are plays of ideas, and he loves to stage oratorical debates and long pleadings before tribunals. His best comedies are *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, *The City Madam* and *The Guardian*; his important serious plays are *The Fatal Dowry*, *The Duke of Millaine*, *The Unnatural Combat*, *The Main of Honour*, *The Bond-Man*, *The Renegado*, *The Roman Actor*, and *The Picture*. Of all these *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is his most successful play, in which the chief character, the usurer, Sir Charles Overreach reminds us of Ben Jonson's Volpone. All the plays of Massinger show careful workmanship, though a great deterioration had crept in the art

of drama at the time when he was writing. When not inspired he becomes monotonous, but he is always a conscientious writer.

John Ford, who was the contemporary of Massinger, collaborated with various dramatists. He was a true poet, but a fatalist, melancholy and gloomy person. Besides the historical play, *Perkin Warbeck*, he wrote *The Lover's Melancholy*, *'Tis Pity Shee's a Whore*, *The Broken Heart* and *Love's Sacrifice*, all of which show a skilful handling of emotions and grace of style. His decadent attitude is seen in the delight he takes in depicting suffering, but he occupies a high place as an artist.

James Shirley, who as Lamb called him, 'the last of a great race', though a prolific writer, shows no originality. His best comedies are *The Traytor*, *The Cardinall*, *The Wedding*, *Changes*, *Hyde Park*, *The Gamester* and *The Lady of Pleasure*, which realistically represent the contemporary manners, modes and literary styles. He also wrote tragi-comedies or romantic comedies, such as *Young Admirall*, *The Opportunitie*, and *The Imposture*. In all these Shirley continued the tradition formed by Fletcher, Tourneur and Webster, but he broke no new ground. Besides these there were a number of minor dramatists, but the drama suffered a serious setback when the theatres were closed in 1642 by the order of the Parliament controlled by the Puritans. They were opened only after eighteen years later at the Restoration.

(c) Jacobean and Caroline Prose

This period was rich in prose. The great prose writers were Bacon, Burton, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Tayler and Clarendon. English prose which had been formed into a harmonious and pliable instrument by the Elizabethans, began to be used in various ways, as narrative as well as a vehicle for philosophical speculation and scientific knowledge. For the first time the great scholars began to write in English rather than Latin. The greatest single influence which enriched the English prose was the Authorised Version of the Bible (English translation of the Bible), which was the result of the efforts of scholars who wrote in a forceful, simple and pure Anglo-Saxon tongue avoiding all that was rough, foreign and affected. So the Bible became the supreme example of earlier English prose-style—simple, plain and natural. As it was read by the people in general, its influence was all-pervasive.

Francis Bacon (1561-1628). Bacon belongs both to the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. He was a lawyer possessing great intellectual gifts. Ben Jonson wrote of him, 'no man ever coughed or turned aside from him without a loss'. As a prose-writer he is the master of the aphoristic style. He has the knack of compressing his wisdom in epigrams which contain the quintessence of his rich experience of life in a most concentrated form. His style is clear, lucid but terse and that is why one has to make an effort to understand his meaning. It lacks spaciousness, ease and rhythm. The reader has always to be alert because each sentence is packed with meaning. Bacon is best-known for his *Essays*, in which he has given his views about the art of managing men and getting on successfully in life. They may be considered as a kind of manual for statesmen and princes. The tone of the essay is that of a worldly man who wants to secure material success and prosperity. That is why their moral standard is not high. Besides the *Essays*, Bacon wrote *Henry VII* the first piece of scientific history in the English language; and *The Advancement of Learning* which is a brilliant popular exposition of the cause of scientific investigation. Though Bacon himself did not make any great scientific discovery, he popularized science through his writings. On account of his being the intellectual giant of his time, he is credited with the authorship of the plays of Shakespeare.

Robert Burton (1577-1640) is known for his *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, which is a book of its own type in the English language. In it he has analysed human melancholy, described its effect and prescribed its cure. But more than that the book deals with all the ills that flesh is heir to, and the author draws his material from writers, ancient as well as modern. It is written in a straightforward, simple and vigorous style, which at times is marked with rhythm and beauty.

Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682) belonged entirely to a different category. With him the manner of writing is more important than the substance. He is, therefore, the first deliberate stylist in the English language, the forerunner of Charles Lamb and Stevenson. Being a physician with a flair for writing, he wrote *Religio Medici* in which he set down his beliefs and thoughts, the religion of the medical man. In this book, which is written in an amusing, personal style, the conflict between the author's intellect and his religious beliefs, gives it a peculiar charm. Every sentence has the stamp of Browne's individuality. His other important prose work is *Hydriotaphia or The Urn Burial*, in which meditating on time and antiquity Browne reaches the heights of rhetorical splendour. He is greater as an artist than a thinker, and his prose is highly complex in its structure and almost poetic in richness of language.

Other writers of his period, who were, like Browne, the masters of rhetorical prose, were Milton, Jeremy Taylor and Clarendon. Most of Milton's prose writings are concerned with the questions at issue between the Parliament and the King. Being the champion of freedom in every form, he wrote a forceful tract *On the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, in which he strongly advocated the right to divorce. His most famous prose work is *Areopagitica* which was occasioned by a parliamentary order for submitting the press to censorship. Here Milton vehemently criticised the bureaucratic control over genius. Though as a pamphleteer Milton at times indulges in downright abuse, and he lacks humour and lightness of touch, yet there is that inherent sublimity in his prose writings, which we associate with him as a poet and man. When he touches a noble thought, the wings of his imagination lift him to majestic heights.

Opposed to Milton, the greatest writer in the parliamentary struggle was the Earl of Clarendon (1609-1674). His prose is stately, and he always writes with a bias which is rather offensive, as we find in his *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*.

Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), a bishop, made himself famous by his literary sermons. On account of the gentle charm of his language, the richness of his images, and his profoundly human imagination, Taylor is considered as one of the masters of English eloquence. His best prose famous book of devotion among English men and women.

Thus during this period we find English prose developing into a grandiloquent and rich instrument capable of expressing all types of ideas—scientific, religious, philosophic, poetic, and personal.

The Restoration Period (1660-1700)

After the Restoration in 1660, when Charles II came to the throne, there was a complete repudiation of the Puritan ideals and way of living. In English literature the period from 1660 to 1700 is called the period of Restoration, because monarchy was restored in England, and Charles II, the son of Charles I who had been defeated and beheaded, came back to England from his exile in France and became the King.

It is called the Age of Dryden, because Dryden was the dominating and most representative literary figure of the Age. As the Puritans who were previously controlling the country, and were supervising her literary and moral and social standards, were finally defeated, a reaction was launched against whatever they held sacred. All restraints and discipline were thrown to the winds, and a wave of licentiousness and frivolity swept the country. Charles II and his followers who had enjoyed a gay life in France during their exile, did their best to introduce that type of

foppery and looseness in England also. They renounced old ideals and demanded that English poetry and drama should follow the style to which they had become accustomed in the gaiety of Paris. Instead of having Shakespeare and the Elizabethans as their models, the poets and dramatists of the Restoration period began to imitate French writers and especially their vices. The result was that the old Elizabethan spirit with its patriotism, its love of adventure and romance, its creative vigour, and the Puritan spirit with its moral discipline and love of liberty, became things of the past. For a time in poetry, drama and prose nothing was produced which could compare satisfactorily with the great achievements of the Elizabethans, of Milton, and even of minor writers of the Puritan age. But then the writers of the period began to evolve something that was characteristic of the times and they made two important contributions to English literature in the form of realism and a tendency to preciseness.

In the beginning realism took an ugly shape, because the writers painted the real pictures of the corrupt society and court. They were more concerned with vices rather than with virtues. The result was a coarse and inferior type of literature. Later this tendency to realism became more wholesome, and the writers tried to portray realistically human life as they found it—its good as well as bad side, its internal as well as external shape.

The tendency to preciseness which ultimately became the chief characteristic of the Restoration period, made a lasting contribution to English literature. It emphasised directness and simplicity of expression, and counteracted the tendency of exaggeration and extravagance which was encouraged during the Elizabethan and the Puritan ages. Instead of using grandiloquent phrases, involved sentences full of Latin quotations and classical allusions, the Restoration writers, under the influence of French writers, gave emphasis to reasoning rather than romantic fancy, and evolved an exact, precise way of writing, consisting of short, clear-cut sentences without any unnecessary word. The Royal Society, which was established during this period enjoined on all its members to use ‘a close, naked, natural way of speaking and writing, as near the mathematical plainness as they can’. Dryden accepted this rule for his prose, and for his poetry adopted the easiest type of verse-form—the heroic couplet. Under his guidance, the English writers evolved a style—precise, formal and elegant—which is called the classical style, and which dominated English literature for more than a century.

(a) Restoration Poetry

John Dryden (1631-1700). The Restoration poetry was mostly satirical, realistic and written in the heroic couplet, of which Dryden was the supreme master. He was the dominating figure of the Restoration period, and he made his mark in the fields of poetry, drama and prose. In the field of poetry he was, in fact, the only poet worth mentioning. In his youth he came under the influence of Cowley, and his early poetry has the characteristic conceits and exaggerations of the metaphysical school. But in his later years he emancipated himself from the false taste and artificial style of the metaphysical writers, and wrote in a clear and forceful style which laid the foundation of the classical school of poetry in England.

The poetry of Dryden can be conveniently divided under three heads—Political Satires, Doctrinal Poems and The Fables. Of his political satires, *Absolom and Achitophel* and *The Medal* are well-known. In *Absolom and Achitophel*, which is one of the greatest political satires in the English language, Dryden defended the King against the Earl of Shaftesbury who is represented as Achitophel. It contains powerful character studies of Shaftesbury and of the Duke of Buckingham who is represented as Zimri. *The Medal* is another satirical poem full of invective against Shaftesbury and MacFlecknoe. It also contains a scathing personal attack on Thomas Shadwell who was once a friend of Dryden.

The two great doctrinal poems of Dryden are *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*. These poems are neither religious nor devotional, but theological and controversial. The first was

written when Dryden was a Protestant, and it defends the Anglican Church. The second written when Dryden had become a Catholic, vehemently defends Catholicism. They, therefore, show Dryden's power and skill of defending any position he took up, and his mastery in presenting an argument in verse.

The Fables, which were written during the last years of Dryden's life, show no decrease in his poetic power. Written in the form of a narrative, they entitle Dryden to rank among the best story-tellers in verse in England. *The Palamon and Arcite*, which is based on Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, gives us an opportunity of comparing the method and art of a fourteenth century poet with one belonging to the seventeenth century. Of the many miscellaneous poems of Dryden, *Annus Mirabilis* is a fine example of his sustained narrative power. His *Alexander's Feast* is one of the best odes in the English language.

The poetry of Dryden possess all the characteristics of the Restoration period and is therefore thoroughly representative of that age. It does not have the poetic glow, the spiritual fervour, the moral loftiness and philosophical depth which were sadly lacking in the Restoration period. But it has the formalism, the intellectual precision, the argumentative skill and realism which were the main characteristics of that age. Though Dryden does not reach great poetic heights, yet here and there he gives us passages of wonderful strength and eloquence. His reputation lies in his being great as a satirist and reasoner in verse. In fact in these two capacities he is still the greatest master in English literature. Dryden's greatest contribution to English poetry was his skilful use of the heroic couplet, which became the accepted measure of serious English poetry for many years.

(b) Restoration Drama

In 1642 the theatres were closed by the authority of the parliament which was dominated by Puritans and so no good plays were written from 1642 till the Restoration (coming back of monarchy in England with the accession of Charles II to the throne) in 1660 when the theatres were re-opened. The drama in England after 1660, called the Restoration drama, showed entirely new trends on account of the long break with the past. Moreover, it was greatly affected by the spirit of the new age which was deficient in poetic feeling, imagination and emotional approach to life, but laid emphasis on prose as the medium of expression, and intellectual, realistic and critical approach to life and its problems. As the common people still under the influence of Puritanism had no love for the theatres, the dramatists had to cater to the taste of the aristocratic class which was highly fashionable, frivolous, cynical and sophisticated. The result was that unlike the Elizabethan drama which had a mass appeal, had its roots in the life of the common people and could be legitimately called the national drama, the Restoration drama had none of these characteristics. Its appeal was confined to the upper strata of society whose taste was aristocratic, and among which the prevailing fashions and etiquettes were foreign and extravagant.

As imagination and poetic feelings were regarded as 'vulgar enthusiasm' by the dictators of the social life. But as 'actual life' meant the life of the aristocratic class only, the plays of this period do not give us a picture of the whole nation. The most popular form of drama was the Comedy of Manners which portrayed the sophisticated life of the dominant class of society—its gaiety, foppiness, insolence and intrigue. Thus the basis of the Restoration drama was very narrow. The general tone of this drama was most aptly described by Shelley:

Comedy loses its ideal universality: wit succeeds humour; we laugh from self-complacency and triumph; instead of pleasure, malignity, sarcasm and contempt, succeed to sympathetic merriment; we hardly laugh, but we smile. Obscenity, which is ever blasphemy against the divine beauty of life, becomes, from the very veil which it assumes, more active if less disgusting; it is a monster for which the corruption of society for ever brings forth new food,

which it devours in secret.

These new trends in comedy are seen in Dryden's *Wild Gallant* (1663), Etheredge's (1635-1691) *The Comical Revenge or Love in a Tub* (1664), Wycherley's *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer*, and the plays of Vanbrugh and Farquhar. But the most gifted among all the Restoration dramatist was William Congreve (1670-1720) who wrote all his best plays he was thirty years of age. His well-known comedies are *Love for Love* (1695) and *The Way of the World* (1700).

It is mainly on account of his remarkable style that Congreve is put at the head of the Restoration drama. No English dramatist has even written such fine prose for the stage as Congreve did. He balances, polishes and sharpens his sentences until they shine like chiselled instruments for an electrical experiment, through which passes the current in the shape of his incisive and scintillating wit. As the plays of Congreve reflect the fashions and foibles of the upper classes whose moral standards had become lax, they do not have a universal appeal, but as social documents their value is very great. Moreover, though these comedies were subjected to a very severe criticism by the Romantics like Shelley and Lamb, they are now again in great demand and there is a revival of interest in Restoration comedy.

In tragedy, the Restoration period specialised in Heroic Tragedy, which dealt with themes of epic magnitude. The heroes and heroines possessed superhuman qualities. The purpose of this tragedy was didactic—to inculcate virtues in the shape of bravery and conjugal love. It was written in the 'heroic couplet' in accordance with the heroic convention derived from France that 'heroic metre' should be used in such plays. In it declamation took the place of natural dialogue.

Moreover, it was characterised by bombast, exaggeration and sensational effects wherever possible. As it was not based on the observations of life, there was no realistic characterisation, and it inevitably ended happily, and virtue was always rewarded.

The chief protagonist and writer of heroic tragedy was Dryden. Under his leadership the heroic tragedy dominated the stage from 1660 to 1678. His first experiment in this type of drama was his play *Tyrannic love*, and in *The Conquest of Granada* he brought it to its culminating point. But then a severe condemnation of this grand manner of writing tragedy was started by certain critics and playwrights, of which Dryden was the main target. It has its effect on Dryden who in his next play *Aurangzeb* exercised greater restraint and decorum, and in the Prologue to this play he admitted the superiority of Shakespeare's method, and his own weariness of using the heroic couplet which is unfit to describe human passions adequately: He confesses that he:

*Grows weary of his long-loved mistress Rhyme,
Passions too fierce to be in fetters bound,
And Nature flies him like enchanted ground;
What verse can do, he has performed in this
Which he presumes the most correct of his;
But spite of all his pride, a secret shame
Invades his breast at Shakespeare's sacred name.*

Dryden's altered attitude is seen more clearly in his next play *All for Love* (1678). Thus he writes in the preface: "In my style I have professed to imitate Shakespeare; which that I might perform more freely, I have disencumbered myself from rhyme." He shifts his ground from the typical heroic tragedy in this play, drops rhyme and questions the validity of the unities of time, place and action in the conditions of the English stage. He also gives up the literary rules observed by French dramatists and follows the laws of drama formulated by the great dramatists of England. Another important way in which Dryden turns himself away from the conventions of the heroic tragedy, is that he does not give a happy ending to this play.

(c) Restoration Prose

The Restoration period was deficient in poetry and drama, but in prose it holds its head much higher. Of course, it cannot be said that the Restoration prose enjoys absolute supremacy in English literature, because on account of the fall of poetic power, lack of inspiration, preference of the merely practical and prosaic subjects and approach to life, it could not reach those heights which it attained in the preceding period in the hands of Milton and Browne, or in the succeeding ages in the hands of Lamb, Hazlitt, Ruskin and Carlyle. But it has to be admitted that it was during the Restoration period that English prose was developed as a medium for expressing clearly and precisely average ideas and feelings about miscellaneous matters for which prose is really meant. For the first time a prose style was evolved which could be used for plain narrative, argumentative exposition of intricate subjects, and the handling of practical business. The elaborate Elizabethan prose was unsuited to telling a plain story. The epigrammatic style of Bacon, the grandiloquent prose of Milton and the dreamy harmonies of Browne could not be adapted to scientific, historical, political and philosophical writings, and, above all, to novel-writing. Thus with the change in the temper of the people, a new type of prose, as was developed in the Restoration period, was essential.

As in the fields of poetry and drama, Dryden was the chief leader and practitioner of the new prose. In his greatest critical work *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden presented a model of the new prose, which was completely different from the prose of Bacon, Milton and Browne. He wrote in a plain, simple and exact style, free from all exaggerations. His Fables and the Preface to them are fine examples of the prose style which Dryden was introducing. This style is, in fact, the most admirably suited to strictly prosaic purposes—correct but not tame, easy but not slipshod, forcible but not unnatural, eloquent but not declamatory, graceful but not lacking in vigour. Of course, it does not have charm and an atmosphere which we associate with imaginative writing, but Dryden never professed to provide that also. On the whole, for general purposes, for which prose medium is required, the style of Dryden is the most suitable.

Other writers, of the period, who came under the influence of Dryden, and wrote in a plain, simple but precise style, were Sir William Temple, John Tillotson and George Saville better known as Viscount Halifax. Another famous writer of the period was Thomas Sprat who is better known for the distinctness with which he put the demand for new prose than for his own writings. Being a man of science himself he published his *History of the Royal Society* (1667) in which he expressed the public demand for a popularised style free from “this vicious abundance of phrase, this trick of metaphors, this volubility of tongue.” The Society expected from all its members “a close, natural way of speaking—positive expressions, clear senses, a native easiness bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can, and preferring the language of artisans, country men and merchants before that of wits and scholars.”

Though these writers wrote under the influence of Dryden, they also, to a certain extent, helped in the evolution of the new prose style by their own individual approach. That is why the prose of the Restoration period is free from monotony.

John Bunyan (1628-1688). Next to Dryden, Bunyan was the greatest prose-writer of the period. Like Milton, he was imbued with the spirit of Puritanism, and in fact, if Milton is the greatest poet of Puritanism, Bunyan is its greatest story-teller. To him also goes the credit of being the precursor of the English novel. His greatest work is *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Just as Milton wrote his *Paradise Lost* “to justify the ways to God to men”, Bunyan's aim in *The Pilgrim's Progress* was “to lead men and women into God's way, the way of salvation, through a simple parable with homely characters and exciting events”. Like Milton, Bunyan was endowed with a highly developed imaginative faculty and artistic instinct. Both were deeply religious, and both, though they distrusted fiction, were the masters of fiction. *Paradise Lost* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* have still survived among thousands of equally fervent religious works of the seventeenth

century because both of them are masterpieces of literary art, which instruct as well please even those who have no faith in those instructions.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan has described the pilgrimage of the Christian to the Heavenly City, the trials, tribulations and temptations which he meets in the way in the form of events and characters, who abstract and help him, and his ultimately reaching the goal. It is written in the form of allegory. The style is terse, simple and vivid, and it appeals to the cultured as well as to the unlettered. As Dr. Johnson remarked: "This is the great merit of the book, that the most cultivated man cannot find anything to praise more highly, and the child knows nothing more amusing." *The Pilgrim's Progress* has all the basic requirements of the traditional type of English novel. It has a good story; the characters are interesting and possess individuality and freshness; the conversation is arresting; the descriptions are vivid; the narrative continuously moves towards a definite end, above all, it has a literary style through which the writer's personality clearly emanates. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a work of superb literary genius, and it is unsurpassed as an example of plain English.

Bunyan's other works are: *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), a kind of spiritual autobiography; *The Holy War*, which like *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory, but the characters are less alive, and there is less variety; *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) written in the form of a realistic novel, gives a picture of low life, and it is second in value and literary significance to *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

The prose of Bunyan shows clearly the influence of the English translation of the Bible (The Authorized Version). He was neither a scholar, nor did he belong to any literary school; all that he knew and learned was derived straight from the English Bible. He was an unlettered country tinker believing in righteousness and in disgust with the corruption and degradation that prevailed all around him. What he wrote came straight from his heart, and he wrote in the language which came natural to him. Thus his works born of moral earnestness and extreme sincerity have acquired true literary significance and wide and enduring popularity. It is quite true to call him the pioneer of the modern novel, because he had the qualities of the great storyteller, deep insight into character, humour, pathos, and the visualising imagination of a dramatic artist.

Eighteenth-Century Literature

The Eighteenth Century in England is called the Classical Age or the Augustan Age in literature. It is also called the Age of Good Sense or the Age of Reason. Though Dryden belonged to the seventeenth century, he is also included in the Classical or Augustan Age, as during his time the characteristics of his age had manifested themselves and he himself represented them to a great extent. Other great literary figures who dominated this age successively were Pope and Dr. Johnson, and so the Classical Age is divided into three distinct periods—the Ages of Dryden, Pope and Dr. Johnson. In this chapter which is devoted to the eighteenth-century literature in England, we will deal with the Ages of Pope and Johnson. The Age of Dryden has already been dealt with in the preceding chapter, entitled "The Restoration Period."

The Eighteenth Century is called the Classical Age in English literature on account of three reasons. In the first place, the term 'classic', refers in general, applies to writers of the highest rank in any nation. This term was first applied to the works of the great Greek and Roman writers, like Homer and Virgil. As the writers of the eighteenth century in England tried to follow the simple and noble methods of the great ancient writers, they began to be called Classical writers. In the second place, in every national literature there is a period when a large number of writers produce works of great merit; such a period is often called the Classical Period

or Age. For example, the reign of Augustus is called the Classical Age of Rome; and the Age of Dante is called the Classical Age of Italian literature. As during the eighteenth century in England there was an abundance of literary productions, the critics named it the Classical Age in English literature. In the third place, during this period the English writers rebelled against the exaggerated and fantastic style of writing prevalent during the Elizabethan and Puritan ages, and they demanded that poetry, drama and prose should follow exact rules. In this they were influenced by French writers, especially by Boileau and Rapin, who insisted on precise methods of writing poetry, and who professed to have discovered their rules in the classics of Horace and Aristotle. The eighteenth century is called the Classical Age, because the writers followed the 'classicism' of the ancient writers, which was taken in a narrow sense to imply fine polish and external elegance. But as the eighteenth century writers in England followed the ancient classical writers only in their external performance, and lacked their sublimity and grandeur, their classicism is called pseudo-classicism i.e., a false or sham classicism.

As the term Classical Age is, therefore, too dignified for writers of the eighteenth century in England, who imitated only the outward trapping of the ancient classical writers, and could not get at their inner spirit, this age is preferably called the Augustan Age. This term was chosen by the writers of the eighteenth century themselves, who saw in Pope, Addison, Swift, Johnson and Burke the modern parallels to Horace, Virgil, Cicero, and other brilliant writers who made Roman literature famous during the reign of Emperor Augustus. Of course, to term this as the *Augustan Age* is also not justified because the writers of this period could not compare favourable with those of the Augustan Age in Latin literature. But these terms—the Classical Age and the Augustan Age—have become current, and so this age is generally called by these terms.

The eighteenth century is also called the Age of Reason or the Age of Good Sense, because the people thought that they could stand on their own legs and be guided in the conduct of their affairs by the light of their own reason unclouded by respect for Ancient precedent. They began to think that undue respect for authority of the Ancients was a great source of error, and therefore in every matter man should apply his own reason and commonsense. Even in literature where the prospect for classical art forms and the rules for writing in those forms gave the defenders of the Ancients a decided advantage, critics could declare that the validity of the rules of art was derived from Reason rather than from Ancient Authority. Though in the seventeenth century Sir Thomas Browne who stood against Ancient Authority in secular matters, declared that in religion "haggard and unreclaimed Reason must stoop unto the lure of Faith". John Locke, the great philosopher, had opined that there was no war between Faith and Reason. He declared in *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (1690), "Faith is nothing but a firm assent of the mind; which if it be regulated as is our duty, cannot be afforded to anything but upon good reason; and so cannot be opposite to it."

It was widely assumed during the eighteenth century that since every man is competent to decide, by reference to his own reason, on any point of natural or moral philosophy, every man becomes his own philosopher. So the need of the expert or specialist vanishes. Moreover, as all men were assumed to be equally endowed with the power of reasoning, it followed that when they reasoned on any given premises they must reach the same conclusion. That conclusion was believed to have universal value and direct appeal to everyone belonging to any race or age. Moreover, it should be the conclusion reached by earlier generation since reason must work the same way in every period of history. When Pope said of wit that it is "Nature to advantage dress'd, what oft was thought but n'er so well express'd," and when Dr. Johnson remarked about Gray's *Elegy* that "it abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo", they were simply giving the literary application of this belief that the highest type of art is that which can be understood immediately, which has the widest appeal, which is free from the expression of personal idiosyncrasy, and

which deals with what is general and universal rather than with what is individual and particular. This was the temper of the eighteenth century. If it is called The Age of Reason or The Age of Good Sense, it is because in this age it was assumed that in reasoning power all men are and have always been equal. It was an age which took a legitimate pride in modern discoveries based upon observation and reason, and which delighted to reflect that those discoveries had confirmed the ancient beliefs that there is an order and harmony in the universe, that it is worked on rational principles, that each created thing has its allowed position and moved in its appointed spheres. It was, in short, an age which implicitly believed in the Biblical saying: "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good."

Now let us consider the literary characteristics of this age. In the previous ages which we have dealt with, it were the poetical works which were given prominence. Now, for the first time in the history of English literature, prose occupies the front position. As it was the age of social, political religious and literary controversies in which the prominent writers took an active part, and a large number of pamphlets, journals and magazines were brought out in order to cater to the growing need of the masses who had begun to read and take interest in these controversial matters, poetry was considered inadequate for such a task, and hence there was a rapid development of prose. In fact the prose writers of this age excel the poets in every respect. The graceful and elegant prose of Addison's essays, the terse style of Swift's satires, the artistic perfection of Fielding's novels, the sonorous eloquence of Gibbon's history, and the oratorical style of Burke, have no equal in the poetical works of the age. In fact, poetry also had become prosaic, because it was no longer used for lofty and sublime purposes, but, like prose, its subject-matter had become criticism, satire, controversy and it was also written in the form of the essay which was the common literary form: Poetry became polished, witty and artificial, but it lacked fire, fine feelings, enthusiasm, the poetic glow of Elizabethan Age and the moral earnestness of Puritanism. In fact, it became more interested in the portrayal of actual life, and distrusted inspiration and imagination. The chief literary glory of the age was, therefore, not poetry, but prose which in the hands of great writers developed into an excellent medium capable of expressing clearly every human interest and emotion.

The two main characteristics of the Restoration period—Realism and Precision—were carried to further perfection during the eighteenth century. They are found in their excellent form in the poetry of Pope, who perfected the heroic couplet, and in the prose of Addison who developed it into a clear, precise and elegant form of expression. The third characteristic of this age was the development of satire as a form of literature, which resulted from the unfortunate union of politics with literature. The Whigs and the Tories—members of two important political parties which were constantly contending to control the government of the country—used and rewarded the writers for satirising their enemies and undermining their reputation. Moreover, as a satire is concerned mainly with finding fault with the opponents, and is destructive in its intention, it cannot reach the great literary heights. Thus the literature of the age, which is mainly satirical cannot be favourably compared with great literature. One feels that these writers could have done better if they had kept themselves clear of the topical controversies, and had devoted their energies to matters of universal import.

Another important feature of this age was the origin and development of the novel. This new literary form, which gained great popularity in the succeeding ages, and which at present holds the prominent place, was fed and nourished by great masters like Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollet and others who laid its secure foundations. The realism of the age and the development of an excellent prose style greatly helped in the evolution of the novel during the eighteenth century.

The eighteenth century was deficient in drama, because the old Puritanic prejudice against the theatre continued, and the court also withdrew its patronage. Goldsmith and Sheridan were the only writers who produced plays having literary merit.

Another important thing which is to be considered with regard to the eighteenth century literature is that it was only during the early part of it—the Age of Pope, that the classical rules and ideals reigned supreme. In the later part of it—the Age of Johnson—cracks began to appear in the edifice of classicism, in the form of revolts against its ideals, and a revival of the Romantic tendency which was characteristic of the Elizabethan period.

As the eighteenth century is a long period, it will be dealt with in different chapters entitled—The Age of Pope, The Age of Johnson, Eighteenth Century Novel and Eighteenth Century Drama.

The Age of Pope (1700-1744)

The earlier part of the eighteenth century or the Augustan Age in English literature is called the Age of Pope, because Pope was the dominating figure in that period. Though there were a number of other important writers like Addison and Swift, but Pope was the only one who devoted himself completely to literature. Moreover, he represented in himself all the main characteristics of his age, and his poetry served as a model to others.

(a) Poetry

It was the Classical school of poetry which dominated the poetry of the Age of Pope. During this age the people were disgusted with the profligacy and frivolity of the Restoration period, and they insisted upon those elementary decencies of life and conduct which were looked at with contempt by the preceding generation. Moreover, they had no sympathy for the fanaticism and religious zeal of the Puritans who were out to ban even the most innocent means of recreation. So they wanted to follow the middle path in everything and steer clear of the emotional as well as moral excesses. They insisted on the role of intelligence in everything. The poets of this period are deficient on the side of emotion and imagination. Dominated by intellect, poetry of this age is commonly didactic and satirical, a poetry of argument and criticism, of politics and personalities.

In the second place, the poets of this age are more interested in the town, and the ‘cultural’ society. They have no sympathy for the humbler aspects of life—the life of the villagers, the shepherds; and no love for nature, the beautiful flowers, the songs of birds, and landscape as we find in the poets of the Romantic period. Though they preached a virtuous life, they would not display any feeling which smacked of enthusiasm and earnestness. Naturally they had no regard for the great poets of the human heart—Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. They had no attachment for the Middle Ages and their tales of chivalry, adventure and visionary idealism. Spenser, therefore, did not find favour with them.

In the poetry of this age, form became more important than substance. This love of superficial polish led to the establishment of a highly artificial and conventional style. The closed couplet became the only possible form for serious work in verse. Naturally poetry became monotonous, because the couplet was too narrow and inflexible to be made the vehicle of high passion and strong imagination. Moreover, as great emphasis was laid on the imitation of ancient writers, originality was discouraged, and poetry lost touch with the real life of the people.

Prose being the prominent medium of expression, the rules of exactness, precision and clarity, which were insisted in the writing of prose, also began to be applied to poetry. It was demanded of the poet to say all that he had to say in a plain simple and clear language. The result was that the quality of suggestiveness which adds so much to the beauty and worth of poetry was sadly lacking in the poetry of this age. The meaning of poetry was all on the surface, and there was nothing which required deep study and varied interpretation.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744). Pope is considered as the greatest poet of the Classical period. He is ‘prince of classicism’ as Prof. Etton calls him. He was an invalid, of small stature and delicate

constitution, whose bad nerves and cruel headaches made his life, in his own phrase, a 'long disease'. Moreover, being a Catholic he had to labour under various restrictions. But the wonder is that in spite of his manifold handicaps, this small, ugly man has left a permanent mark on the literature of his age. He was highly intellectual, extremely ambitious and capable of tremendous industry. These qualities brought him to the front rank of men of letters, and during his lifetime he was looked upon as a model poet.

The main quality of Pope's poetry is its correctness. It was at the age of twenty-three that he published his *Essay on Criticism* (1711) and since then till the end of his life he enjoyed prodigious reputation. In this essay Pope insists on following the rules discovered by the Ancients, because they are in harmony with Nature:

Those rules of old discovered, not devised

Are Nature still, but Nature methodised.

Pope's next work, *The Rape of the Lock*, is in some ways his masterpiece. It is 'mock heroic' poem in which he celebrated the theme of the stealth, by Lord Petre of lock of hair from the head of Miss Arabella. Though the poem is written in a jest and deals with a very insignificant event, it is given the form of an epic, investing this frivolous event with mock seriousness and dignity. By this time Pope had perfected the heroic couplet, and he made use of his technical skill in translating Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey* which meant eleven years' very hard work. The reputation which Pope now enjoyed created a host of jealous rivals whom he severely criticised and ridiculed in *The Dunciad*. This is Pope's greatest satire in which he attacked all sorts of literary incompetence. It is full of cruel and insulting couplets on his enemies. His next great poem was *The Essay on Man* (1732-34), which is full of brilliant oft-quoted passages and lines. His later works—*Imitations of Horace* and *Epistle*—are also satires and contain biting attacks on his enemies.

Though Pope enjoyed a tremendous reputation during his lifetime and for some decades after his death, he was so bitterly attacked during the nineteenth century that it was doubted whether Pope was a poet at all. But in the twentieth century this reaction subsided, and now it is admitted by great critics that though much that Pope wrote is prosaic, not of a very high order, yet a part of his poetry is undoubtedly indestructible. He is the supreme master of the epigrammatic style, of condensing an idea into a line or couplet. Of course, the thoughts in his poetry are commonplace, but they are given the most appropriate and perfect expression. The result is that many of them have become proverbial sayings in the English language. For example:

Who shall decide when doctors disagree?

Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;

The proper study of mankind is man.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast;

Man never is, but always to be, blest.

Minor Poets of the Age of Pope. During his age Pope was by far the greatest of all poets. There were a few minor poets—Matthew Prior, John Gay, Edward Young, Thomas Parnell and Lady Winchelsea.

Matthew Prior (1664-1721), who was a diplomat and active politician wrote two long poems: *Solomon on the Vanity of The World* and *Alma or the Progress of the Mind*. These are serious poems, but the reputation of Prior rests on 'light verse' dealing with trifling matters. He is not merely a light-hearted jester, but a true humanist, with sense of tears as well as laughter as is seen in the "Lines written in the beginning of Mezeray's *History of France*".

John Gay (1685-1732) is the master of vivid description of rural scenes as well of the delights of the town. Like Prior he is full of humour and good temper. As a writer of lyrics, and in the

handling of the couplet, he shows considerable technical skill. His best-known works are: -- *Rural Sports*; *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London*; *Black-Eyed Susan* and some *Fables*.

Prior and Gay were the followers of Pope, and after Pope, they are the two excellent guides to the life of eighteenth century London. The other minor poets, Edward Young, Thomas Parnell and Lady Winchelsea, belonged more to the new Romantic spirit than to the classical spirit in their treatment of external nature, though they were unconscious of it.

Edward Young (1683-1765) is his *Universal Passions* showed himself as skilful a satirist as Pope. His best-known work is *The Night Thoughts* which, written in blank verse, shows considerable technical skill and deep thought.

Thomas Parnell (1679-1718) excelled in translations. His best known works are the *The Night-Piece on Death* and *Hymn to Contentment*, which have a freshness of outlook and metrical skill.

Lady Winchelsea (1660-1725), though a follower of Pope, showed more sincerity and genuine feeling for nature than any other poet of that age. Her *Nocturnal Reverie* may be considered as the pioneer of the nature poetry of the new Romantic age.

To sum up, the poetry of the age of Pope is not of a high order, but it has distinct merits—the finished art of its satires; the creation of a technically beautiful verse; and the clarity and succinctness of its expression.

(b) Prose of the Age of Pope

The great prose writers of the Age of Pope were Defoe, Addison, Steele and Swift. The prose of this period exhibits the Classical qualities—clearness, vigour and direct statement.

Daniel Defoe (1661-1731) is the earliest literary journalist in the English language. He wrote on all sorts of subjects—social, political, literary, and brought out about 250 publications. He owes his importance, in literature, however, mainly to his works of fiction which were simply the offshoots of his general journalistic enterprises. As a journalist he was fond of writing about the lives of famous people who had just died, and of notorious adventurers and criminals. At the age of sixty he turned his attention to the writing of prose fiction, and published his first novel—*Robinson Crusoe*—the book by which he is universally known. It was followed by other works of fiction—*The Memoirs of a Cavalier*, *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, *Roxana* and *Journal of the Plague Year*.

In these works of fiction Defoe gave his stories an air of reality and convinced his readers of their authenticity. That is why they are appropriately called by Sir Leslie Stephen as ‘Fictitious biographies’ or ‘History minus the Facts’. All Defoe's fictions are written in the biographical form. They follow no system and are narrated in a haphazard manner which give them a semblance of reality and truth. His stories, told in the plain, matter-of-fact, business-like way, appropriate to stories of actual life, hence they possess extraordinary minute realism which is their distinct feature. Here his homely and colloquial style came to his help. On account of all these qualities Defoe is credited with being the originator of the English novel. As a writer of prose his gift of narrative and description is masterly. As he never wrote with any deliberate artistic intention, he developed a natural style which made him one of the masters of English prose.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was the most powerful and original genius of his age. He was highly intellectual but on account of some radical disorder in his system and the repeated failures

which he had to face in the realisation of his ambition to rise in public life, made him a bitter, melancholy and sardonic figure. He took delight in flouting conventions, and undermining the reputation of his opponents. His best-known work, *Gulliver's Travels*, which is a very popular children's book, is also a bitter attack on contemporary political and social life in particular, and on the meanness and littleness of man in general. *The Tale of a Tub* which, like *Gulliver's Travels*, is written in the form of an allegory, and exposes the weakness of the main religious beliefs opposed to Protestant religion, is also a satire upon all science and philosophy. His *Journal to Stella* which was written to Esther Johnson whom Swift loved, is not only an excellent commentary on contemporary characters and political events, by one of the most powerful and original minds of the age, but in love passages, and purely personal descriptions, it reveals the real tenderness which lay concealed in the depths of his fierce and domineering nature.

Swift was a profound pessimist. He was essentially a man of his time in his want of spiritual quality, in his distrust of the visionary and the extravagant, and in his thoroughly materialistic view of life. As a master of prose-style, which is simple, direct and colloquial, and free from the ornate and rhetorical elements, Swift has few rivals in the whole range of English literature. As a satirist his greatest and most effective weapon is irony. Though apparently supporting a cause which he is really opposing, he pours ridicule upon it until its very foundations are shaken. The finest example of irony is to be found in his pamphlet—*The Battle of Books*, in which he championed the cause of the Ancients against the Moderns. The mock heroic description of the great battle in the King's Library between the rival hosts is a masterpiece of its kind.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) who worked in collaboration, were the originators of the periodical essay. Steele who was more original led the way by founding *The Tatler*, the first of the long line of eighteenth century periodical essays. This was followed by the most famous of them *The Spectator*, in which Addison, who had formerly contributed to Steele's *Tatler*, now became the chief partner. It began on March 1, 1711, and ran till December 20, 1714 with a break of about eighteen months. In its complete form it contains 635 essays. Of these Addison wrote 274 and Steele 240; the remaining 121 were contributed by various friends.

The Characters of Steele and Addison were curiously contrasted. Steele was an emotional, full-blooded kind of man, reckless and dissipated but fundamentally honest and good-hearted. What there is of pathos and sentiment, and most of what there is of humour in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* are his. Addison, on the other hand, was an urbane, polished gentleman of exquisite refinement of taste. He was shy, austere, pious and righteous. He was a quiet and accurate observer of manners of fashions in life and conversation.

The purpose of the writings of Steele and Addison was ethical. They tried to reform society through the medium of the periodical essay. They set themselves as moralistic to break down two opposed influences—that of the profligate Restoration tradition of loose living and loose thinking on the one hand, and that of Puritan fanaticism and bigotry on the other. They performed this work in a gentle, good-humoured manner, and not by bitter invective. They made the people laugh at their own follies and thus get rid of them. So they were, to a great extent, responsible for reforming the conduct of their contemporaries in social and domestic fields. Their aim was moral as well as educational. Thus they discussed in a light-hearted and attractive manner art, philosophy, drama, poetry, and in so doing guided and developed the taste of the people. For example, it was by his series of eighteen articles on *Paradise Lost*, that Addison helped the English readers have a better appreciation of Milton and his work.

In another direction the work of Addison and Steele proved of much use. Their character studies in the shape of the members of the Spectator Club—Sir Roger de Coverley and others—

presented actual men moving amid real scenes and taking part in various incidents and this helped in the development of genuine novel.

Both Steele and Addison were great masters of prose. Their essays are remarkable as showing the growing perfection of the English language. Of the two, Addison was a greater master of the language. He cultivated a highly cultured and graceful style—a style which can serve as a model. Dr. Johnson very aptly remarked: “Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.” And again he said: “Give nights and days, Sir, to the study of Addison if you mean to be a good writer, or what is more worth, an honest man.”

The Age of Johnson (1744-1784)

The later half of the eighteenth century, which was dominated by Dr. Samuel Johnson, is called the *Age of Johnson*. Johnson died in 1784, and from that time the Classical spirit in English literature began to give place to the Romantic spirit, though officially the Romantic Age started from the year 1798 when Wordsworth and Coleridge published the famous *Lyrical Ballads*. Even during the Age of Johnson, which was predominantly classical, cracks had begun to appear in the solid wall of classicism and there were clear signs of revolt in favour of the Romantic spirit. This was specially noticeable in the field of poetry. Most of the poets belonging to the *Age of Johnson* may be termed as the precursors of the Romantic Revival. That is why the *Age of Johnson* is also called the *Age of Transition* in English literature.

(a) Poets of the Age of Johnson

As has already been pointed out, the Age of Johnson in English poetry is an age of transition and experiment which ultimately led to the Romantic Revival. Its history is the history of the struggle between the old and the new, and of the gradual triumph of the new. The greatest protagonist of classicism during this period was Dr. Johnson himself, and he was supported by Goldsmith. In the midst of change these two held fast to the classical ideals, and the creative work of both of them in the field of poetry was imbued with the classical spirit. As Macaulay said, “Dr. Johnson took it for granted that the kind of poetry which flourished in his own time and which he had been accustomed to hear praised from his childhood, was the best kind of poetry, and he not only upheld its claims by direct advocacy of its canons, but also consistently opposed every experiment in which, as in the ballad revival, he detected signs of revolt against it.” Johnson’s two chief poems, *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, are classical on account of their didacticism, their formal, rhetorical style, and their adherence to the closed couplet.

Goldsmith was equally convinced that the classical standards of writing poetry were the best and that they had attained perfection during the Augustan Age. All that was required of the poets was to imitate those standards. According to him “Pope was the limit of classical literature.” In his opposition to the blank verse, Goldsmith showed himself fundamentally hostile to change. His two important poems, *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, which are versified pamphlets on political economy, are classical in spirit and form. They are written in the closed couplet, are didactic, and have pompous phraseology. These poems may be described as the last great work of the outgoing, artificial eighteenth century school, though even in them, if we study them minutely, we perceive the subtle touches of the new age of Romanticism especially in their treatment of nature and rural life.

Before we consider the poets of the Age of Johnson, who broke from the classical tradition and followed the new Romantic trends, let us first examine what Romanticism stood for.

Romanticism was opposed to Classicism on all vital points. For instance, the main characteristics of classical poetry were: (i) it was mainly the product of intelligence and was especially deficient

in emotion and imagination; (ii) it was chiefly the town poetry; (iii) it had no love for the mysterious, the supernatural, or what belonged to the dim past; (iv) its style was formal and artificial; (v) it was written in the closed couplet; (vi) it was fundamentally didactic; (vii) it insisted on the writer to follow the prescribed rules and imitate the standard models of good writing. The new poetry which showed romantic leanings was opposed to all these points. For instance, its chief characteristics were: (i) it encouraged emotion, passion and imagination in place of dry intellectuality; (ii) it was more interested in nature and rustic life rather than in town life; (iii) it revived the romantic spirit—love of the mysterious, the supernatural, the dim past; (iv) it opposed the artificial and formal style, and insisted on simple and natural forms of expression; (v) it attacked the supremacy of the closed couplet and encouraged all sorts of metrical experiments; (vi) its object was not didactic but the expression of the writer's experience for its own sake; (vii) it believed in the liberty of the poet to choose the theme and the manner of his writing.

The poets who showed romantic leanings, during the Age of Johnson, and who may be described as the precursors or harbingers of the Romantic Revival were James Thomson, Thomas Gray, William Collins, James Macpherson, William Blake, Robert Burns, William Cowper and George Crabbe.

James Thomson (1700-1748) was the earliest eighteenth century poet who showed romantic tendency in his work. The main romantic characteristic in his poetry is his minute observation of nature. In *The Seasons* he gives fine sympathetic descriptions of the fields, the woods, the streams, the shy and wild creatures. Instead of the closed couplet, he follows the Miltonic tradition of using the blank verse. In *The Castle of Indolence*, which is written in form of dream allegory so popular in medieval literature, Thomson uses the Spenserian stanza. Unlike the didactic poetry of the Augustans, this poem is full of dim suggestions.

Thomas Gray (1716-1771) is famous as the author of *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, "the best-known in the English language." Unlike classical poetry which was characterised by restraint on personal feelings and emotions, this poem is the manifestation of deep feelings of the poet. It is suffused with the melancholy spirit which is a characteristic romantic trait. It contains deep reflections of the poet on the universal theme of death which spare no one. Other important poems of Gray are *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*. Of these *The Bard* is more original and romantic. It emphasises the independence of the poet, which became the chief characteristic of romantic poetry. All these poems of Gray follow the classical model so far as form is concerned, but in spirit they are romantic.

William Collins (1721-1759). Like the poetry of Gray, Collin's poetry exhibits deep feelings of melancholy. His first poem, *Oriental Eclogues* is romantic in feeling, but is written in the closed couplet. His best-known poems are the odes *To Simplicity*, *To Fear*, *To the Passions*, the small lyric *How Sleep The Brave*, and the beautiful "*Ode to Evening*". In all these poems the poet values the solitude and quietude because they afford opportunity for contemplative life. Collins in his poetry advocates return to nature and simple and unsophisticated life, which became the fundamental creeds of the Romantic Revival.

James Macpherson (1736-1796) became the most famous poet during his time by the publication of Ossianic poems, called the *Works of Ossian*, which were translations of Gaelic folk literature, though the originals were never produced, and so he was considered by some critics as a forger. In spite of this Macpherson exerted a considerable influence on contemporary poets like Blake and Burns by his poetry which was impregnated with moonlight melancholy and ghostly romantic suggestions.

William Blake (1757-1827). In the poetry of Blake we find a complete break from classical poetry. In some of his works as *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* which contain the famous poems—*Little Lamb who made thee?* and *Tiger, Tiger burning bright*, we are impressed by their lyrical quality. In other poems such as *The Book of Thel*, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, it is the prophetic voice of Blake which appeals to the reader. In the words of Swinburne, Blake was the only poet of “supreme and simple poetic genius” of the eighteenth century, “the one man of that age fit, on all accounts, to rank with the old great masters”. Some of his lyrics are, no doubt, the most perfect and the most original songs in the English language.

Robert Burns (1759-96), who is the greatest song writer in the English language, had great love for nature, and a firm belief in human dignity and quality, both of which are characteristic of romanticism. He has summed up his poetic creed in the following stanza:

*Give me a spark of Nature's fire,
That is all the learning I desire;
Then, though I trudge through dub and mire
At plough or cart,
My Muse, though homely in attire,
May touch the heart.*

The fresh, inspired songs of Burns as *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *To a Mouse*, *To a Mountain Daisy*, *Man was Made to Mourn* went straight to the heart, and they seemed to be the songs of the birds in spring time after the cold and formal poetry for about a century. Most of his songs have the Elizabethan touch about them.

William Cowper (1731-1800), who lived a tortured life and was driven to the verge of madness, had a genial and kind soul. His poetry, much of which is of autobiographical interest, describes the homely scenes and pleasures and pains of simple humanity—the two important characteristics of romanticism. His longest poem, *The Task*, written in blank verse, comes as a relief after reading the rhymed essays and the artificial couplets of the Age of Johnson. It is replete with description of homely scenes, of woods and brooks of ploughmen and shepherds. Cowper's most laborious work is the translation of Homer in blank verse, but he is better known for his small, lovely lyrics like *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, beginning with the famous line, 'Oh, that those lips had language', and *Alexander Selkirk*, beginning with the oft-quoted line, 'I am monarch of all I survey'.

George Crabbe (1754-1832) stood midway between the Augustans and the Romantics. In form he was classical, but in the temper of his mind he was romantic. Most of his poems are written in the heroic couplet, but they depict an attitude to nature which is Wordsworthian. To him nature is a “presence, a motion and a spirit,” and he realizes the intimate union of nature with man. His well-known poem, *The Village*, is without a rival as a picture of the working men of his age. He shows that the lives of the common villager and labourers are full of romantic interest. His later poems, *The Parish Register*, *The Borough*, *Tales in Verse*, and *Tales of the Hall* are all written in the same strain.

Another poet who may also be considered as the precursor of the Romantic Revival was **Thomas Chatterton (1752-70)**, the Bristol boy, whose *The Rowley Poems*, written in pseudo-Chaucerian English made a strong appeal of medievalism. The publication of Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* in 1765 also made great contribution to the romantic mood reviving interest in ballad literature.

(b) Prose of the Age of Johnson

In the Age of Johnson the tradition established by prose writers of the earlier part of the eighteenth century—Addison, Steele and Swift—was carried further. The eighteenth century is called the age of aristocracy. This aristocracy was no less in the sphere of the intellect than in that of politics and society. The intellectual and literary class formed itself into a group, which observed certain rules of behaviour, speech and writing. In the field of prose the leaders of this group established a literary style which was founded on the principles of logical and lucid thought. It was opposed to what was slipshod, inaccurate, and trivial. It avoided all impetuous enthusiasm and maintained an attitude of aloofness and detachment that contributed much to its mood of cynical humour. The great prose writers, the pillars of the Age of Johnson, who represented in themselves, the highest achievements of English prose, were Johnson, Burke and Gibbon.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was the literary dictator of his age, though he was not its greatest writer. He was a man who struggled heroically against poverty and ill-health; who was ready to take up cudgels against anyone however high he might be placed, but who was very kind and helpful to the poor and the wretched. He was an intellectual giant, and a man of sterling character, on account of all these qualities he was honoured and loved by all, and in his poor house gathered the foremost artists, scholars, actors, and literary men of London, who looked upon him as their leader.

Johnson's best-known works are his *Dictionary* and *Lives of Poets*. He contributed a number of articles in the periodicals, *The Rambler*, *The Idler* and *Rasselas*. In them his style is ponderous and verbose, but in *Lives of Poets*, which are very readable critical biographies of English poets, his style is simple and at times charming. Though in the preceding generations Dryden, Addison, Steele and Swift wrote elegant, lucid and effective prose, none of them set up any definite standard to be followed by others. What was necessary in the generation when Johnson wrote, was some commanding authority that might set standard of prose style, lay down definite rules and compel others to follow them. This is what was actually done by Johnson. He set a model of prose style which had rhythm, balance and lucidity, and which could be imitated with profit. In doing so he preserved the English prose style from degenerating into triviality and feebleness, which would have been the inevitable result of slavishly imitating the prose style of great writers like Addison by ordinary writers who had not the secret of Addison's genius. The model was set by Johnson.

Though Johnson's own style is often condemned as ponderous and verbose, he could write in an easy and direct style when he chose. This is clear from *Lives of Poets* where the formal dignity of his manner and the ceremonial stateliness of his phraseology are mixed with touches of playful humour and stinging sarcasm couched in very simple and lucid prose. The chief characteristic of Johnson's prose-style is that it grew out of his conversational habit, and therefore it is always clear, forceful and frank. We may not some time agree to the views he expresses in the *Lives*, but we cannot but be impressed by his boldness, his wit, wide range and brilliancy of his style.

Burke (1729-1797) was the most important member of Johnson's circle. He was a member of the Parliament for thirty years and as such he made his mark as the most forceful and effective orator of his times. A man of vast knowledge, he was the greatest political philosopher that ever spoke in the English Parliament.

Burke's chief contributions to literature are the speeches and writings of his public career. The earliest of them were *Thoughts on the Present Discontent* (1770). In this work Burke advocated the principle of limited monarchy which had been established in England since the Glorious Revolution in 1688, when James II was made to quit the throne, and William of Orange was invited by the Parliament to become the king of England with limited powers. When the

American colonies revolted against England, and the English government was trying to suppress that revolt, Burke vehemently advocated the cause of American independence. In that connection he delivered two famous speeches in Parliament. *On American Taxation* (1774) and on *Conciliation with America*, in which are embodied true statesmanship and political wisdom. The greatest speeches of Burke were, however, delivered in connection with the French Revolution, which were published as *The Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790). Here Burke shows himself as prejudiced against the ideals of the Revolution, and at times he becomes immoderate and indulges in exaggerations. But from the point of view of style and literary merit the *Reflections* stand higher, because they brought out the poetry of Burke's nature. His last speeches delivered in connection with the impeachment of Warren Hastings for the atrocities he committed in India, show Burke as the champion of justice and a determined foe of corruption, high-handedness and cruelty.

The political speeches and writings of Burke belong to the sphere of literature of a high order because of their universality. Though he dealt in them with events which happened during his day, he gave expression to ideas and impulses which were true not for one age but for all times. In the second place they occupy an honourable place in English literature on account of excellence of their style. The prose of Burke is full of fire and enthusiasm, yet supremely logical; eloquent and yet restrained; fearless and yet orderly; steered by every popular movement and yet dealing with fundamental principles of politics and philosophy. Burke's style, in short, is restrained, philosophical, dignified, obedient to law and order, free from exaggeration and pedantry as well as from vulgarity and superficiality.

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) was the first historian of England who wrote in a literary manner. His greatest historical work—*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which is an authoritative and well-documented history, can pass successfully the test of modern research and scholarship. But its importance in literature is on account of its prose style which is the very climax of classicism. It is finished, elegant, elaborate and exhaustive. Though his style is sometimes marred by affectations and undue elaboration, yet on account of his massive intellect, and unflinching sense of literary proportion, he towers above all competitors as the model historian.

The Eighteenth Century Novel

The chief literary contribution of the eighteenth century was the discovery of the modern novel, which at present is the most widely read and influential type of literature. The novel in its elementary form as a work of fiction written in prose was at first established in England by two authors—Bunyan and Defoe, who took advantage of the public interest in autobiography. The books of Bunyan, whether they are told in the first person or not, were meant to be autobiographical and their interest is subjective. Bunyan endeavours to interest his readers not in the character of some other person he had imagined or observed, but in himself, and his treatment of it is characteristic of the awakening talent for fiction in his time. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is begun as an allegory, but in course of time the author is so much taken up with the telling of the story, that he forgets about the allegory, and it is this fact which makes Bunyan the pioneer of the modern novel.

But it was Defoe who was the real creator of autobiographical fiction as a work of art. He was the first to create psychological interest in the character of the narrator. Moreover, he was the first to introduce realism or verisimilitude by observing in his writing a scrupulous and realistic fidelity and appropriateness to the conditions in which the story was told. For example, the reader is told about Crusoe's island as gradually as Crusoe himself comes to know of it. Besides introducing the elements of autobiography and realism, Defoe also fixed the peculiar form of the historical novel—the narrative of an imaginary person in a historical setting as in his *Memories*

of a Cavalier. On account of all these reasons Defoe is rightly termed the originator of the modern novel.

In spite of this, it can be safely said that until the publication of Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740, no true novel had appeared in English literature. By a true novel we mean simply a work of fictions which relates the story of a plain human life, under stress of emotions, and the interest of which does not depend on incident or adventure, but on its truth to nature. During the eighteenth century a number of English novelists—Goldsmith, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne—all developed simultaneously the form of the novel as presenting life, as it really is, in the form of a story. The new middle class which was rising and getting into power demanded a new type of literature, which must express the new ideal of the eighteenth century, that is, the value and the importance of individual life. Moreover, on account of the spread of education and the appearance of newspapers and magazines there was an immense increase in the reading public to whom the novelist could directly appeal without caring for the patronage of the aristocratic class which was losing power. It was under these circumstances that the novel was born in the eighteenth century expressing the same ideals of personality and of the dignity of common life which became the chief themes of the poets of the Romantic Revival, and which were proclaimed later by the American and French Revolutions. The novelists of the eighteenth century told the common people not about the grand lives of knights, princes and heroes, but about their own plain and simple lives, their ordinary thoughts and feelings, and their day-to-day actions and their effects on them and others. The result was that such works were eagerly read by the common people, and the novel became a popular form of literature appealing to the masses, because it belonged to them and reflected their lives.

Daniel Defoe (1661-1731) was, as has already been pointed out, the originator of the novel, though none of his works can be placed under the category of novel in the modern sense of the term. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe, has described the experiences of Alexander Selkirk who spent five years in solitude in the island of Juan Fernandez. Though the whole story is fictitious, it has been described most realistically with the minute accuracy of an eyewitness. From that point of view we can say that in *Robinson Crusoe* Defoe brought the realistic adventure story to a very high stage of its development, better than in his other works of fiction *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* which are just like picaresque stories (current at that time, about the adventures of rogues) to which were added unnatural moralising and repentance. But we cannot call *Robinson Crusoe*, strictly speaking, a novel, because here the author has not produced the effect of subordinating incident to the faithful portrayal of human life and character, which is the criterion of the real novel.

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) is credited with the writing of the first modern novel—*Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*. It tells the trials, tribulations and the final happy marriage of a young girl. Written in the form of 'Familiar Letters, on how to think and act justly and prudently, in the common concerns of Human Life', it is sentimental and boring on account of its wearisome details. But the merit of it lies in the fact that it was the first book which told in a realistic manner the inner life of a young girl. Its psychological approach made it the first modern novel in England. Richardson here gave too much importance to physical chastity, and 'prudence' which was the key to the middle class way of life during the eighteenth century. It enjoyed tremendous popularity on account of being in tune with the contemporary standards of morality. Richardson's second novel, *Clarissa or The History of a Young Lady*, is also written in the form of letters and is as sentimental as *Pamela*. In the heroine of this novel, Clarissa, Richardson has painted a real woman, portraying truthfully her doubts, scruples, griefs and humiliations. In his next novel, *Sir Charles Grandison*, which is also written in the form of letters, Richardson told the story of an aristocrat of ideal manners and virtues.

In all his novels Richardson's purpose was didactic, but he achieved something more. He probed into the inner working of the human mind. It was this achievement that made Dr. Johnson say of Richardson that he "enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue". Of *Clarissa* he said that "it was the first book in the world for the knowledge it displays of the human heart." Richardson's main contribution to the English novel was that for the first time he told stories of human life from within, depending for their interest not on incidents or adventures but on their truth to human nature.

Henry Fielding (1707-1754) was the greatest of the eighteenth century novelists. He wrote his first great novel *Joseph Andrews* in order to satirise and parody the false sentimentality and conventional virtues of Richardson's heroine, Pamela. The hero of this novel is a supposed brother of Pamela, a domestic servant, who has vowed to follow the example of his sister. He is also exposed to the same kinds of temptations, but instead of being rewarded for his virtues, he is dismissed from service by his mistress. The satiric purpose of Fielding ends here, because then he describes the adventures of Joseph with his companion Parson Adams, and tells the story of a vagabond life, with a view "to laugh men out of their follies". Instead of the sentimentality and feminine niceties of Richardson, in Fielding's novel we find a coarse, vigorous, hilarious and even vulgar approach to life. The result is broad realism not in the portrayal of inner life but of outer behaviour and manners. The characters in the novels are drawn from all classes of society, and they throb with life.

Fielding's next novel, *Jonathan Wild*, is a typical picaresque novel, narrating the story of a rogue. His greatest novel, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1746-1749), has epic as well as dramatic qualities. It consists of a large number of involved adventures, which are very skillfully brought towards their climax by the hand of a dramatist. Behind all chance happenings, improbabilities and incongruities there exists a definite pattern which gives the complicated plot of *Tom Jones* a unity which we find nowhere in English novel or drama except in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemists*. Without making a deliberate effort at moralising like Richardson Fielding suggests a deeper moral lesson that one should do good not for reward but for the satisfaction of doing so. It is the generous impulses, rooted in unselfishness and respect for others, which are the best guarantee of virtue.

Fielding's last novel, *Amelia* (1751), which is the story of a good wife in contrast with an unworthy husband, is written in a milder tone. Here instead of showing a detached and coarse attitude to life, Fielding becomes soft-hearted and champions the cause of the innocent and the helpless. It is also written in a homely and simple narrative.

Fielding's great contribution to the English novel is that he put it on a stable footing. It became free from its slavery to fact, conscious of its power and possibilities, and firmly established as an independent literary form. He is called the Father of the English novel, because he was the first to give genuine pictures of men and women of his age, without moralising over their vices and virtues. It was through his efforts that the novel became immensely popular with the reading public, and a large number of novels poured from the press.

Tobias Smollett (1721-1771) followed the example of Fielding in writing picaresque novels, which are full of intrigue and adventure. But he lacks the genius of Fielding, for his novels are just a jumble of adventures and incidents without any artistic unity. Instead of Fielding's broad humour and his inherent kindness, we find horrors and brutalities in the novels of Smollett, which are mistaken for realism.

Smollett's best-known novels are *Roderick Random* (1748) in which the hero relates a series of adventures; *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) in which are related the worst experiences at sea; and *Humphrey Clinker* (1771) in which is related the journey of a Welsh family through England and Scotland. In all these novels Smollett excites continuous laughter by farcical situations and

exaggeration in portraying human eccentricities. Unlike the realistic and pure comedy which Fielding presents in his novels, Smollett is the originator of the *funny novel*, which was brought to a climax by Dickens in his satirical and hearty caricatures.

Lawrence Sterne (1713-1768) was the opposite of Smollett in the sense that whereas we find horrors and brutalities in the novels of Smollett, in Sterne's we find whims, vagaries and sentimental tears. His best-known novels are *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. The former was started in 1760; its ninth volume appeared in 1767, but the book was never finished. In it are recorded in a most digressive and aimless manner the experiences of the eccentric Shandy family. The main achievements of this book lie in the brilliancy of its style and the creation of eccentric characters like Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim. *The Sentimental Journey*, which is a strange mixture of fiction, descriptions of travel, and a number of essays on all sorts of subjects, is also written in a brilliant style, and is stamped with Sterne's false and sentimental attitude to life.

These novels are written in the first person, and while Sterne speaks of one thing, it reminds him of another, with which it has no apparent, logical connection. So he is forced into digression, and in this manner he follows the wayward movements of his mind. This method is very much like that of the *Stream of Consciousness* novelists, though there is a difference, because the hero in Sterne's novels is Sterne himself. Another peculiarity of Sterne is his power of sentimentality, which along with his humour and indecency, is part and parcel of his way of interpreting life. Whenever he makes us smile, he hopes that there will be a suspicion of a tear as well. In fact the main contribution of Sterne to the English novel was his discovery of the delights of sensibility, the pleasures of the feeling heart, which opened up a vast field of experience, and which was followed by many eighteenth century writers.

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) wrote only one novel—*The Vicar of Wakefield*. This is the best novel in the English language, in which domestic life has been given an enduring romantic interest. It is free from that vulgarity and coarseness which we find in the novels of Smollett and Sterne. In it domestic virtues and purity of character are elevated. It is the story of Dr. Primrose, a simple English clergyman, who passes through various misfortunes, but ultimately comes out triumphant, with his faith in God and man reaffirmed. Without introducing romantic passion, intrigue and adventure which were freely used by other novelists, Goldsmith by relating a simple story in a simple manner has presented in *The Vicar of Wakefield* the best example of the novel, the new literary form which was becoming immensely popular.

Summing up the development of the English novel during the eighteenth century, we can say that the novel from a humble beginning evolved into a fully developed form. Defoe gave it the realistic touch; Richardson introduced analysis of the human heart; Fielding made it full of vitality and animal vigour; Smollett introduced exaggerated and eccentric characters; Sterne contributed sentimentality and brilliancy of style; and Goldsmith emphasised high principles and purity of domestic life. In the hands of these early masters the novel took a definite shape and came to be recognised as an important literary form with vast possibilities of further development.

The Eighteenth Century Drama

The dramatic literature of the eighteenth century was not of a high order. In fact there was a gradual deterioration and during the last quarter of the century drama was moving towards its lowest ebb. One of the reasons of the decline of drama during the eighteenth century was the Licensing Act of 1737 which curtailed the freedom of expression of dramatists. The result was that a number of writers like Fielding, who could make their marks as dramatists, left the theatre and turned towards the novel. Moreover, the new commercial middle classes which were coming

into prominence imposed their own dull and stupid views on the themes that would be acceptable to the theatre. Naturally this was not liked by first-rate writers who wanted to write independently.

In the field of tragedy two opposing traditions—Romantic and Classical—exercised their influence on the dramatists. The Romantic tradition was the Elizabethan way of writing tragedy. Those who followed this tradition made use of intricate plots and admitted horror and violence on the open stage. The Classical tradition which was mainly the French tradition of writing tragedy was characterised by the unfolding of a single action without any sub-plot, and long declamatory speeches delivered by the actors. The traditional English pattern of drama was exemplified by Otway's *Venice Preserved*, while the Classical tradition was strictly upheld in Addison's *Cato* (1713), which is written in an unemotional but correct style, and has a pronounced moralising tone. Other tragedies which were written according to the Classical pattern were James Thomson's *Sophonisba* (1729) and Dr. Johnson's *Irene* (1749). But none of these tragedies, whether following the Romantic or the Classical tradition came up to a respectable dramatic standard, because the creative impulse seems to have spent itself. Though a very large number of tragedies were written during the eighteenth century, they had literary, but no dramatic value. Mostly there were revivals of old plays, which were adapted by writers who were not dramatists in the real sense of the term.

In the field of comedy, the same process of disintegration was noticeable. Comedy was deteriorating into farce. Moreover, sentimentality which was opposed to the authority of reason, came to occupy an important place in comedy. This 'sentimental' comedy which gained in popularity was criticised by Goldsmith thus:

"A new species of dramatic composition has been introduced under the name of sentimental comedy, in which the virtues of private life are exhibited, rather than the vices exposed; and the distresses rather than the faults of mankind make our interest in the pieces. These comedies have had of late great success, perhaps from their novelty, and also from their flattering every man in his favourite foible. In these plays almost all the characters are good and exceedingly generous; they are lavish enough of their tin money on the stage; and though they want humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught, not only to pardon, but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended, and the comedy aims at touching our passions without the power of being truly pathetic."

Steele was the first exponent of the sentimental comedy in the eighteenth century. In his plays, such as *The Funeral*, *The Lying Lover*, *The Tender Husband*, *The Conscious Lovers*, Steele extolled the domestic virtues. His object was didactic, and he tried to prove that morality and sharpness of intelligence can go together. In his plays in which tears of pity and emotion flowed profusely, Steele held that Simplicity of mind, Good nature, Friendship and Honour were the guiding principles of conduct.

Other dramatists who wrote sentimental comedies were Colley Cibber, Hugh Kelley and Richard Cumberland. In their hands comedy was so much drenched in emotions and sentiments that the genuine human issues were completely submerged in them. Thus there was a need to rescue the drama from such depths to which it had fallen.

The two great dramatists of the eighteenth century, who led the revolt against sentimental comedy were Oliver Goldsmith (1730-74) and Richard Sheridan (1751-1861). Though in his novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and in his poem, *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith showed clear marks of a sentimental attitude to life, in his *Good-Natured Man* he covers it with ridicule by portraying the character of Honeywood as unadulterated 'good-nature'. Though the play is a feeble one, his intentions of mocking the excess of false charity are obvious. His next play, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), which is his masterpiece, was an immediate success. It has always

remained one of the half-dozen most popular comedies in the English language. In spite of the obvious improbabilities of the plot, the play moves naturally in a homely atmosphere, full of genuine humour which provokes unrestrained laughter. Here there is no artificiality of sentimental comedy. The main characters—Hardcastle and Tony Lumpkin are very clearly delineated. They are at once types and individuals. They are the images of their age, and yet recognizable as human figures. *She Stoops to Conquer* went a long way in restoring comedy to its own province of mirth and laughter and rescuing it from too much sentimentality.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan is best known for his two comedies—*The Rivals* (1775) and *The School for Scandal* (1777). Sheridan brought back the brilliance of the witty and elegant Restoration comedy, purged of its impurities and narrowness. He created, instead, a more genial and romantic atmosphere associated with the comedies of Shakespeare. His characters are as clearly drawn as those of Ben Jonson, but they move in a gayer atmosphere. The only defect that we find in these comedies of Sheridan is that there is all gaiety, but no depth, no new interpretation of human nature.

The intrigue in *The Rivals*, though not original, is skilfully conducted. The audience heartily laugh at humours of Mrs. Malaprop, Sir Anthony, and Bab Acres. In *The School for Scandal* Sheridan showed himself as a mature dramatist. Here the dialogue has the exquisite Congreve-like precision, and wit reigns supreme. Even the stupid characters, the servants, are witty. Though the main characters, the quarrelsome couple and the plotting brothers; the ‘scandal-club’ of Lady Sneerwell; and the intrigue leading inevitably to the thrilling resolution in the famous scene, are all familiar, and can be found in many other plays, yet they are invested with novelty. In both these plays Sheridan reversed the trend of sentimentalism by introducing realism tinged with the geniality of romance. He had no message to convey, except that the most admirable way of living is to be generous and open-hearted.

The Romantic Age (1798-1824)

The Romantic period is the most fruitful period in the history of English literature. The revolt against the Classical school which had been started by writers like Chatterton, Collins, Gray, Burne, Cowper etc. reached its climax during this period, and some of the greatest and most popular English poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats belong to this period.

This period starts from 1798 with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the famous Preface which Wordsworth wrote as a manifesto of the new form of poetry which he and Coleridge introduced in opposition to the poetry of the Classical school. In the Preface to the First Edition Wordsworth did not touch upon any other characteristic of Romantic poetry except the simplicity and naturalness of its diction. “The majority of the following poems”, he writes “are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertaining how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adopted to the purposes of poetic pleasure.” In the longer preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, where Wordsworth explains his theories of poetic imagination, he again returns to the problem of the proper language of poetry. “The language too, of these men (that is those in humble and rustic life) has been adopted because from their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple, unelaborated expression.”

Wordsworth chose the language of the common people as the vehicle of his poetry, because it is the most sincere expression of the deepest and rarest passions and feelings. This was the first point of attack of the artificial and formal style of Classical school of poetry. The other point at which Wordsworth attacked the old school was its insistence on the town and the artificial way

of life which prevailed there. He wanted the poet to breathe fresh air of the hills and beautiful natural scenes and become interested in rural life and the simple folk living in the lap of nature. A longing to be rid of the precision and order of everyday life drove him to the mountains, where, as he describes in his *Lines written above Tintern Abbey*.

The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite.

By attacking the supremacy of the heroic couplet as the only form of writing poetry, and substituting it by simple and natural diction; by diverting the attention of the poet from the artificial town life to the life in the woods, mountains and villages inhabited by simple folk; and by asserting the inevitable role of imagination and emotions in poetry as against dry intellectualism which was the chief characteristic of the Classical school, Wordsworth not only emancipated the poet from the tyranny of literary rules and conventions which circumscribed his freedom of expression, but he also opened up before him vast regions of experience which in the eighteenth century had been closed to him. His revolt against the Classical school was in keeping with the political and social revolutions of the time as the French Revolution and the American War of Independence which broke away with the tyranny of social and political domination, and which proclaimed the liberty of the individual or nation to be the master of its own destiny. Just as liberty of the individual was the watchword of the French Revolution, liberty of a nation from foreign domination was the watchword of the American War of Independence; in the same manner liberty of the poet from the tyranny of the literary rules and conventions was the watchword of the new literary movement which we call by the name of Romantic movement. It is also termed as the Romantic Revival, because all these characteristics—the liberty of the writer to choose the theme and form of his literary production, the importance given to imagination and human emotions, and a broad and catholic outlook on life in all its manifestations in towns, villages, mountains, rivers etc. belonged to the literature of the Elizabethan Age which can be called as the first Romantic age in English literature. But there was a difference between the Elizabethan Age and the Romantic Age, because in the latter the Romantic spirit was considered as discovery of something which once was, but had been lost. The poets of the Romantic periods, therefore, always looked back to the Elizabethan masters—Shakespeare, Spenser and other—and got inspiration from them. They were under the haunting influence of feelings which had already been experienced, and a certain type of free moral life which had already been lived, and so they wanted to recapture the memory and rescue it from fading away completely.

In the poems which were contributed in the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth dealt with events of everyday life, by preference in its humblest form. He tried to prove that the commonplace things of life, the simple and insignificant aspects of nature, if treated in the right manner, could be as interesting and absorbing as the grand and imposing aspects of life and nature. To the share of Coleridge fell such subjects as were supernatural, which he was “to inform with that semblance of truth sufficient to procure for those shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.” Wordsworth’s *naturalism* and Coleridge’s *supernaturalism* thus became the two important spearheads of the Romantic Movement.

Wordsworth’s naturalism included love for nature as well for man living in simple and natural surroundings. Thus he speaks for the love that is in homes where poor men live, the daily teaching that is in:

Woods and rills;

The silence that is in the starry sky;

The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

Coleridge's supernaturalism, on the other hand, established the connection between the visible world and the other world which is unseen. He treated the supernatural in his masterly poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, in such a manner that it looked quite natural.

Associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge in the exploration of the less known aspects of humanity was Southey who makes up with them the trail of the so-called Lake Poets. He devoted himself to the exhibition of "all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind." Walter Scott, though he was not intimately associated with the Lake poets, contributed his love for the past which also became one of the important characteristics of the Romantic Revival.

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and Scott belong to the first romantic generation. Though they were in their youth filled with great enthusiasm by the outburst of the French Revolution which held high hope for mankind, they became conservatives and gave up their juvenile ideas when the French Republic converted itself into a military empire resulting in Napoleonic wars against England and other European countries. The revolutionary ardour, therefore, faded away, and these poets instead of championing the cause of the oppressed section of mankind, turned to mysticism, the glory of the past, love of natural phenomena, and the noble simplicity of the peasant race attached to the soil and still sticking to traditional virtues and values. Thus these poets of the first romantic generation were not in conflict with the society of which they were a part. They sang about the feelings and emotions which were shared by a majority of their countrymen.

The second generation of Romantic writers—Byron, Shelley, Keats, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and others—who came to the forefront after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, revolted from the reactionary spirit which was prevailing at that time in England against the ideals of the French Revolution. The result was that the second generation came in conflict with the social environment with which their predecessors were in moral harmony. Moreover, the victorious struggle with the French empire had left England impoverished, and the political and social agitations which had subsided on account of foreign danger, again raised their head. The result was that there was a lot of turmoil and perturbation among the rank and file, which was being suppressed by those who were in power. In such an atmosphere the younger romantic generation renewed the revolutionary ardour and attacked the established social order. Thus Romanticism in the second stage became a literature of social conflict. Both Byron and Shelley rebelled against society and had to leave England.

But basically the poets of the two generations of Romanticism shared the same literary beliefs and ideals. They were all innovators in the forms well as in the substance of their poetry. All, except, Byron, turned in disgust from the pseudo-classical models and condemned in theory and practice the "poetical diction" prevalent throughout the eighteenth century. They rebelled against the tyranny of the couplet, which they only used with Elizabethan freedom, without caring for the mechanical way in which it was used by Pope. To it they usually preferred either blank verse or stanzas, or a variety of shorter lyrical measures inspired by popular poetry are truly original. The prose-writers of the Romantic Revival also broke with their immediate predecessors, and discarded the shorter and lighter style of the eighteenth century. They reverted to the ponderous, flowery and poetical prose of the Renaissance and of Sir Thomas Browne, as we find in the works of Lamb, and De Quincey. Much of the prose of the Romantic period was devoted to the critical study of literature, its theory and practice. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Lamb, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt and De Quincey opened up new avenues in the study of literature, and gradually prepared the way for the understanding of the new type of literature which was being produced.

As the Romantic Age was characterised by excess of emotions, it produced a new type of novel, which seems rather hysterical, now, but which was immensely popular among the multitude of

readers, whose nerves were somewhat excited, and who revelled in extravagant stories of supernatural terror. Mrs. Anne Radcliffe was one of the most successful writers of the school of exaggerated romances. Sir Walter Scott regaled the readers by his historical romances. Jane Austen, however, presents a marked contrast to these extravagant stories by her enduring work in which we find charming descriptions of everyday life as in the poetry of Wordsworth.

Whereas the Classical age was the age of prose, the Romantic age was the age of poetry, which was the proper medium for the expression of emotions and imaginative sensibility of the artist. The mind of the artist came in contact with the sensuous world and the world of thought at countless points, as it had become more alert and alive. The human spirit began to derive new richness from outward objects and philosophical ideas. The poets began to draw inspiration from several sources—mountains and lakes, the dignity of the peasant, the terror of the supernatural, medieval chivalry and literature, the arts and mythology of Greece, the prophecy of the golden age. All these produced a sense of wonder which had to be properly conveyed in literary form. That is why some critics call the Romantic Revival as the Renaissance of Wonder. Instead of living a dull, routine life in the town, and spending all his time and energy in to midst of artificiality and complexity of the cities, the poets called upon man to adopt a healthier way of living in the natural world in which providence has planted him of old, and which is full of significance for his soul. The greatest poets of the romantic revival strove to capture and convey the influence of nature on the mind and of the mind on nature interpenetrating one another. The essence of Romanticism was that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way. The result was that during the Romantic period the young enthusiasts turned as naturally to poetry as a happy man to singing. The glory of the age is the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats. In fact, poetry was so popular that Southey had to write in verse in order to earn money, what he otherwise would have written in prose.

Summing up the chief characteristics of Romanticism as opposed to Classicism, we can say that Classicism laid stress upon the impersonal aspects of the life of the mind; the new literature, on the other hand, openly shifts the centre of art, bringing it back towards what is most proper and particular in each individual. It is the product of the fusion of two faculties of the artist—his sensibility and imagination. The Romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life, and Romantic literature was fed by intense emotion coupled with the intense desire to display that emotion through appropriate imagery. Thus Romantic literature is a genuinely creative literature calling into play the highest creative faculty of man.

Romantic Poetry

Romantic poetry which was the antithesis of Classical poetry had many complexities. Unlike Classical poets who agreed on the nature and form of poetry, and the role that the poet is called upon to play, the Romantic poets held different views on all these subjects. The artistic and philosophic principles of neo-classical poetry were completely summarised by Pope, and they could be applied to the whole of Augustan poetry. But it is difficult to find a common denominator which links such poets as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The reason of this was that there was abundance and variety of genius. No age in English literature produced such great giants in the field of poetry. Moreover, it was the age of revolutionary change, not only in the view of the character and function of poetry but in the whole conception of the nature of man and of the world in which he found himself. The evenness, equanimity and uniformity of the Classical age was broken, and it was replaced by strong currents of change flowing in various directions. One poet reacted to a particular current more strongly or sympathetically than the other poet. Thus each poet of the Romantic period stands for himself, and has his own well-defined individuality. The only common characteristic

that we find in them is their intense faith in imagination, which could not be controlled by any rules and regulations.

In fact the most distinctive mark which distinguished the Romantic poets from the Classical poets was the emphasis which the former laid on imagination. In the eighteenth century imagination was not a cardinal point in poetical theory. For Pope, Johnson and Dryden the poet was more an interpreter than a creator, more concerned with showing the attractions of what we already know than with expeditions into the unfamiliar and the unseen. They were less interested in the mysteries of life than in its familiar appearances, and they thought that their task was to display this with as much charm and truth as they could command. But for the Romantics imagination was fundamental, because they thought that without that poetry was impossible. They were conscious of a wonderful capacity to create imaginary worlds, and they could not believe that this was idle or false. On the contrary, they thought that to curb it was to deny something vitally necessary to the whole being.

Whereas the Classical poets were more interested in the visible world, the Romantic poets obeyed an inner call to explore more fully the world of the spirit. They endeavoured to explore the mysteries of life, and thus understand it better. It was this search for the unseen world that awoke the inspiration of the Romantics and made poets of them. They appealed not to the logical mind, but to the complete self, in the whole range of intellectual faculties, senses and emotions. Though all the Romantic poets believed in an ulterior reality and based their poetry on it, they founded it in different ways and made different uses of it. They varied in the degree of importance which they attached to the visible world and in their interpretation of it. Coleridge conceived of the world of facts as an “inanimate cold world”, in which “object, as objects, are essentially fixed and dead”. It was the task of the poet to transform it by his power of imagination, to bring the dead world back to life. When we turn to *The Ancient Mariner and Christable* it seems clear that Coleridge thought that the task of poetry is to convey the mystery of life by the power of imagination. He was fascinated by the notion of unearthly powers at work in the world, and it was this influence which he sought to catch. The imagination of the poet is his creative, shaping spirit, and it resembles the creative power of God. Just as God creates this universe, the poet also creates a universe of his own by his imagination.

Wordsworth also thought with Coleridge that the imagination was the most important gift that the poet can have. He agreed with Coleridge that this activity resembles that of God. But according to Wordsworth imagination is a comprehensive faculty comprising many faculties. So he explains that the imagination:

*Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind
And Reason in her most exalted mood.*

Wordsworth differs from Coleridge in his conception of the external world. For him the world is not dead but living and has its own soul. Man's task is to enter into communion with this soul. Nature was the source of his inspiration, and he could not deny to it an existence at least as powerful as man's. But since nature lifted him out of himself, he sought for a higher state in which the soul of nature and the soul of man could be united in a single harmony.

Shelley was no less attached to the imagination and gave it no less a place in his theory of poetry. He saw that the task of reason is simply to analyse a given thing and to act as an instrument of the imagination, which uses its conclusions to create a synthetic and harmonious whole. He called poetry “the Expression of the Imagination”, because in it diverse things are brought together in harmony instead of being separated through analysis. Shelley tried to grasp the whole of things in its essential unity, to show what is real and what is merely phenomenal, and by doing this to display how the phenomenal depends on the real. For him the ultimate reality is the eternal mind, and this holds the universe together. In thought and feeling, in consciousness and spirit, Shelley found reality. He believed that the task of the imagination is to create shapes by which

this reality can be revealed.

Keats had passionate love for the visible world and at times his approach was highly sensuous. But he had a conviction that the ultimate reality is to be found only in the imagination. What is meant to him can be seen from some lines in *Sleep and Poetry*, in which he asks why imagination has lost its power and scope:

*Is there so small a range
In the present strength of manhood, that the high
Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
Upon the clouds? Has she not shown us all?
From the clear space of ether, to the small
Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning
Of Jove's eyebrow, to the tender greening
Of April meadows.*

Through the imagination Keats sought an ultimate reality to which a door was opened by his appreciation of beauty through the senses. For him imagination is that absorbing and exalting faculty which opens the way to an unseen spiritual order.

Thus the great Romantic poets agreed that their task was to find through the imagination some transcendental order, some inner and ultimate reality which explains the outward appearance of things in the visible world and the effect which they produce on us. Each one gave his own interpretation of the universe, the relation of God, the connection between the visible and the invisible, nature and man, as he saw it through the power of his imagination. Each set forth his own vision through the power of his imagination. Each set forth his own vision through the richness of his poetry, and gave it a concrete individual shape. They refused to accept the ideas of other men on trust or to sacrifice imagination to argument. By means of their creative art they tried to awaken the imagination of the reader to the reality that lies behind and in familiar things, to rouse him from the dead and dull routine of custom, and make him conscious of the unfathomable mysteries of life. They tried to show that mere reason is not sufficient to understand the fundamental problems of life; what is required is inspired intuition. Thus their view of life and poetry was much wider and deeper than that of their predecessors in the eighteenth century, because they appealed to the whole spiritual nature of man and not merely to his reason and common sense whose scope is limited.

Poets of the Romantic Age

The poets of the Romantic age can be classified into three groups— (i) The Lake School, consisting of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey; (ii) The Scott group including Campbell and Moore; and (iii) The group comprising Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The first two groups were distinctly earlier than the third, so we have two eight years flood periods of supremely great poetry, namely 1798-1806 and 1816-1824, separated by a middle period when by comparison creative energy had ebbed.

(a) The Lake Poets

The Lake Poets formed a 'school' in the sense that they worked in close cooperation, and their lives were spent partly in the Lake district. Only Wordsworth was born there, but all the three lived there for a shorter or longer period. Linked together by friendship, they were still further united by the mutual ardour of their revolutionary ideas in youth, and by the common reaction

which followed in their riper years. They held many of the poetic beliefs in common. Wordsworth and Coleridge lived together for a long time and produced the *Lyrical Ballads* by joint effort in 1798. They had original genius and what they achieved in the realm of poetry was supported by Southey who himself did not possess much creative imagination. The literary revolution which is associated with their name was accomplished in 1800, when in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth and Coleridge explained further their critical doctrines.

Describing the genesis of the poems contained the *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge wrote later in his greatest critical work—*Biographia Literaria* (1817):

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversation turned frequently on two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination... The thought suggested itself that a series of poems may be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real... For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents, were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves. In this idea originated the plan of Lyrical Ballads, in which it was agreed that my endeavour should be directed to persons and characters supernatural... Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to give charm of novelty to things of every day.

This was the framework of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Regarding the style, Wordsworth explained in the famous preface:

The poems were published which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement, a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavour to impart... Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language.

Wordsworth thus registered a protest against the artificial ‘poetic diction’ of the classical school, which was separated from common speech. He declared emphatically: “There is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.” Thus it was in the spirit of a crusader that Wordsworth entered upon his poetic career. His aim was to lift poetry from its depraved state and restore to it its rightful position.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was the greatest poet of the Romantic period. The credit of originating the Romantic movement goes to him. He refused to abide by any poetic convention and rules, and forged his own way in the realm of poetry. He stood against many generations of great poets and critics, like Dryden, Pope and Johnson, and made way for a new type of poetry. He declared: “A poet is a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind.” The truth of this statement struck down the ideal of literary conventions based on reason and rationality, which had been blindly worshipped for so long. By defining poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling” he revolted against the dry intellectuality of his predecessors. By giving his ideas about the poetic language as simple and natural, he opposed the “gaudiness and inane phraseology” of the affected classical style.

Wordsworth wrote a large number and variety of lyrics, in which he can stir the deepest emotions by the simplest means. There we find the aptness of phrase and an absolute naturalness which make a poem once read as a familiar friend. Language can scarcely be at once more

simple and more full of feeling than in the following stanza from one of the 'Lucy poems':

*Thus Nature spoke—The work was done,
How soon my Lucy's race was run.
She died, and left to me
This health, this calm, and quiet scene,
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.*

Besides lyrics Wordsworth wrote a number of sonnets of rare merit like *To Milton*, *Westminster Bridge*, *The World is too much with us*, in which there is a fine combination of the dignity of thought and language. In his odes, as *Ode to Duty* and *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, he gives expression to his high ideals and philosophy of life. In the *Immortality Ode*, Wordsworth celebrates one of his most cherished beliefs that our earliest intuitions are the truest, and that those are really happy who even in their mature years keep themselves in touch with their childhood:

*Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither.
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling ever more.*

But Wordsworth was not merely a lyrical poet; he justly claims to be the poet of Man of Nature, and of Human Life. Though in his youth he came under the influence of the ideals of the French Revolution, he was soon disillusioned on account of its excesses, and came to the conclusion that the emancipation of man cannot be effected by poetical upheavals, but by his living a simple, natural life. In the simple pieties of rustic life he began to find a surer foundation for faith in mankind than in the dazzling hopes created by the French Revolution. Moreover, he discovered that there is an innate harmony between Nature and Man. It is when man lives in the lap of nature that he lives the right type of life. She has an ennobling effect on him, and even the simplest things in nature can touch a responsive cord in man's heart:

*To me the meanest flower that blooms can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.*

According to Wordsworth man is a part of Nature. In his poem *Resolution and Independence* the old man and the surroundings make a single picture:

*Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood;
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace
Upon the margin of that moorish flood,
Motionless like a cloud the old man stood
That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth all together, if it move at all.*

Besides the harmony between Man and Nature, the harmony of Wordsworth's own spirit with the universe is the theme of Wordsworth's greatest Nature poems: *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, *Yew Trees* and *The Simlton Pass*.

Wordsworth is famous for his lyrics, sonnets, odes and short descriptive poems. His longer poems contain much that is prosy and uninteresting. The greater part of his work, including *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* was intended for a place in a single great poem, to be called *The Recluse*, which should treat of nature, man and society. *The Prelude*, treating of the growth of poets' mind, was to introduce this work. *The Excursion* (1814) is the second book of *The Recluse*; and the third was never completed. In his later years, Wordsworth wrote much poetry

which is dull and unimaginative. But there is not a single line in his poetry which has not got the dignity and high moral value which we associate with Wordsworth who, according to Tennyson, “uttered nothing base.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). The genius of Coleridge was complementary to that of Wordsworth. While Wordsworth dealt with naturalism which was an important aspect of the Romantic movement, Coleridge made the supernatural his special domain, which was an equally important aspect. In his youth Coleridge came under the spell of French Revolution and the high hope which it held out for the emancipation of the oppressed section of mankind. He gave poetic expression to his political aspiration in *Religious Musings*, *Destiny of Nations* and *Ode to the Departing Year* (1796). But like Wordsworth, he also began to think differently after the excesses of the Revolution. This change of thought is shown in his beautiful poem *France: an Ode* (1798) which he himself called his ‘recantation’. After that he, like Wordsworth, began to support the conservative cause.

Coleridge was a man of gigantic genius, but his lack of will power and addiction to opium prevented him from accomplishing much in the realm of poetry. Whatever he has written, though of high quality, is fragmentary. It was, however, in the fields of theology, philosophy and literary criticism that he exercised a tremendous and lasting influence. His two best-known poems are *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, which represent the high watermark of supernaturalism as some of the best poems of Wordsworth represent the triumph of naturalism, in English poetry. In these two poems Coleridge saved supernaturalism from the coarse sensationalism then in vogue by linking it with psychological truth. He had absorbed the spells of medievalism within himself and in these poems they appeared rarely distilled and inextricably blended with poets’ exquisite perception of the mysteries that surround the commonplace things of everyday life.

In the *Ancient Mariner*, which is a poetic masterpiece, Coleridge introduced the reader to a supernatural realm, with a phantom ship, a crew of dead men, the overwhelming curse of the albatross, the polar spirit, the magic breeze, and a number of other supernatural things and happenings, but he manages to create a sense of absolute reality concerning these manifest absurdities. With that supreme art which ever seems artless, Coleridge gives us glimpses from time to time of the wedding feast to which the mariner has been invited. The whole poem is wrought with the colour and glamour of the Middle Ages and yet Coleridge makes no slavish attempt to reproduce the past in a mechanical manner. The whole poem is the baseless fabric of a vision; a fine product of the ethereal and subtle fancy of a great poet. But in spite of its wildness, its medieval superstitions and irresponsible happening, *The Ancient Mariner* is made actual and vital to our imagination by its faithful pictures of Nature, its psychological insight and simple humanity. In it the poet deals in a superb manner with the primal emotions of love, hate, pain, remorse and hope. He prayeth best who loveth best is not an artificial ending of the poem in the form of a popular saying, but it is a fine summing up in a few lines of the spirit which underlies the entire poem. Its simple, ballad form, its exquisite imagery, the sweet harmony of its verse, and the aptness of its phraseology, all woven together in an artistic whole, make this poem the most representative of the romantic school of poetry.

Christabel, which is a fragment, seems to have been planned as the story of a pure young girl who fell under the spell of a sorcer in the shape of the woman Gerldine. Though it has strange melody and many passages of exquisite poetry, and in sheer artistic power it is scarcely inferior to *The Ancient Mariner*, it has supernatural terrors of the popular hysterical novels. The whole poem is suffused in medieval atmosphere and everything is vague and indefinite. Like *The Ancient Mariner* it is written in a homely and simple diction and in a style which is spontaneous and effortless.

Kubla Khan is another fragment in which the poet has painted a gorgeous Oriental dream picture. The whole poem came to Coleridge in a dream one morning when he had fallen asleep, and upon awakening he began to write hastily, but he was interrupted after fifty-four lines were written,

and it was never finished.

Though Coleridge wrote a number of other poems—*Love, The Dark Ladie, Youth and Age, Dejection: an Ode*, which have grace, tenderness and touches of personal emotion, and a number of poems full of very minute description of natural scenes, yet his strength lay in his marvellous dream faculty, and his reputation as a poet rest on *The Ancient Mariner, Christabel and Kubla Khan* where he touched the heights of romantic poetry.

Robert Southey (1774-1843) was the third poet of the group of Lake Poets. Unlike Wordsworth and Coleridge he lacked higher qualities of poetry, and his achievement as a poet is not much. He was a voracious reader and voluminous writer. His most ambitious poems *Thalaba, The Curse of Kehama, Madoc and Roderick* are based on mythology of different nations. He also wrote a number of ballads and short poems, of which the best known is about his love for books (*My days among the Dead are past.*) But he wrote far better prose than poetry, and his admirable *Life of Nelson* remains a classic. He was made the *Poet Laureate* in 1813, and after his death in 1843 Wordsworth held this title.

(b) The Scott Group

The romantic poets belonging to the Scott group are *Sir Walter Scott, Campbell and Thomas Moore*. They bridged the years which preceded the second outburst of high creative activity in the Romantic period.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) was the first to make romantic poetry popular among the masses. His *Marmion and Lady of the Lake* gained greater popularity than the poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge which were read by a select few. But in his poetry we do not find the deeply imaginative and suggestive quality which is at the root of poetic excellence. It is the story element, the narrative power, which absorbs the reader's attention. That is why they are more popular with young readers. Moreover, Scott's poetry appeals on account of its vigour, youthful abandon, vivid pictures, heroic characters, rapid action and succession of adventures. His best known poems are *The Lady of the Last Ministrel, Marmion, The Lady of the Lake, Rokeby, The Lord of the Isles*. All of them recapture the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, and breathe an air of supernaturalism and superstitions. After 1815 Scott wrote little poetry and turned to prose romance in the form of the historical novel in which field he earned great and enduring fame. Thomas Campbell (1774-1844) and Thomas Moore (1779-1852) were prominent among a host of minor poets who following the vogue of Scott wrote versified romance. Campbell wrote *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809) in the Spenserian stanza, which does not hold so much interest today as his patriotic war songs—*Ye Mariners of England, Hohenlinden, The Battle of the Baltic*, and ballads such as *Lord Ullin's Daughter*. The poems of Moore are now old-fashioned and have little interest for the modern reader. He wrote a long series of *Irish Melodies*, which are musical poems, vivacious and sentimental. His *Lalla Rookh* is a collection of Oriental tales in which he employs lucious imagery. Though Moore enjoyed immense popularity during his time, he is now considered as a minor poet of the Romantic Age.

(c) The Younger Group

To the younger group of romantic poets belong Byron, Shelley and Keats. They represent the second Flowering of English Romanticism, the first being represented by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. Though the younger group was in many ways indebted to the older group and was in many ways akin to it, yet the poets of the younger group show some sharp differences with the poets of older group, it was because the revolutionary ideals which at first attracted Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey and then repelled them, had passed into the blood of Byron and Shelley. They were the children of the revolution and their humanitarian ardour affected even Keats who

was more of an artist. Moreover, compared to the poets of the older group, the poets of the younger group were not only less national, but they were also against the historic and social traditions of England. It is not without significance that Byron and Shelley lived their best years, and produced their best poetry in Italy; and Keats was more interested in Greek mythology than in the life around him. Incidentally, these three poets of second generation of Romanticism died young—Byron at the age of thirty-six, Shelley thirty, and Keats twenty-five. So the spirit of youthful freshness is associated with their poetry.

(i) Lord George Gordon Byron (1788-1824)

During his time Byron was the most popular of all Romantic poets, and he was the only one who made an impact on the continent both in his own day and for a long time afterwards. This was mainly due to the force of his personality and the glamour of his career, but as his poetry does not possess the high excellence that we find in Shelley's and Keats', now he is accorded a lower position in the hierarchy of Romantic poets. He is the only Romantic poet who showed regard for the poets of the eighteenth century, and ridiculed his own contemporaries in his early satirical poem, *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers* (1809). That is why, he is called the 'Romantic Paradox'.

Byron who had travelled widely captured the imagination of his readers by the publications of the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* (1812). This work made him instantly famous. As he said himself, "I woke one morning and found myself famous." In it he described the adventures of a glamorous but sinister hero through strange lands. He also gave an air of authenticity to these adventures and a suggestion that he himself had indulged in such exploits. Such a hero, called the Byronic hero, became very popular among the readers and there was greater and greater demand for such romances dealing with his exploits. Under the pressure of the popular demand Byron wrote a number of romances which began with *The Giaour* (1813), and in all of them he dealt with the exploits of the Byronic hero. But whereas these romances made his reputation not in England alone but throughout Europe, the pruder section of the English society began to look upon him with suspicion, and considered him a dangerous, sinister man. The result was that when his wife left him in 1816, a year after his marriage, there was such a turn in the tide of public opinion against him that he left England under a cloud of distrust and disappointment and never returned.

It was during the years of his exile in Italy that the best part of his poetry was written by him. The third and fourth cantos of *Childe Harold* (1816-1818) have more sincerity, and are in every way better expressions of Byron's genius. He also wrote two sombre and self-conscious tragedies—*Manfred* and *Cain*. But the greatness of Byron as a poet lies, however, not in these poems and tragedies, but in the satires which begin with *Beppo* (1818) and include *The Vision of Judgment* (1822) and *Don Juan* (1819-24). Of these *Don Juan*, which is a scathing criticism of the contemporary European society, is one of the greatest poems in the English language. In it humour, sentiment, adventure and pathos are thrown together in a haphazard manner as in real life. It is written in a conversational style which subtly produces comic as well as satirical effect. Of all the romantic poets Byron was the most egoistical. In all his poems his personality obtrudes itself, and he attaches the greatest importance to it. Of the romantic traits, he represents the revolutionary iconoclasm at its worst, and that is why he came in open conflict with the world around him. His last great act, dying on his way to take part in the Greek War of Independence, was a truly heroic act; and it vindicated his position for all times and made him a martyr in the cause of freedom.

Byron does not enjoy a high reputation as a poet because of his slipshod and careless style. He was too much in a hurry to revise what he had written, and so there is much in his poetry which is artistically imperfect. Moreover his rhetorical style, which was admirably suited to convey the

force and fire of his personality, often becomes dull and boring.

(ii) Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Whereas Byron was the greatest interpreter of revolutionary iconoclasm, Shelley was the revolutionary idealist, a prophet of hope and faith. He was a visionary who dreamed of the Golden Age. Unlike Byron's genius which was destructive, Shelley's was constructive and he incarnated that aspect of the French Revolution which aimed at building up a new and beautiful edifice on the ruins of the old and the ugly. Whereas Byron's motive impulse was pride, Shelley's was love.

In his early days Shelley came under the influence of William Godwin's *Political Justice*. He saw that all established institutions, kings and priests were diverse forms of evil and obstacles to happiness and progress. So he began to imagine the new world which would come into existence when all these forms of error and hatred had disappeared. The essence of all his poetical works is his prophecy of the new-born age. In his first long poem, *Queen Mab*, which he wrote when he was eighteen, he condemns kings, governments, church, property, marriage and Christianity. *The Revolt of Islam* which followed in 1817, and is a sort of transfigured picture of the French Revolution is charged with the young poet's hopes for the future regeneration of the world. In 1820 appeared *Prometheus Unbound*, the hymn of human revolt triumphing over the oppression of false gods. In this superb lyrical drama we find the fullest and finest expression of Shelley's faith and hope. Here Prometheus stands forth as the prototype of mankind in its long struggle against the forces of despotism, symbolised by love. At last Prometheus is united to Asia, the spirit of love and goodness in nature, and everything gives promise that they shall live together happy ever afterwards.

Shelley's other great poems are *Alastor* (1816), in which he describes his pursuit of an unattainable ideal of beauty; *Julian and Meddalo* (1818) in which he draws his own portrait contrasted with that of Byron; *The Cenci*, a poetic drama which deals with the terrible story of Beatrice who, the victim of father's lust, takes his life in revenge; the lyrical drama *Hellas* in which he sings of the rise of Greece against the Ottoman yoke; *Epipsychidion* in which he celebrates his Platonic love for a beautiful young Italian girl; *Adonais*, the best-known of Shelley's longer poems, which is an elegy dedicated to the poet Keats, and holds its place with Milton's *Lycidas* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam* as one of the three greatest elegies in the English language; and the unfinished masterpiece, *The Triumph of Life*.

Shelley's reputation as a poet lies mainly in his lyrical power. He is in fact the greatest lyrical poet of England. In all these poems mentioned above, it is their lyrical rapture which is unique. In the whole of English poetry there is no utterance as spontaneous as Shelley's and nowhere does the thought flow with such irresistible melody. Besides these longer poems Shelley wrote a number of small lyrics of exquisite beauty, such as "To Constantia Singing", the 'Ozymandias' sonnet, the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills", the 'Stanzas written in Dejection', the 'Ode to the West Wind', 'Cloud', 'Skylark'; 'O World! O life! O time'. It is in fact on the foundation of these beautiful lyrics, which are absolutely consummate and unsurpassed the whole range of English lyrical poetry, that Shelley's real reputation as a poet lies.

As the poet of Nature, Shelley was inspired by the spirit of love which was not limited to mankind but extended to every living creature—to animals and flowers, to elements, to the whole Nature. He is not content, like Wordsworth, merely to love and revere Nature; his very being is fused and blended with her. He, therefore, holds passionate communion with the universe, and becomes one with the lark (*To a Skylark*), with the cloud (*The Cloud*), and west wind (*Ode to the West Wind*) to which he utters forth this passionate, lyrical appeal:

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is;

*What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one.*

(iii) John Keats (1795-21)

Of all the romantic poets, Keats was the pure poet. He was not only the last but the most perfect of the Romantics. He was devoted to poetry and had no other interest. Unlike Wordsworth who was interested in reforming poetry and upholding the moral law; unlike Shelley who advocated impossible reforms and prophesied about the golden age; and unlike Byron who made his poetry a vehicle of his strongly egoistical nature and political discontents of the time; unlike Coleridge who was a metaphysician, and Scott who relished in story-telling, Keats did not take much notice of the social, political and literary turmoils, but devoted himself entirely to the worship of beauty, and writing poetry as it suited his temperament. He was, about all things, a poet, and nothing else. His nature was entirely and essentially poetical and the whole of his vital energy went into art.

Unlike Byron who was a lord, and Shelley who belonged to an aristocratic family, Keats came of a poor family, and at an early age he had to work as a doctor's assistant. But his medical studies did not stand in the way of his passion for writing poetry which was roused by his reading of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, which revealed to him the vast world of poetry. He also became interested in the beauty of nature. His first volume of poems appeared in 1817 and his first long poem *Endymion* in 1818, which opened with the following memorable lines:

*A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us; and sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and healthy, and quiet breathing.*

This poem was severely criticised by contemporary critics, which must have shocked Keats. Besides this a number of other calamities engulfed him. He had lost his father when he was only nine; his mother and brother died of tuberculosis, and he himself was suffering from this deadly disease. All these misfortunes were intensified by his disappointment in love for Fanny Brawne whom Keats loved passionately. But he remained undaunted, and under the shadow of death and in midst of most excruciating sufferings Keats brought out his last volume of poems in the year 1820 (which is called the 'Living Year' in his life.) *The Poems* of 1820 are Keats' enduring monument. They include the three narratives, *Isabella*, *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *Lamia*; the unfinished epic *Hyperion*; the Odes, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and a few sonnets.

In *Isabella* Keats made an attempt to turn a somewhat repellent and tragic love story of Isabella and Lorenzo, who was murdered by Isabella's brothers, into a thing of beauty by means of fine narrative skill and beautiful phraseology. In *Lamia* Keats narrated the story of a beautiful enchantress, who turns from a serpent into a glorious woman and fills every human sense with delight, until as the result of the foolish philosophy of old Apollonius, she vanishes for ever from her lover's sight. *The Eve of St. Agnes*, which is the most perfect of Keats' medieval poems, is surpassingly beautiful in its descriptions. *Hyperion* which is a magnificent fragment deals with the overthrow of the Titans by the young sun-god Apollo. This poem shows the influence of Milton as *Endymion* of Spenser. *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, which captures the spirit of the Middle Ages, has a haunting melody. Though small, it is a most perfect work of art.

Of the odes, those *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn* and *To Autumn* stand out above the rest, and are among the masterpieces of poetic art. In *Ode to a Nightingale* we find a love of sensuous

beauty, and a touch of pessimism. In *Ode on a Grecian Urn* we see Keats's love for Greek mythology and art. It is this Ode which ends with the following most memorable lines in the whole of Keats's poetry.

*'Beauty is Truth, and Truth Beauty',--that is all
Yea know on earth, and all ye need to know.*

The Ode to Autumn, in which Keats has glorified Nature, is a poem which for richness and colour has never been surpassed. Though Keats died young, when he had attained barely the age of twenty-five, and had only a few years in which he could effectively write poetry, his achievement in the field of poetry is so great, that we wonder what he might have accomplished if he had lived longer. For a long time his poetry was considered merely as sensuous having no depth of thought. But with the help of his letters critics have reinterpreted his poems, and now it has been discovered that they are based on mature thinking, and that there is a regular line of development from the point of thought and art. He was not an escapist who tried to run away from the stark realities of life, but he faced life bravely, and came to the conclusion that sufferings play an important part in the development of the human personality. As a worshipper of beauty, though his first approach was sensuous, his attitude suddenly became philosophic, and he discovered that there is beauty in everything, and that Beauty and Truth are one. As an artist there are few English poets who come near him. As a poet he had very high ideals before him. He wanted to become the poet of the human heart, one with Shakespeare. For him the proper role of poetry is 'to be a friend to sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of men', and the real poet is that "to whom the miseries of the world are misery, and will not let him rest." And Keats sincerely and persistently lived up to these high ideals. Taking into account all these factors and the very short span of life that was given to him by the Providence, it is no exaggeration to say that of all the English poets he comes nearest to Shakespeare.

Prose-Writers of the Romantic Age

Though the Romantic period specialised in poetry, there also appeared a few prose-writers—Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey who rank very high. There was no revolt of the prose-writers against the eighteenth century comparable to that of the poets, but a change had taken place in the prose-style also.

Whereas many eighteenth century prose-writers depended on assumptions about the suitability of various prose styles for various purposes which they shared with their relatively small but sophisticated public; writers in the Romantic period were rather more concerned with subject matter and emotional expression than with appropriate style. They wrote for an ever-increasing audience which was less homogeneous in its interest and education than that of their predecessors. There was also an indication of a growing distrust of the sharp distinction between matter and manner which was made in the eighteenth century, and of a Romantic preference for spontaneity rather than formality and contrivance. There was a decline of the 'grand' style and of most forms of contrived architectural prose written for what may be called public or didactic purposes. Though some Romantic poets—Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron—wrote excellent prose in their critical writings, letters and journals, and some of the novelists like Scott and Jane Austen were masters of prose-style, those who wrote prose for its own sake in the form of the essays and attained excellence in the art of prose-writing were Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey.

(i) Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

Charles Lamb is one of the most lovable personalities in English literature. He lived a very humble, honest, and most self-sacrificing life. He never married, but devoted himself to the care of his sister Mary, ten years his senior, who was subject to mental fits, in one of which she had

fatally wounded her mother. In his *Essays of Elia* (1823) and *Last Essays* (1833), in which he revealed his own personality, he talks intimately to the readers about himself, his quaint whims and experiences, and the cheerful and heroic struggle which he made against misfortunes. Unlike Wordsworth who was interested in natural surroundings and shunned society, Lamb who was born and lived in the midst of London street, was deeply interested in the city crowd, its pleasures and occupations, its endless comedies and tragedies, and in his essays he interpreted with great insight and human sympathy that crowded human life of joys and sorrows. Lamb belongs to the category of intimate and self-revealing essayists, of whom Montaigne is the original, and Cowley the first exponent in England. To the informality of Cowley he adds the solemn confessional manner of Sir Thomas Browne. He writes always in a gentle, humorous way about the sentiments and trifles of everyday. The sentimental, smiling figure of 'Elia' in his essays is only a cloak with which Lamb hides himself from the world. Though in his essays he plays with trivialities, as Walter Pater has said, "We know that beneath this blithe surface there is something of the domestic horror, of the beautiful heroism, and devotedness too, of the old Greek tragedy."

The style of Lamb is described as 'quaint', because it has the strangeness which we associate with something old-fashioned. One can easily trace in his English the imitations of the 16th and 17th century writers he most loved—Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, Fuller, Burton, Isaac Walton. According to the subject he is treating, he makes use of the rhythms and vocabularies of these writers. That is why, in every essay Lamb's style changes. This is the secret of the charm of his style and it also prevents him from ever becoming monotonous or tiresome. His style is also full of surprises because his mood continually varies, creating or suggesting its own style, and calling into play some recollection of this or that writer of the older world.

Lamb is the most lovable of all English essayists, and in his hand the Essay reached its perfection. His essays are true to Johnson's definition; 'a loose sally of the mind.' Though his essays are all criticisms or appreciations of the life of his age and literature, they are all intensely personal. They, therefore, give us an excellent picture of Lamb and of humanity. Though he often starts with some purely personal mood or experience he gently leads the reader to see life as he saw it, without ever being vain or self-assertive. It is this wonderful combination of personal and universal interest together with his rare old style and quaint humour, which have given his essays his perennial charm, and earned for him the covetable title of "The Prince among English Essayists".

(ii) William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

As a personality Hazlitt was just the opposite of Lamb. He was a man of violent temper, with strong likes and dislikes. In his judgment of others he was always downright and frank, and never cared for its effect on them. During the time when England was engaged in a bitter struggle against Napoleon, Hazlitt worshipped him as a hero, and so he came in conflict with the government. His friends left him one by one on account of his aggressive nature, and at the time of his death only Lamb stood by him.

Hazlitt wrote many volumes of essays, of which the most effective is *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) in which he gives critical portraits of a number of his famous contemporaries. This was a work which only Hazlitt could undertake because he was outspoken and fearless in the expression of his opinion. Though at times he is misled by his prejudices, yet taking his criticism of art and literature as a whole there is not the least doubt that there is great merit in it. He has the capacity to see the whole of his author most clearly, and he can place him most exactly in relation to other authors. In his interpretation of life in the general and proper sense, he shows an acute and accurate power of observation and often goes to the very foundation of things. Underneath his light and easy style there always flows an undercurrent of deep thought and

feeling.

The style of Hazlitt has force, brightness and individuality. Here and there we find passages of solemn and stately music. It is the reflection of Hazlitt's personality—outspoken, straightforward and frank. As he had read widely, and his mind was filled with great store of learning, his writings are interspersed with sentences and phrases from other writers and there are also echoes of their style. Above all, it vibrates with the vitality and force of his personality, and so never lapses into dullness.

(iii) Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859)

De Quincey is famous as the writer of 'impassioned prose'. He shared the reaction of his day against the severer classicism of the eighteenth century, preferring rather the ornate manner of Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Browne and their contemporaries. The specialty of his style consists in describing incidents of purely personal interest in language suited to their magnitude as they appear in the eyes of the writer. The reader is irresistibly attracted by the splendour of his style which combines the best elements of prose and poetry. In fact his prose works are more imaginative and melodious than many poetical works. There is revealed in them the beauty of the English language. The defects of his style are that he digresses too much, and often stops in the midst of the fine paragraph to talk about some trivial thing by way of jest. But in spite of these defects his prose is still among the few supreme examples of style in the English language.

De Quincey was a highly intellectual writer and his interests were very wide. Mostly he wrote in the form of articles for journals and he dealt with all sorts of subjects—about himself and his friends, life in general, art, literature, philosophy and religion. Of his autobiographical sketches the best-known is his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, in which he has given us, in a most interesting manner, glimpses of his own life under the influence of opium. He wrote fine biographies of a number of classical, historical and literary personages, of which the most ambitious attempt is *The Caesars*. His most perfect historical essay is on *Joan of Arc*. His essays on principle of literature are original and penetrating. The best of this type is the one where he gives the distinction between the literature of knowledge and of power. *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* is the most brilliant. He also wrote very scholarly articles on Goethe, Pope, Schiller and Shakespeare. Besides these he wrote a number of essays on science and theology. In all his writings De Quincey asserts his personal point of view, and as he is a man of strong prejudices, likes and dislikes, he often gives undue emphasis on certain points. The result is that we cannot rely on his judgment entirely. But there is no doubt that his approach is always original and brilliant which straightway captures the attention of the reader. Moreover, the splendour of his 'poetic prose' which is elaborate and sonorous in its effects, casts its own special spell. The result is that De Quincey is still one of the most fascinating prose-writers of England.

Novelists of the Romantic Age

The great novelists of the Romantic period are Jane Austen and Scott, but before them there appeared some novelists who came under the spell of medievalism and wrote novels of 'terror' or the 'Gothic novels'. The origin of this type of fiction can be ascribed to Horace Walpole's (1717-97) *The Castle of Otranto* (1746). Here the story is set in medieval Italy and it includes a gigantic helmet that can strike dead its victims, tyrants, supernatural intrusions, mysteries and secrets. There were a number of imitators of such a type of novel during the eighteenth century as well as in the Romantic period.

(i) The Gothic Novel

The most popular of the writers of the 'terror' or 'Gothic' novel during the Romantic age was Mrs. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), of whose five novels the best-known are *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and the *Italian*. She initiated the mechanism of the 'terror' tale as practiced by Horace Walpole and his followers, but combined it with sentimental but effective description of scenery. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* relates the story of an innocent and sensitive girl who falls in the hands of a heartless villain named Montoni. He keeps her in a grim and isolated castle full of mystery and terror. The novels of Mrs. Radcliffe became very popular, and they influenced some of the great writers like Byron and Shelley. Later they influenced the Bronte sisters whose imagination was stimulated by these strange stories.

Though Mrs. Radcliffe was the prominent writer of 'Gothic' novels, there were a few other novelists who earned popularity by writing such novels. They were Mathew Gregory ('Monk') Lewis (1775-1818). Who wrote *The Monk*, *Tales of Terror* and *Tales of Wonder*; and Charles Robert Maturin whose *Melmoth the Wanderer* exerted great influence in France. But the most popular of all 'terror' tales was *Frankenstein* (1817) written by Mrs. Shelley. It is the story of a mechanical monster with human powers capable of performing terrifying deeds. Of all the 'Gothic' novels it is the only one which is popular even today.

(ii) Jane Austen (1775-1817)

Jane Austen brought good sense and balance to the English novel which during the Romantic age had become too emotional and undisciplined. Giving a loose rein to their imagination the novelist of the period carried themselves away from the world around them into a romantic past or into a romantic future. The novel, which in the hands of Richardson and Fielding had been a faithful record of real life and of the working of heart and imagination, became in the closing years of the eighteenth century the literature of crime, insanity and terror. It, therefore, needed castigation and reform which were provided by Jane Austen. Living a quiet life she published her six novels anonymously, which have now placed her among the front rank of English novelists. She did for the English novel precisely what the Lake poets did for English poetry—she refined and simplified it, making it a true reflection of English life. As Wordsworth made a deliberate effort to make poetry natural and truthful, Jane Austen also from the time she started writing her first novel—*Pride and Prejudice*, had in her mind the idea of presenting English country society exactly as it was, in opposition to the romantic extravagance of Mrs. Radcliffe and her school. During the time of great turmoil and revolution in various fields, she quietly went on with her work, making no great effort to get a publisher, and, when a publisher was got, contenting herself with meagre remuneration and never permitting her name to appear on a title page. She is one of the sincerest examples in English literature of art for art's sake.

In all Jane Austen wrote six novels—*Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Mansefield Park*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. Of these *Pride and Prejudice* is the best and most widely read of her novels. *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *Mansefield* are now placed among the front rank of English novels. From purely literary point of view *Northanger Abbey* gets the first place on account of the subtle humour and delicate satire it contains against the grotesque but popular 'Gothic' novels.

As a novelist Jane Austen worked in a narrow field. She was the daughter of a humble clergyman living in a little village. Except for short visits to neighbouring places, she lived a static life but she had such a keen power of observation that the simple country people became the characters of her novels. The chief duties of these people were of the household, their chief pleasures were in country gatherings and their chief interest was in matrimony. It is the small, quiet world of these people, free from the mighty interests, passions, ambitious and tragic struggles of life, that Jane Austin depicts in her novels. But in spite of these limitations she has achieved wonderful

perfection in that narrow field on account of her acute power of observation, her fine impartiality and self-detachment, and her quiet, delicate and ironical humour. Her circumstances helped her to give that finish and delicacy to her work, which have made them artistically perfect. Novel-writing was a part of her everyday life, to be placed aside should a visitor come, to be resumed when he left, to be pursued unostentatiously and tranquilly in the midst of the family circle. She knew precisely what she wanted to do, and she did it in the way that suited her best. Though in her day she did not receive the appreciation she deserved, posterity has given her reward by placing this modest, unassuming woman who died in her forties, as one of the greatest of English novelists.

Among her contemporaries only Scott, realised the greatness and permanent worth of her work, and most aptly remarked: "That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bowbow strain I can do myself, like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me, What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"

(iii) Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Walter Scott's qualities as a novelist were vastly different from those of Jane Austen. Whereas she painted domestic miniatures, Scott depicted pageantry of history on broader canvases. Jane Austen is precise and exact in whatever she writes; Scott is diffusive and digressive. Jane Austen deals with the quiet intimacies of English rural life free from high passions, struggles and great actions; Scott, on the other hand, deals with the chivalric, exciting, romantic and adventurous life of the Highlanders—people living on the border of England and Scotland, among whom he spent much of his youth, or with glorious scenes of past history.

During his first five or six years of novel-writing Scott confined himself to familiar scenes and characters. The novels which have a local colour and are based on personal observations are *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, *Old Mortality* and *The Heart of Midlothian*. His first attempt at a historical novel was *Ivanhoe* (1819) followed by *Kenilworth* (1821), *Quentin Durward* (1823), and *The Talisman* (1825). He returned to Scottish antiquity from time to time as in *The Monastery* (1820) and *St. Ronan's Well* (1823).

In all these novels Scott reveals himself as a consummate storyteller. His leisurely unfolding of the story allows of digression particularly in the descriptions of natural scenes or of interiors. Without being historical in the strict sense he conveys a sense of the past age by means of a wealth of colourful descriptions, boundless vitality and with much humour and sympathy. The historical characters which he has so beautifully portrayed that they challenge comparison with the characters of Shakespeare, include Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots. Besides these he has given us a number of imperishable portraits of the creatures of his imagination. He is a superb master of the dialogue which is invariably true to character.

The novels of Scott betray the same imaginative joy in the recreation of the past as his poetry, but the novel offered him a more adaptable and wider field than the narrative poem. It gave him a better opportunity for the display of his varied gifts, his antiquarian knowledge, his observation of life and character, his delight in popular as well as courtly scenes, and his rich humour.

Scott is the first English writer of the historical novel, and he made very enduring contributions to its development in England as well as in Europe. He was by temperament and training perfectly suited to the accomplishment of this task. In the first place he had acquired a profound knowledge of history by his copious reading since his earliest youth. He had the zest of the storyteller, and a natural heartiness which made him love life in all its manifestations. He had an innate sense of the picturesque, developed by his passion for antiquarianism. His conservative temper which turned him away from the contemporary revolutionary enthusiasm, gave him a

natural sympathy for the days of chivalry. In the Romantic age, Scott was romantic only in his love of the picturesque and his interest in the Middle Ages.

Scott was the first novelist in Europe who made the scene an essential element in action. He knew Scotland, and loved it, and there is hardly an event in any of his Scottish novels in which we do not breathe the very atmosphere of the place, and feel the presence of its moors and mountains. He chooses the place so well and describes it so perfectly, that the action seems almost to be result of natural environment.

Though the style of Scott is often inartistic, heavy and dragging; the love interest in his novels is apt to be insipid and monotonous; he often sketches a character roughly and plunges him into the midst of stirring incidents; and he has no inclinations for tracing the logical consequences of human action—all these objections and criticisms are swept away in the end by the broad, powerful current of his narrative genius. Moreover, Scott's chief claim to greatness lies in the fact that he was the first novelist to recreate the past in such a manner that the men and women of the bygone ages, and the old scenes became actually living, and throbbing with life. Carlyle very pertinently remarked about Scott's novels: "These historical novels have taught this truth unknown to the writers of history, that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state papers, controversies, and abstractions of men."

The Victorian Age (1832-1900)

The Victorian Age in English literature began in second quarter of the nineteenth century and ended by 1900. Though strictly speaking, the Victorian age ought to correspond with the reign of Queen Victoria, which extended from 1837 to 1901, yet literary movements rarely coincide with the exact year of royal accession or death. From the year 1798 with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* till the year 1820 there was the heyday of Romanticism in England, but after that year there was a sudden decline.

Wordsworth who after his early effusion of revolutionary principles had relapsed into conservatism and positive opposition to social and political reforms, produced nothing of importance after the publication of his *White Doe of Rylstone* in 1815, though he lived till 1850. Coleridge wrote no poem of merit after 1817. Scott was still writing after 1820, but his work lacked the fire and originality of his early years. The Romantic poets of the younger generation unfortunately all died young—Keats in 1820, Shelley in 1822, and Byron in 1824.

Though the Romantic Age in the real sense of the term ended in 1820, the Victorian Age started from 1832 with the passing of the first Reform Act, 1832. The years 1820-1832 were the years of suspended animation in politics. It was a fact that England was fast turning from an agricultural into a manufacturing country, but it was only after the reform of the Constitution which gave right of vote to the new manufacturing centres, and gave power to the middle classes, that the way was opened for new experiments in constructive politics. The first Reform Act of 1832 was followed by the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 which gave an immense advantage to the manufacturing interests, and the Second Reform Act of 1867. In the field of literature also the years 1820-1832 were singularly barren. As has already been pointed out, there was sudden decline of Romantic literature from the year 1820, but the new literature of England, called the Victorian literature, started from 1832 when Tennyson's first important volume, *Poems*, appeared. The following year saw Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, and Dickens' earliest work, *Sketches by Boz*. The literary career of Thackeray began about 1837, and Browning published his *Dramatic Lyrics* in 1842. Thus the Victorian period in literature officially starts from 1832, though the Romantic period ended in 1820, and Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837. The Victorian Age is so long and complicated and the great writers who flourished in it are so many, that for the sake of convenience it is often divided into two periods—Early Victorian Period and Later Victorian Period. The earlier period which was the period of middle class supremacy, the age of 'laissez-faire' or free trade, and of unrestricted competition, extended from

1832 to 1870. The great writers of this period were Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens and Thackeray. All these poets, novelists and prose-writers form, a certain homogenous group, because in spite of individual differences they exhibit the same approach to the contemporary problems and the same literary, moral and social values. But the later Victorian writers who came into prominence after 1870—Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris, George Eliot, Meredith, Hardy, Newman and Pater seem to belong to a different age. In poetry Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris were the protagonists of new movement called the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, which was followed by the Aesthetic Movement. In the field of novel, George Eliot is the pioneer of what is called the modern psychological novel, followed by Meredith and Hardy. In prose Newman tried to revolutionise Victorian thought by turning it back to Catholicism, and Pater came out with his purely aesthetic doctrine of ‘Art for Art’s Sake’, which was directly opposed to the fundamentally moral approach of the prose-writers of the earlier period—Carlyle Arnold and Ruskin. Thus we see a clear demarcation between the two periods of Victorian literature—the early Victorian period (1832-1870) and the later Victorian period (1870-1900).

But the difference between the writers of the two periods is more apparent than real. Fundamentally they belong to one group. They were all the children of the new age of democracy, of individualism, of rapid industrial development and material expansion, the age of doubt and pessimism, following the new conceptions of man which was formulated by science under the name of Evolution. All of them were men and women of marked originality in outlook and character or style. All of them were the critics of their age, and instead of being in sympathy with its spirit, were its very severe critics. All of them were in search of some sort of balance, stability, a rational understanding, in the midst of the rapidly changing times. Most of them favoured the return to precision in form, to beauty within the limits of reason, and to values which had received the stamp of universal approval. It was in fact their insistence on the rational elements of thought, which gave a distinctive character to the writings of the great Victorians, and which made them akin, to a certain extent, to the great writers of the neo-Classical school. All the great writers of the Victorian Age were actuated by a definite moral purpose. Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold wrote with a superb faith in their message, and with the conscious moral purpose to uplift and to instruct. Even the novel broke away from Scott’s romantic influence. Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot wrote with a definite purpose to sweep away error and reveal the underlying truth of humanity. For this reason the Victorian Age was fundamentally an age of realism rather than of romance.

But from another point of view, the Victorian Age in English literature was a continuation of the Romantic Age, because the Romantic Age came to a sudden and unnatural end mainly on account of the premature deaths of Byron, Shelley and Keats. If they had lived longer, the Age of Romanticism would have extended further. But after their death the coherent inspiration of romanticism disintegrated into separate lines of development, just as in the seventeenth century the single inspiration of the Renaissance broke into different schools. The result was that the spirit of Romanticism continued to influence the innermost consciousness of Victorian Age. Its influence is clearly visible on Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Dickens, Thackeray, Ruskin, Meredith, Swinburne, Rossetti and others. Even its adversaries, and those who would escape its spell, were impregnated with it. While denouncing it, Carlyle does so in a style which is intensely charged with emotional fire and visionary colouring. In fact after 1870 we find that the romantic inspiration was again in the ascendent in the shape of the Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic movements.

There was also another reason of the continuation of Romanticism in the Victorian Age. There is no doubt that the Reform Act set at rest the political disturbances by satisfying the impatient demand of the middle classes, and seemed to inaugurate an age of stability. After the crisis which followed the struggle against the French Revolution and Napoleon, England set about organizing

herself with a view to internal prosperity and progress. Moreover, with the advent to power of a middle class largely imbued with the spirit of Puritanism, and the accession of a queen to the throne, an era of self-restraint and discipline started. The English society accepted as its standard a stricter conventional morality which was voiced by writers like Carlyle. But no sooner had the political disturbances subsided and a certain measure of stability and balance had been achieved than there was fresh and serious outbreak in the economic world. The result was that the Victorian period, quiet as it was, began to throb with the feverish tremors of anxiety and trouble, and the whole order of the nation was threatened with an upheaval. From 1840 to 1850 in particular, England seemed to be on the verge of a social revolution, and its disturbed spirit was reflected, especially in the novel with a purpose. This special form of Romanticism which was fed by the emotional unrest in the social sphere, therefore, derived a renewed vitality from these sources. The combined effect of all these causes was the survival and prolongation of Romanticism in the Victorian Age which was otherwise opposed to it.

Moreover, Romanticism not only continued during the Victorian Age, but it appeared in new forms. The very exercise of reason and the pursuit of scientific studies which promoted the spirit of classicism, stirred up a desire for compensation and led to a reassertion of the imagination and the heart. The representatives of the growing civilization of the day—economists, masters of industry, businessmen—were considered as the enemies of nobility and beauty and the artisans of hopeless and joyless materialism. This fear obsessed the minds of those writers of the Victorian Age, to whom feelings and imagination were essentials of life itself. Thus the rationalistic age was rudely shaken by impassioned protestations of writers like Newman, Carlyle and Ruskin who were in conflict with the spirit of their time.

The Victorian Age, therefore, exhibits a very interesting and complex mixture of two opposing elements—Classicism and Romanticism. Basically it was inclined towards classicism on account of its rational approach to the problems of life, a search for balance and stability, and a deeply moral attitude; but on account of its close proximity to the Romantic Revival which had not completely exhausted itself, but had come to a sudden end on account of the premature deaths of Byron, Shelley and Keats, the social and economic unrest, the disillusionment caused by industrialization and material prosperity, the spirit of Romanticism also survived and produced counter currents.

Poets of the Early Victorian Period

The most important poets during the early Victorian period were Tennyson and Browning, with Arnold occupying a somewhat lower position. After the passing away of Keats, Shelley and Byron in the early eighteenth twenties, for about fifteen years the fine frenzy of the high romantics subsided and a quieter mood ensued. With the abatement of the revolutionary fervour, Wordsworth's inspiration had deserted him and all that he wrote in his later years was dull and insipid.

There appeared a host of writers of moderate talent like John Clare, Thomas Love Peacock, Walter Savage Landor and Thomas Hood. The result was that from 1820 till the publication of Tennyson's first important work in 1833 English poetry had fallen into the hands of mediocrities. It was in fact by the publication of his two volumes in 1842 that Tennyson's position was assured as, in Wordsworth's language, "decidedly the greatest of our living poets." Browning's recognition by the public came about the same time, with the appearance of *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), although *Paracelsus* and *Sordello* had already been published. The early Victorian poetry which started in 1833, therefore, came to its own, in the year 1842.

The early poetry of both Tennyson and Browning was imbued with the spirit of romanticism, but it was romanticism with a difference. Tennyson recognised an affinity with Byron and Keats; Browning with Shelley, but their romanticism no longer implied an attitude of revolt against

conventional modes. It had itself become a convention. The revolutionary fervour which inspired the poetry of the great Romantic poets had now given place to an evolutionary conception of progress propagated by the writings of Darwin, Bentham and their followers. Though the writers of the new age still persisted in deriving inspiration from the past ages, yet under the spell of the marvels of science, they looked forward rather than backward. The dominant note of the early Victorian period was therefore, contained in Browning's memorable lines: "The best is yet to be." Tennyson found spiritual consolation in contemplating the

One far off divine event

To which the whole creation moves.

Faith in the reality of progress was thus the main characteristic of the early Victorian Age.

Doubt, scepticism and questioning became the main characteristic of the later Victorian Age.

(a) Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

Tennyson is the most representative poet of the Victorian Age. His poetry is a record of the intellectual and spiritual life of the time. Being a careful student of science and philosophy he was deeply impressed by the new discoveries and speculations which were undermining the orthodox religion and giving rise to all sorts of doubts and difficulties. Darwin's theory of Evolution which believed in the "struggle for existence" and "the survival of the fittest" specially upset and shook the foundations of religious faith. Thus there was a conflict between science and religion, doubt and faith, materialism and spirituality. These two voices of the Victorian age are perpetually heard in Tennyson's work. In *In Memoriam*, more than in any other contemporary literary work, we read of the great conflict between faith and doubt. Though he is greatly disturbed by the constant struggle going on in Nature which is "red in tooth and claw", his belief in evolution steadies and encourages him, and helps him to look beyond the struggle towards the "one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

Tennyson's poetry is so much representative of his age that a chronological study of it can help us to write its history. Thus his *Locksley Hall* of 1842 reflects the restless spirit of 'young England' and its faith in science, commerce and the progress of mankind. In *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1866) the poet gives expression to the feeling of revulsion aroused against the new scientific discoveries which threatened the very foundations of religion, and against commerce and industry which had given rise of some very ugly problems as a result of the sordid greed of gain. In *The Princess*, Tennyson dealt with an important problem of the day—that of the higher education of women and their place in the fast changing conditions of modern society. In *Maud*, he gave expression to the patriotic passion aroused on account of the Crimean War. In *Idylls of Kings*, in spite of its medieval machinery, contemporary problems were dealt with by the poet. Thus in all these poems the changing moods of the Victorian Age are successively represented—doubts, misgivings, hopefulness etc.

Taking Tennyson's poetry as a whole, we find that in spite of varieties of moods, it is an exposition of the cautious spirit of Victorian liberalism. He was essentially the poet of law and order as well as of progress. He was a great admirer of English traditions, and though he believed in divine evolution of things:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,

And God fulfills himself in many ways

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world,

he was, like a true Englishman, against anything that smacked of revolution.

But the real greatness of Tennyson as a poet lies in his being a supreme artist. The ideas contained in his poems are often condemned by his critics as commonplace, and he is berated as

a shallow thinker. But no one can deny his greatness as an artist. He is, perhaps, after Milton, the most conscientious and accomplished poetic artist in English literature. He is noteworthy for the even perfection of his style and his wonderful mastery of language which is at once simple and ornate. Moreover, there is an exquisite and varied music in his verse. In poetic style he has shown a uniform mastery which is not surpassed by any other English poet except Shakespeare. As an artist, Tennyson has an imagination less dramatic than lyrical, and he is usually at his best when he is kindled by personal emotion, personal experience. It is his fine talent for lyric which gives him a high place among the masters of English verse. Some of his shorter pieces, such as *Break, break, break; Tear, idle tears; Crossing the Bar* are among the finest English songs on account of their distinction of music and imagery.

Tennyson is a master of imaginative description, which is seen at its best in *The Lotos Eaters*. Words can hardly be more beautiful or more expressive than in such a stanza as this:

*A land of stream! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping, veils of thinnest lawn did go;
And some thro' waning lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumberous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; for off, three mountain tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset flush'd and dew'd with showery drops.
Up clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.*

During his lifetime Tennyson was considered as the greatest poet of his age, but after his death a reaction started against him, and he was given a much lower rank among the English poets. But with the passage of time Tennyson's poetry regained its lost position, and at present his place as one of the greatest poets of England is secure mainly on account of the artistic perfection of his verse.

(b) Robert Browning (1812-1889)

During his lifetime Browning was not considered as great a poet as Tennyson, but after that the opinion of the critics has changed in favour of Browning, who, on account of his depth and originality of thoughts, is ranked superior to Tennyson. Browning and Tennyson were contemporaries and their poetic careers ran almost parallel to each other, but as poets they presented a glaring contrast. Whereas Tennyson is first the artist and then the teacher, with Browning the message is always the important thing, and he is very careless of the form in which it is expressed. Tennyson always writes about subjects which are dainty and comely; Browning, on the other hand, deals with subjects which are rough and ugly, and he aims to show that truth lies hidden in both the evil and the good. In their respective messages the two poets differed widely. Tennyson's message reflects the growing order of the age, and is summed up in the word 'law'. He believes in disciplining the individual will and subordinating it to the universal law. There is a note of resignation struck in his poetry, which amounts to fatalism. Browning, on the other hand, advocates the triumph of the individual will over the obstacles. In his opinion self is not subordinate but supreme. There is a robust optimism reflected in all his poetry. It is in fact because of his invincible will and optimism that Browning is given preference over Tennyson whose poetry betrays weakness and helpless pessimism. Browning's boundless energy, his cheerful courage, his faith in life and in the development that awaits beyond the portals of death, give a strange vitality to his poetry. It is his firm belief in the immortality of the soul which forms the basis of his generous optimism, beautifully expressed in the following lines of *Pippa*

Passes:

*The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill side's dew pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snails on the thorn,
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world.*

Thus is an age when the minds of men were assailed by doubt, Browning spoke the strongest words of hope and faith:

*Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be.
The last of life, for which the first was made.*

(Rabbi Ben Ezra)

In another way also Browning presents a contrast to Tennyson. Whereas Tennyson's genius is mainly lyrical. Browning's is predominantly dramatic, and his greatest poems are written in the form of the dramatic monologue. Being chiefly interested in the study of the human soul, he discusses in poem after poem, in the form of monologue or dialogue, the problems of life and conscience. And in all of them Browning himself is the central character, and he uses the hero as his own mouthpiece. His first poem *Pauline* (1833) which is a monologue addressed to Pauline, on 'the incidents in the development of a soul', is autobiographical—a fragment of personal confession under a thin dramatic disguise. His *Paracelsus* (1835) which is in form a drama with four characters, is also a story of 'incidents in the development of a soul', of a Renaissance physician in whom true science and charlatanism were combined. Paracelsus has the ambition of attaining truth and transforming the life of man. For this purpose he discards emotion and love, and fails on account of this mistake. Browning in this poem also uses the hero as a mouthpiece of his own ideas and aspiration. *Paracelsus* was followed by *Sordello*, (1840) which is again 'the study of a soul'. It narrates in heroic verse the life of a little-known Italian poet. On account of its involved expression its obscurity has become proverbial. In *Pipa Passes* (1841) Browning produced a drama partly lyrical and consisting of isolated scenes. Here he imagined the effect of the songs of a little working girl, strolling about during a holiday, on the destiny of the very different persons who hear them in turn.

It was with the publication of a series of collections of disconnected studies, chiefly monologues, that Browning's reputation as a great poet was firmly established. These volumes were—*Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845), *Men and Women* (1855), *Dramatis Personae* (1864), *Dramatic Idylls* (1879-80). The dramatic lyrics in these collections were a poetry of a new kind in England. In them Browning brings the most varied personages to make their confessions to us. Some of them are historical, while others are the product of Browning's imagination, but all of them while unravelling the tangled web of their emotions and thoughts give expression to the optimistic philosophy of the poet. Some of the important dramatic lyrics are *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, *Two in a Gondola*, *Porphyria's Lover*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *The last Ride Together*, *Childe Roland to a Dark Tower Came*, *A Grammarian's Funeral*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Prospice* and *My Last Duchess*. All of them have won for Browning the applause of readers who value "thought" in poetry. In (1868-69) Browning brought out four successive volumes of *The Ring and the Book*, which is his masterpiece. Here different persons concerned in a peculiarly brutal set of murders, and many witnesses give their own versions of the same events, varying them according to their different interests and prejudices. The lawyers also have their say, and at the end the Pope sums up the case. The ten long successive monologues contain the finest psychological studies of characters ever attempted by a poet.

During the last twenty years of his life Browning wrote a number of poems. Though they do not have much poetic merit, yet they all give expression to his resolute courage and faith. In fact Browning is mainly remembered for the astonishing vigour and hope that characterise all his work. He is the poet of love, of life, and of the will to live, here and beyond the grave, as he says in the song of David in his poem *Soul*:

*How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy.*

The chief fault of Browning's poetry is obscurity. This is mainly due to the fact that his thought is often so obscure or subtle that language cannot express it perfectly. Being interested in the study of the individual soul, never exactly alike in any two men, he seeks to express the hidden motives and principles which govern individual action. Thus in order to understand his poems, the reader has always to be mentally alert; otherwise he fails to understand his fine shades of psychological study. To a certain extent, Browning himself is to be blamed for his obscurity, because he is careless as an artist. But in spite of his obscurity, Browning is the most stimulating poet, in the English language. His influence on the reader who is prepared to sit up, and think and remain alert when he reads his poetry, is positive and tremendous. His strength, his joy of life, his robust faith and his invincible optimism enter into the life of a serious reader of his poetry, and make him a different man. That is why, after thirty years of continuous work, his merit was finally recognised, and he was placed beside Tennyson and even considered greater. In the opinion of some critics he is the greatest poet in English literature since Shakespeare.

(c) Matthew Arnold (1822-88)

Another great poet of the early Victorian period is Matthew Arnold, though he is not so great as Tennyson and Browning. Unlike Tennyson and Browning who came under the influence of Romantic poets, Arnold, though a great admirer of Wordsworth, reacted against the ornate and fluent Romanticism of Shelley and Keats. He strove to set up a neo-classical ideal as against the Romantic. He gave emphasis on 'correctness' in poetry, which meant a scheme of literature which picks and chooses according to standards, precedents and systems, as against one which gives preference to an abundant stream of original music and representation. Besides being a poet, Arnold was a great critic of poetry, perhaps the greatest critics during the Victorian period, and he belongs to that rare category of the critic who is a poet also.

Though Arnold's poetry does not possess the merit of the poetry of Tennyson and Browning, when it is at its best, it has wonderful charm. This is especially the case with his early poetry when his thought and style had not become stereotyped. Among his early poems the sonnet on Shakespeare deserves the highest place. It is the most magnificent epigraph and introduction to the works of Shakespeare. Another poem of great charm and beauty is *Requiescat*, which is an exquisite dirge. In his longer poems—*Strayed Reveller*, *Empedocles on Etna*, *Sohrab and Rustum*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Thyrsis* (an elegy on Clough, which is considered of the same rank as Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's *Adonais*)—it is the lyrical strain into which the poet breaks now and then, which gives them a peculiar charm. It is the same lyrical note in the poems—*The Forsaken Merman*, which is a piece of exquisite and restrained but melodious passionate music; *Dover Beach* which gives expression to Arnold's peculiar religious attitude in an age of doubt; the fine *Summer Night*, the *Memorial Verses* which immediately appeals to the reader.

Most of the poetry of Arnold gives expression to the conflict of the age—between spontaneity and discipline, emotion and reason, faith and scepticism. Being distressed by the unfaith, disintegration, complexity and melancholy of his times, Arnold longed for primitive faith, wholeness, simplicity, and happiness. This melancholy note is present throughout his poetry.

Even in his nature poems, though he was influenced by the 'healing power' of Wordsworth, in his sterner moods he looks upon Nature as a cosmic force indifferent to, or as a lawless and insidious foe of man's integrity. In his most characteristic poem *Empedocles on Etna* Arnold deals with the life of a philosopher who is driven to suicide because he cannot achieve unity and wholeness; his sceptical intellect has dried up the springs of simple, natural feeling. His attitude to life is very much in contrast with the positive optimism of Browning whose Ben Ezra grows old on the belief that "The best is yet to be!"

As a critic Arnold wants poetry to be plain, and severe. Though poetry is an art which must give aesthetic pleasure, according to Arnold, it is also a criticism of life. He looks for 'high seriousness' in poetry, which means the combination of the finest art with the fullest and deepest insight, such as is found in the poetry of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare. Arnold's own poetry was greatly affected by his critical theories, and we find that whereas Tennyson's poetry is ornate and Browning's grotesque, Arnold's poetry on the whole is plain and prosaic. In setting forth his spiritual troubles Arnold seeks first of all to achieve a true and adequate statement, devoid of all non-essential decorations. The reader gets the impression that the writing is neither inspired nor spontaneous. It is the result of intellectual effort and hard labour. But there are occasions in the course of his otherwise prosaic poems, when Arnold suddenly rises from the ground of analysis and diagnosis into sensuous emotion and intuitions, and then language, imagery, and rhythm fuse into something which has an incomparable charm and beauty.

(d) Some Minor Poets

Besides Tennyson, Browning and Arnold there were a number of minor poets during the early Victorian period. Of these Mrs. Browning and Clough are well-known. Elizabeth Barrett (1806-61) became Mrs. Browning in 1846. Before her marriage she had won fame by writing poems about the Middle Ages in imitation of Coleridge. She also gave voice to sensitive pity in *Cowper's Grave* and to passionate indignation in *The Cry of Children* which is an eloquent protest against the employment of children in factories. But she produced her best work after she came in contact with Browning. Her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, which were written before her marriage with Browning, tell in a most delicate and tender manner her deep love for, and passionate gratitude to Browning who brought her, who was sick and lonely, back to health of life. The rigid limit of the sonnet form helped her to keep the exuberance of her passion under the discipline of art. Her other great work, *Aurora Leigh* (1857), is written in the form of an epic on a romantic theme. Written in blank verse which is of unequal quality, the poem is full of long stretches of dry, uninteresting verse, but here and there it contains passages of rare beauty, where sentiment and style are alike admirable.

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861), a friend of Arnold, came under the influence of Wordsworth in his early years, but later he cut himself off from Wordsworthian narrow piety, and moved towards a religious faith free from all dogma. He searched for a moral law which was in consonance with the intellectual development of the age. In his *Dipsychus*, 'the double-souled' (1850), he attempted to reconcile the special and the idealistic tendencies of the soul. His best known work, however, is *The Bothie of Toberna Vuolich*, in which he has given a lively account of an excursion of Oxford students in the Highlands. Here he, like Wordsworth, emphasises the spiritualising and purifying power of Nature. The importance of Clough as a poet lies mainly in the quality of his thought and the frank nobility of his character which is beautifully expressed in the following memorable lines:

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll:
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul!*

Novelists of the Early Victorian Period

In the early Victorian period the novel made a rapid progress. Novel-reading was one of the chief occupations of the educated public, and material had to be found for every taste. The result was that the scope of the novel, which during the eighteenth century dealt mainly with contemporary life and manners, was considerably enlarged. A number of brilliant novelists showed that it was possible to adapt the novel to almost all purposes of literature whatsoever. In fact, if we want to understand this intellectual life of the period.

We need hardly go outside the sphere of fiction. The novels produced during the period took various shapes—sermons, political pamphlets, philosophical discourses, social essays, autobiographies and poems in prose. The theatre which could rival fiction had fallen on evil days, and it did not revive till the later half of the nineteenth century. So the early Victorian period saw the heyday of the English novel.

The two most outstanding novelists of the period were Dickens and Thackeray. Besides them there were a number of minor novelists, among whom the important ones were Disraeli, Bronte Sisters, Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins and Trollope. All these novelists had a number of points of similarity. In the first place, they identified themselves with their age, and were its spokesmen, whereas the novelists of the latter Victorian period were critical, and even hostile to its dominant assumptions. This sense of identity with their time is of cardinal importance in any consideration of the early Victorian novelists. It was the source alike of their strengths and their weaknesses, and it distinguished them from their successors. It is not that these novelists were uncritical of their country and age, but their criticisms are much less radical than those of Meredith and Hardy. They accepted the society in which they criticised it as many of their readers were doing in a light hearted manner. They voiced the doubts and fears of the public, but they also shared their general assumptions.

Now let us examine these general assumptions of the early Victorians which these novelists shared. In the first place, in spite of the fact that they were conscious of the havoc caused by the industrial revolution, the presence of mass poverty, and accumulation of riches in a few hands, yet they believed like the common Victorians that these evils would prove to be temporary, that on the whole England was growing prosperous, which was evident from the enormous increase in material wealth and the physical amenities of civilization, and that there was no reason why this progress should not continue indefinitely.

Another important view which these novelists shared with the public was the acceptance of the idea of respectability, which attached great importance to superficial morality in business as well as in domestic and sexual relations. 'Honesty is the best policy', 'Nothing for nothing' were the dictums which the Victorians honoured in their business relations. Their attitude to sex had undergone a great change. Frank recognition and expression of sex had become tabooed.

Fielding's *Tom Jones* was kept out of way of women and children, and in 1818 Thomas Bowdler published his *Family Shakespeare* which contained the original text of Shakespeare's plays from which were omitted those expressions which could not be with propriety read aloud in a family.

The novelists were not far behind in propagating the Victorian ideal. Trollope wrote in his *Autobiography*:

The writer of stories must please, or he will be nothing. And he must teach whether he wish to teach or not. How shall he teach lessons of virtue and at the same time make himself a delight to his readers? But the novelist, if he have a conscience, must preach his sermons with the same purpose as the clergymen, and must have his own system of ethics. If he can do this efficiently, if he can do this efficiently, if he can make virtue alluring and vice ugly, while he charms his readers instead of wearying them, then I think Mr. Carlyle need not call him distressed...

I think that many have done so; so many that we English novelists may boast as a class that such

has been the general result of our own work... I find such to have been the teaching of Thackeray, of Dickens and of George Eliot. Can anyone by search through the works of the great English novelists I have named, find a scene, a passage or a word that would teach a girl to be immodest, or a man to be dishonest? When men in their pages have been described as dishonest and women as immodest, have they not ever been punished?

The reading public of the early Victorian period was composed of 'respectable' people, and it was for them that the novelists wrote. As the novelist themselves shared the same views of 'respectability' with the public, it gave them great strength and confidence. As they were artists as well as public entertainers, they enjoyed great power and authority. Moreover, as they shared the pre-occupations and obsessions of their time, they produced literature which may be termed as truly national.

(a) Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Dickens is the chief among the early Victorian novelists and is in fact the most popular of all English novelists so far. It was at the age of twenty-five with the publication of *Pickwick Papers* that Dickens suddenly sprang into fame, and came to be regarded as the most popular of English novelists. In his early novels, *Pickwick* (1837) and *Nickolas Nickleby* for instance, Dickens followed the tradition of Smollett. Like Smollett's novels they are mere bundles of adventure connected by means of character who figure in them. In his *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843), *Domby and Son* (1846-48), and *David Copperfield* (1849-50) he made some effort towards unifications but even here the plots are loose. It was in *Bleak House* (1852-53) that he succeeded in gathering up all the diverse threads of the story in a systematic and coherent plot. His later novels—*Dorrit* (1855-57), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1864-65), and the unfinished *Edwin Drood*—were also like *Bleak House* systematically planned. But, on the whole Dickens was not every successful in building up his plots, and there is in all of them a great deal of mere episodic material.

During the early Victorian period there was a swing from romance or a coldly picturesque treatment of life to depicting the heart had the affections. The novels which during the Romantic period and passed through a phase of adventure, reverted in the hands of Dickens to the literature of feeling. Too much emphasis on feelings often led Dickens to sentimentalism as it happened in the case of Richardson. His novels are full of pathos, and there are many passages of studied and extravagant sentiment. But Dickens's sentimentalism, for which he is often blamed, is a phase of his idealism. Like a true idealist Dickens seeks to embody in his art the inner life of man with a direct or implied moral purpose. His theme is the worth of man's thought, imaginings, affections, and religious instincts, the need of a trust in his fellowmen, a faith in the final outcome of human endeavour and a belief in immortality. He values qualities like honour, fidelity, courage magnanimity. The best example of Dickens's idealism is found in *A Tale of Two Cities*, where he preaches a sermon on the sublime text: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Another phase of Dickens's idealism was his implicit belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. In spite of pain, dirt and sin with which his novels are full, they leave an impression on the reader of the unwavering optimism and buoyant temper of Dickens. He shared to the full, the sanguine spirit of his age, and despite the hardness of heart and the selfishness of those in high places, their greed and hypocrisy, and the class prejudices which had divided man from man, Dickens believed that the world was still a very good world to live in. He had faith in the better element of human beings who live and struggle for a period, and then fall unremembered to give place to other. All his characters come out of the pit of suffering and distress as better men, uncontaminated and purer than before.

But the most delightful manifestation of the idealism of Dickens is his humour, which is almost irresistible. It is clearly manifest in his first novel, *Pickwick*, and in the succeeding novels it

broadened and deepened. Dickens has the knack of uniting humour with pathos in a sort of tragic-comedy, which is especially noticeable in certain sections of *Old curiosity shop* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. The best examples of Dickens pure comedy are the Peggotty and Barkis episodes in *David Copperfield*.

It is especially in the delineations of characters that the humour of Dickens is supreme. Like Smollett he was on the lookout for some oddity which for his purpose he made more odd than it was. All his characters are humours highly idealised and yet retaining so much of the real that we recognise in them some disposition of ourselves and of the men and women we met. The number of these humorous types that Dickens contributed to fiction runs into thousands. In fact there is no other writer in English literature, except only Shakespeare, who has created so many characters that have become permanent elements of the humorous tradition of the English race. Besides being an idealist, Dickens was also a realist. He began his literary career as a reporter, and his short *Sketches by Boz* have the air of the eighteenth century quiet observer and news writer. This same reportorial air is about his long novels, which are groups of incidents. The main difference is that, while in his sketches he writes down his observation fresh from experience, in his novels he draws upon his memory. It is his personal experiences which underlie the novels of Dickens, not only novels like *David Copperfield* where it is so obvious, but also *Hard Times* where one would least expect to find them. One very important aspect of Dickens's realism is this richness of descriptive detail, based upon what Dickens had actually seen.

It was Dickens's realism which came as a check to medievalism which was very popular during the Romantic period. He awakened the interest of the public in the social conditions of England. The novels of Dickens were full of personal experiences, anecdotes, stories from friends, and statistics to show that they were founded upon facts. The result was that after Dickens began writing, knights and ladies and tournaments became rarer in the English novel. They were replaced by agricultural labourers, miners, tailors and paupers.

The novels of Dickens were also the most important product and expression in fiction of the humanitarian movement of the Victorian era. From first to last he was a novelist with a purpose. He was a staunch champion of the weak, the outcast and the oppressed, and in almost all his novels he attacked one abuse or the other in the existing system of things. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that humanitarianism is the key-note of his work, and on account of the tremendous popularity that he enjoyed as a novelist, Dickens may justly be regarded as one of the foremost reformers of his age.

(b) William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)

Thackeray who was Dickens's contemporary and great rival for popular favour, lacked his weaknesses and his genius. He was more interested in the manners and morals of the aristocracy than in the great upheavals of the age. Unlike Dickens who came of a poor family and had to struggle hard in his boyhood, Thackeray was born of rich parents, inherited a comfortable fortune, and spent his young days in comfort. But whereas Dickens, in spite of his bitter experiences retained a buoyant temperament and a cheerful outlook on life, Thackeray, in spite of his comfortable and easy life, turned cynical towards the world which used him so well, and found shames, deceptions, vanities everywhere because he looked for them. Dickens was more interested in plain, common people; Thackeray, on the other hand, was more concerned with high society. The main reason of this fundamental difference between the two was not, however, of environment, but of temperament. Whereas Dickens was romantic and emotional and interpreted the world largely through his imagination; Thackeray was the realist and moralist and judged solely by observation and reflection. Thus if we take the novels of both together, they give us a true picture of all classes of English society in the early Victorian period.

Thackeray is, first of all, a realist, who paints life as he sees it. As he says of himself, "I have no brains above my eyes; I describe what I see." He gives in his novels accurate and true picture especially of the vicious elements of society. As he possesses an excessive sensibility, and a capacity for fine feelings and emotions like Dickens, he is readily offended by shams, falsehood and hypocrisy in society. The result is that he satirises them. But his satire is always tempered by kindness and humour. Moreover, besides being a realist and satirist, Thackeray is also a moralist. In all his novels he definitely aims at creating a moral impression and he often behaves in an inartistic manner by explaining and emphasising the moral significance of his work. The beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice in his character is so obvious on every page that we do not have to consult our conscience over their actions. As a writer of pure, simple and charming prose Thackeray the reader by his natural, easy and refined style. But the quality of which Thackeray is most remembered as a novelist is the creation of living characters. In this respect he stands supreme among English novelists. It is not merely that he holds up the mirror to life, he presents life itself.

It was with the publication of *Vanity Fair* in 1846 that the English reading public began to understand what a star had risen in English letters. *Vanity Fair* was succeeded in 1849 by *Pendennis* which, as an autobiography, holds the same place among his works as *David Copperfield* does among those of Dickens. In 1852 appeared the marvellous historical novel of *Henry Esmond* which is the greatest novel in its own special kind ever written. In it Thackeray depicted the true picture of the Queen Anne period and showed his remarkable grasp of character and story. In his next novel *Newcomes* (1853-8) he returned to modern times, and displayed his great skill in painting contemporary manners. By some critics *Newcomes* is considered to be his best novel. His next novel, *The Virginians*, which is a sequel of *Esmond*, deals with the third quarter of the eighteenth century. In all these novels Thackeray has presented life in a most realistic manner. Every act, every scene, every person in his novels is real with a reality which has been idealised up to, and not beyond, the necessities of literature. Whatever the acts, the scenes and the personages may be in his novels, we are always face to face with real life, and it is there that the greatness of Thackeray as a novelist lies.

(c) Minor Novelists

Among the minor novelists of the early Victorian period, Benjamin Disraeli, the Brontes, Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, Charles Reede, Wilkie Collins and Trollope are well known.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81) wrote his first novel *Vivian Grey* (1826-27), in which he gave the portrait of a dandy, a young, intelligent adventurer without scruples. In the succeeding novels *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847) Disraeli was among the first to point out that the amelioration of the wretched lot of the working class was a social duty of the aristocracy. Being a politician who became the Prime Minister of England, he has given us the finest study of the movements of English politics under Queen Victoria. All his novels are written with a purpose, and as the characters in them are created with a view to the thesis, they retain a certain air of unreality.

The Bronte Sisters who made their mark as novelists were Charlotte Bronte (1816-55) and Emily Bronte (1818-48). Charlotte Bronte depicted in her novels those strong romantic passions which were generally avoided by Dickens and Thackeray. She brought lyrical warmth and the play of strong feeling into the novel. In her masterpiece, *Jane Eyre* (1847), her dreams and resentments kindle every page. Her other novels are *The Professor*, *Villette* and *Shirley*. In all of them we find her as a mistress of wit, irony, accurate observation, and a style full of impassioned eloquence.

Emily Bronte was more original than her sister. Though she died at the age of thirty, she wrote a strange novel, *Wuthering Heights*, which contains so many of the troubled, tumultuous and rebellious elements of romanticism. It is a tragedy of love at once fantastic and powerful, savage and moving, which is considered now as one of the masterpieces of world fiction.

Mrs. Gaskell (1810-65) as a novelist dealt with social problems. She had first-hand knowledge of the evils of industrialisation, having lived in Manchester for many years. Her novels *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855) give us concrete details of the miserable plight of the working class. In *Ruth* (1853) Mrs. Gaskell shows the same sympathy for unfortunate girls. In *Cranford* (1853) she gave a delicate picture of the society of a small provincial town, which reminds us of Jane Austen.

Charles Kingsley (1819-75) who was the founder of the Christian Socialists, and actively interested in the co-operative movement, embodied his generous ideas of reform in the novels *Yeast* (1848) and *Alton Locke* (1850). As a historical novelist he returned to the earliest days of Christianity in *Hypatia* (1853). In *Westward Ho!* (1855) he commemorated the adventurous spirit of the Elizabethan navigators, and in *Hereward the Wake* (1865) of the descendants of the Vikings.

Charles Reade (1814-84) wrote novels with a social purpose. *It is Never too Late to Mend* (1853) is a picture of the horrors of prison life; *Hard Cash* (1863) depicts the abuses to which lunatic asylums gave rise; *Put Yourself in his place* is directed against trade unions. His *A Terrible Temptation* is a famous historical novel. His *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1867) shows the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

Wilkie Collins (1824-89) excelled in arousing the sense of terror and in keeping in suspense the explanation of a mystery or the revelation of crime. His best-known novels are *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* in which he shows his great mastery in the mechanical art of plot construction.

Anthony Trollope (1815-88) wrote a number of novels, in which he presented real life without distorting or idealising it. His important novels are *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857) and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867) in which he has given many truthful scenes of provincial life, without poetical feeling, but not without humour. Trollope has great skill as a story-teller and his characters are lifelike and shrewdly drawn. His novels present a true picture of middle class life, and there is neither heroism nor villainy there. His style is easy, regular, uniform and almost impersonal.

Prose-Writers of the Early Victorian Period

The early Victorian prose is in keeping with the energetic temperament of the time. An expansive energy seems to be characteristic of the whole period, displaying itself as freely in literature as in the development of science, geographical exploration and the rapidity of economic change.

This energetic mood prescribes the inventiveness and fertility of the prose-writers of the period and explains the vitality of so many of their works. Carlyle's *The French Revolution*, Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* are not modest and light-hearted compositions, but they represent the aesthetic equivalent of self-assertion and an urgent 'will to survive' which was characteristic of the early Victorians. Their prose is not, as a rule, flawless in

diction and rhythm, or easily related to a central standard of correctness or polished to a uniform high finish, but it is a prose which is vigorous, intricate and ample, and is more conscious of vocabulary and imagery than of balance and rhythm. The dominant impression of zestful and workmanlike prose.

As the number of prose-writers during the period is quite large, there is a greater variety of style among them than to be found in any other period. In the absence any well-defined tradition of prose-writing, each writer cherishes his oddities and idiosyncrasies and is not prepared to sacrifice his peculiarities in deference to a received tradition. Victorian individualism, the 'Doing As One Likes', censured by Matthew Arnold, reverberates in prose style.

Taking the Victorian prose as a whole, we can say that it is Romantic prose. Though Romanticism gave a new direction to English poetry between 1780 and 1830, its full effects on prose were delayed until the eighteen-thirties when all the major Romantic poets were either dead or moribund. That is why, early Victorian prose is, properly speaking, Romantic prose, and Carlyle is the best example of a Romantic prose-artist. In fact it were the romantic elements—unevenness, seriousness of tone, concreteness and particularity—which constitute the underlying unity of the prose of the early Victorian period. All the great prose writers of period—Carlyle, Ruskin, Macaulay and Matthew Arnold have these qualities in common.

(a) Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

Carlyle was the dominant figure of the Victorian period. He made his influence felt in every department of Victorian life. In the general prose literature of his age he was incomparably the greatest figure, and one of the greatest moral forces. In his youth he suffered from doubts which assailed him during the many dark years in which he wandered in the 'howling wilderness of infidelity,' striving vainly to recover his lost belief in God. Then suddenly there came a moment of mystical illumination, or 'spiritual new birth', which brought him back to the mood of courage and faith. The history of these years of struggle and conflict and the ultimate triumph of his spirit is written with great power in the second book of *Sartor Resartus* which is his most characteristic literary production, and one of the most remarkable and vital books in the English language. His other works are: *French Revolution* (1837); his lectures on *Heroes and Hero-Worship*; *Past and Present* (1843); the *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (1845); *Latter-day Pamphlets* (1850); the *Life of John Sterling* (1851); the *History of Frederick the Great* (1858-65).

Basically Carlyle was a Puritan, and in him the strenuous and uncompromising spirit of the seventeenth century Puritanism found its last great exponent. Always passionately in earnest and unyielding in temper, he could not tolerate any moral weakness or social evil. He wanted people to be sincere and he hated conventions and unrealities. In the spheres of religion, society and politics he sought reality and criticised all sham and falsehood. To him history was the revelation of God's righteous dealings with men and he applied the lessons derived from the past to the present. He had no faith in democracy. He believed in the 'hero' under whose guidance and leadership the masses can march to glory. This is the theme of his lectures on *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. He proclaimed a spiritual standard of life to a generation which had started worshipping the 'mud-gods of modern civilisation'. He denounced scientific materialism and utilitarianism in *Past and Present*. He preached to his contemporaries in a most forceful manner that spiritual freedom was the only life-giving truth. Carlyle could not turn back the currents of his age, but he exerted a tremendous influence.

Carlyle's style is the reflection of his personality. In fact in hardly any English writer are personal and literary characters more closely and strongly blended. He twists the language to suit his needs. In order to achieve this he makes use of strange 'tricks'—the use of capital initials, the dropping of conjunctions, pronouns, verbs, the quaint conversion of any noun into a verb, free

use of foreign words or literal English translations of foreign words. Thus his language is like a mercenary army formed of all sorts of incongruous and exotic elements. His personifications and abstractions sometimes become irritating and even tiresome. At times he deliberately avoids simplicity, directness, proportion and form. He is in fact the most irregular and erratic of English writers. But in spite of all these faults, it is impossible to read him at his best without the sentiment of enthusiasm. In his mastery of vivid and telling phraseology he is unrivalled and his powers of description and characterisation are remarkable. His style with its enormous wealth of vocabulary, its strangely constructed sentences, its breaks, abrupt turns, apostrophes and exclamations, is unique in English prose literature, and there is no doubt that he is one of the greatest literary artists in the English language.

(b) John Ruskin (1819-1900)

In the general prose literature of the early Victorian period Ruskin is ranked next to Carlyle. Of all the Victorian writers who were conscious of the defeats in contemporary life, he expressed himself most voluminously. Being one of the greatest masters of English he became interested in art and wrote *Modern Painters* (1843-1860) in five volumes in order to vindicate the position of Turner as a great artist. Being a man of deeply religious and pious nature he could not separate Beauty from Religion, and he endeavoured to prove that 'all great art is praise'. Examination of the principles of art gradually led Ruskin to the study of social ethics. He found that architecture, even more than painting, indicated the state of a nation's health. In his *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) he tried to prove that the best type of architecture can be produced only in those ages which are morally superior.

The year 1860 when Ruskin published *Unto this Last* marks a great change in him. From this time onward he wrote little on art and devoted himself to the discussing of the ills of society. In this book he attacked the prevalent system of political economy, and protested against unrestricted competition, the law of 'Devil-take-the-hindmost', as Ruskin called it. In his later books—*Sesame and Lilies* (1865) and *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), Ruskin showed himself as a popular educator, clear in argument and skilful in illustration. His last work, an autobiography called *Praterita*, is full of interesting reminiscences.

Ruskin was a great and good man who himself is more inspiring than any of his books. In the face of drudgery and poverty of the competitive system he wrote: "I will endure it no longer quietly; but henceforward, with any few or many who will help, do my best to abate this misery." It was with this object that leaving the field of art criticism, where he was the acknowledged leader, he began to write of labour and justice. Though as a stylist he is one of the masters of English prose, he is generally studied not as a literary man but as an ethical teacher, and every line that he wrote, bears the stamp of his sincerity. He is both a great artist as well as a great ethical teacher. We admire him for his richly ornate style, and for his message to humanity. The prose of Ruskin has a rhythmic, melodious quality which makes it almost equal to poetry. Being highly sensitive to beauty in every form, he helps the reader to see and appreciate the beauty of the world around us. In his economic essays he tried to mitigate the evils of the competitive system; to bring the employer and the employed together in mutual trust and helpfulness; to seek beauty, truth, goodness as the chief ends of life. There is no doubt that he was the prophet in an age of rank materialism, utilitarianism and competition, and pointed out the solution to the grave problems which were confronting his age.

(c) Thomas Babington Lord Macaulay (1800-59)

Though Carlyle and Ruskin are now considered to be the great prose-writers of the Victorian period, contemporary opinion gave the first place to Macaulay, who in popularity far exceeded

both of them. He was a voracious reader, and he remembered everything he read. He could repeat from memory all the twelve books of *Paradise Lost*. At the age of twenty-five he wrote his essay on poetry in general and on Milton as poet, man and politician in particular, which brought him immediate popularity as Byron's *Childe Harold* had done. Besides biographical and critical essays which won for him great fame and popularity, Macaulay, like Carlyle; wrote historical essays as well as *History of England*. As early as 1828, he wrote, 'a perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque.' That power of imagination he possessed and exercised so delightfully that his *History* was at once purchased more eagerly than a poem of romance.

Macaulay was the representative of the popular sentiments and prejudices of the common English man of the first half of the nineteenth century. But his popularity was based mainly on the energy and capacity of his mind, and the eloquence with which he enlivened whatever he wrote. By the resources and the quickness of his memory, by his wide learning which was always at his command, he rose to the high rank as the exponent of the matter of history, and as a critic of opinions.

The chief quality which makes Macaulay distinct from the other prose writers of the period is the variety and brilliance of details in his writings. There is a fondness for particulars in his descriptions which distinguished the poems and novels of the new age from the more generalised and abstract compositions of the old school. Though he may be more extravagant and profuse in his variety of details than is consistent with the 'dignity' of history, this variety is always supported by a structure of great plainness. The only fault of his style is that at times it becomes too rhetorical and so the continuity of the narrative is sacrificed. His short sentences, and his description of particular interference with the flow of the narrative, and so the cumulative effect of the story is not always secured. Besides this weakness of style, Macaulay is now given a rank lower than that of Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold on account of his lack of originality and depth as a thinker. But on the whole he still remains as one of the most enjoyable of all Victorian prose-writers.

(d) Matthew Arnold (1822-88)

Besides being a poet, Matthew Arnold was a prose-writer of a high order. He was also a great literary as well as social critic. Like Carlyle and Ruskin, he was vehement critic of his age. According to him, the Englishmen needed classical qualities in order to attain harmonious perfection in morals and in literature. It was not to the Hebrews or the Germans (as suggested by Carlyle), or to the men of the Middle Age (as suggested by Ruskin) that England could with advantage look for teaching, but to the Greeks or to that people which among the moderns had imbibed most of Hellenic culture, the French.

In literature Arnold strove to rehabilitate and to propagate the classical spirit in his country. England had reason to be proud of the literary splendour of the Elizabethan period, or of the glories of her Romantic movement, but according to Arnold, she had to long condemned or disdained the "indispensable eighteenth century." From 1855 onwards Arnold wrote incessantly in order to raise the intellectual and cultural level of his countrymen. All his prose works are directed to this end: *On Translating Homer* (1861), *The Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), *Essays in Criticism* (1865 and 1888) and *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) in which he declared that "culture is the minister of the sweetness and light essential to the perfect character". Being a poet himself, he looked upon poetry as "a criticism of life", and laid great emphasis on the part it played in the formation of character and the guidance of conduct. He always attacked "the Philistines", by whom he meant the middle class indifferent to the disinterested joys of pure intelligence. Arnold also attempted to eliminate the dogmatic element from Christianity in order to preserve its true spirit and bring it into the line with the discoveries of science and the progress of liberal thought.

Unlike the teachings of Carlyle and Ruskin, which appealed to the masses, Arnold's teaching appealed mainly to the educated classes. As a writer of prose he is simply superb. His style is brilliant and polished to a nicety, possessing the virtues of quietness and proportion which we associate with no other English writer except Dryden. As his object was to bring home to his countrymen certain fundamental principles of cultured and intellectual life, he has the habit of repeating the same word and phrase with a sort of refrain effect. It was no wonder that critics first and the public afterwards, were attracted, irritated, amused or charmed by his writings. His loud praise of 'sweetness' and 'culture', his denunciation of the 'Philistine', the 'Barbarian', and so forth, were ridiculed by some unkind critics. But rightly considered we find that there is something of justice in all that he wrote, and on every line there is the stamp of his sincerity. When Arnold returned from religion and politics to his natural sphere of literature, then the substance of his criticism is admirably sound and its expression always delightful and distinguished. In spite of its extreme mannerism and the apparently obvious tricks by which that mannerism is reached, the style of Arnold is not easy to imitate. It is almost perfectly clear with a clearness rather French than English. It sparkles with wit which seldom diverts or distracts the attention. Such a style was eminently fitted for the purposes of criticism. As a writer of essays he had no superior among the writers of his time, and he can probably never be surpassed by any one in a certain mild ironic handling of a subject which he disapproves. He may not be considered as one of the strongest writers of English prose, but he must always hold a high rank in it for grace, for elegance, and for an elaborate and calculated charm.

Poets of the Later Victorian Period

(a) Pre-Raphaelite Poets

In the later Victorian period a movement took place in English poetry, which resembled something like a new Romantic Revival. It was called the Pre-Raphaelite Movement and was dominated by a new set of poets—Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris, who were interested simply in beauty. They were quite satisfied with the beauty of diction, beauty of rhythm, and the beauty of imagery in poetry.

They were not interested in the contemporary movements of thought which formed the substance of Arnold's poetry, and had influenced Tennyson a good deal. They made use of the legends of the Middle Ages not as a vehicle for moral teaching or as allegories of modern life, as Tennyson had done, but simply as stories, the intrinsic beauty of which was their sufficient justification. There was no conscious theory underlying their work as there was in the case of Arnold's poetry. It was in 1847 that a young artist named Holman Hunt came under the influence of Ruskin's first volume of *Modern Painters*. He along with his friends, Millais and D.G. Rossetti, who were also painters, determined to find a club or brotherhood which should be styled Pre-Raphaelite, and whose members should bind themselves to study Nature attentively with the object of expressing genuine ideas in an unconventional manner, in sympathy with what was 'direct and serious and heart-felt' in early Italian painting before the artificial style of Raphael. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood lasted for a very short time, but its effect upon the plastic arts was far-reaching and revolutionary. D.G. Rossetti who was a painter as well as poet, introduced these principles in the field of poetry also. As early as 1848, in his twentieth year, Rossetti began to write the sonnets long afterwards collected as *The House of Life*, in the opening of which he urges the poets not to be satisfied with a repetition of the worn-out forms of current literature, but to turn back to the earliest masters:

*Unto the lights of the great-past, new-lit
Fair for the Future's track.*

Rossetti displayed in those earliest pieces the passion for material beauty, and the love of rich language, magnificent even in simplicity, which were always to characterise his poetry. He also

showed a complete detachment from ethical curiosity, from that desire to mend the world, which occupied almost all his Victorian contemporaries, and was to obsess his successors. Being a painter he was able to express his poetic genius more exclusively concentrated on the hues and forms of phenomena, than any other English poet. He withdrew poetry from its wide field, and concentrated it on the intensity of passion, and the richness of light on an isolated object. His earliest volume of *Poems* (1870), which spread thrills of aesthetic excitement far and wide, attracted a number of young enthusiasts, in spite of some faint protests by the older generation against the 'Fleshly School' of English poetry. Other poets who followed him and belong to the Pre-Raphaelite group of poets are—Christiana Rossetti, William Morris, and Swinburne. The Pre-Raphaelite school of poetry did not regard poetry as being prophetic, or as being mainly philosophical. Their poetry did not concern itself with intellectual complications after the manner of Browning, nor with social conditions. Thus it divided itself sharply from the great writers of the time—Tennyson, Browning and Arnold. It was not an intellectual movement at all, but it brought back the idea that poetry deals with modes of thought and feeling that cannot be expressed in prose. Moreover, it gave greater importance to personal feeling over thought. It also introduced symbolism which was so far rare in English poetry, and insisted on simplicity of expression and directness of sensation. The fleshly images used by the Pre-Raphaelite poets were full of mysticism, but the Victorians who considered them as merely sensuous were shocked by them.

(i) Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)

Rossetti was the chief force behind the Pre-Raphaelite movement. He was the son of Gabriel Rossetti, an Italian refugee, who was a poet himself and a man of sterling character. D.G. Rossetti studied drawing, and as a young man became one of the most enthusiastic members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was at the middle of the century to convert England from conventional art. His own form of painting never admitted reconciliation with convention, and possessed far greater charm than that of the other members of pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—Millais and Holman Hunt. Though his drawings were severely criticised, no one with eyes could doubt the magnificence of his colour. The same pictorial quality became the chief characteristic of his poetry, which lies apart from the main current of contemporary verse, both in its highly specialised quality of thought and language and in the condition and circumstances of its production, Rossetti openly followed the profession of a painter, pursuing poetry, for the most part, as a recreative rather than a principal study.

In his poetry Rossetti assumes for ever the reality and immanence of spiritual and moral world. But he is not a consciously didactic poet. On the other hand, the form and substance of his utterance are so perfected in truth and virility of thought, in majesty and grace of speech, that the reader is unconsciously affected by them. Rossetti's poetry can be roughly divided into two groups—the personal and the impersonal poems. In the *House of Life* sonnets, *Dante at Verona*, *The Streams Secret*, *The Portrait*, and many of the shorter lyrics, the personal note of love or grief, of memory or hope, is wholly dominant. The poet's soul is absorbed with its individual being, and sees in all the life around him the illustration and interpretation of his own. In the second group, in the great romantic ballads, in *Rose Mary*, and *The Blessed Damozel*, in *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy*, in *The Bride's Pleasure* and *Sister Helen*, the imagination takes a higher and larger range. Here the art becomes impersonal in this sense only that the thought of self is merged in the full and immense life of humanity laying hold of the universal consciousness through its own experience.

Rossetti was a supreme master of rhythm and music. He cast his great historical lyrics in the highest narrative—that is to say, the ballad form; and chose the sonnet—the most chastened and exclusive vehicle for the meditative and yet sensuous, self-delineative love poetry. But whether

written in the form of ballad or sonnet, Rossetti's verse remains fully charged with the very essence of romance. As a poet, he is neither less nor more pre-Raphaelite than as painter. The vivid and intense simplicity of his diction, the verbal flashes of his ballad style, seem to correspond with the tone and method of his water-colour painting, and the more laboured splendour of the sonnets with the qualities of his oil paintings.

(ii) Christiana Rossetti

Though Christiana Rossetti naturally displayed a temperament akin to her brother's and sometimes undoubtedly wrote to some extent under his inspiration, large parts, and some of the best parts, of her poetical accomplishments, are quite distinct from anything of his. Her sonnet sequences have the same Italian form and the same characteristics of colour, music, and meditation, as those of Rossetti, because the sonnet form exercised its strong restraint. But her lyrics have lighter, more bird-like movement and voice than the stately lyrics of Rossetti. Her range was distinctly wide. She had, unlike Mrs. Browning, and perhaps unlike the majority of her sex, a very distinct sense of humour. Moreover, her pathos has never been surpassed except in the great single strokes of Shakespeare. But her most characteristic strain is where this pathos blends with or passes into, the utterance of religious awe, unstained and un-weakened by any fear. The great devotional poets of the seventeenth century, Crashaw, Vaughan, Herbert are more artificial than she is in their expression of this.

Christiana Rossetti began with *Goblin Market and Other Poems* in 1861, followed it with another volume, *The Prince's Progress* in 1866 and after a much longer interval with *A Pageant and Other Poems* in 1881. Later her verse was collected more than once, and it was supplemented by a posthumous volume after her death. But a good deal of it remains in two books of devotion, entitled *Time Flies* (1885) and *The Face of the Deep* (1892).

(iii) William Morris (1834-96)

William Morris who was an eminent designer and decorator besides being a poet, was chiefly interested in the Middle Ages. His first volume of poems—*The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (1858)—gives expression to his enthusiasm for the Middle Ages. His object of writing poetry was to revive the true Gothic spirit, and these poems interpreted ardours and mysteries of the Middle Ages which the Victorians had forgotten. Though Tennyson also drew inspiration for his 'Idylls' from medieval sources, he used medieval stories as a vehicle for contemporary moralising. Morris, on the other hand tried to bring back to life the true spirit of the Middle Ages.

For nine years after *The Defence of Guenevere*, Morris did not write anything, as Rossetti under whose influence he had come, wanted him to be a painter. When he did resume his literary work, his style had entirely changed. *The Life and Death of Jason* is the first of a long series of narrative poems which forms the bulk of his contribution to literature. In it he followed Chaucer whom he knew and loved best. In 1868-1870 were published the greatest collection of his stories in *Earthly Paradise*. These stories which are in Medieval setting, are written in an easy and simple style, and their diction is always graceful and suited to the subject.

In the later parts of *Earthly Paradise* there is an indication of a change in Morris's interests and methods. Tales such as the 'Lover of Gudrun' which are derived from the mythologies of northern Europe are treated in a different manner. This new interest was intensified by his visits to Iceland in 1871 and 1873, and the greater part of Morris's subsequent work is based on the study of the sagas, and has a spirit of Epic poetry. He translated the 'Grettis and Volsunga' Sagas; but the new spirit is found at its best in the poems *Sigured the Volsung*.

Morris is a pre-Raphaelite in the sense that he wrote poetry mainly with the object of creating

beauty. He is a past master in producing languorous effects bathed in an atmosphere of serenity and majesty. He, therefore, belongs to the lineage of Spenser in combining virile strength with the greatest refinement of touch. His poems have a harmonious and musical flow, the variety and suppleness of which recall at once the styles of Chaucer and Spenser. In whatever form he writes—blank verse, rhymed verse, the complicated or the simple stanza—he can produce exquisite music which casts its fascinating spell on the readers. In all his poetry the love of adventure, the attraction of an imaginary world, where beautiful human lives bloom out in open nature and unrestricted liberty, where unhappiness, suffering and death have themselves a dignity unknown in the real world made ugly by industrialisation, inspired Morris. The charm of his poems lies mainly in their indefiniteness and their remote atmosphere which soothe the aching of a mind disturbed and tortured by the tyranny of a vulgar present. His poetry is the result of the reaction of a wounded sensibility against the sordidness and ugliness of the real world.

(iv) Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909)

Besides Rossetti and Morris, Swinburne was another Victorian poet who is reckoned with the pre-Raphaelites, though his association with them was personal rather than literary, and he belonged to the later styles of the movement. Unlike the other members of the group, Swinburne was a musician rather than a painter. The poetry of Rossetti and Morris, however musical it may be, is primarily pictorial. Swinburne's poetry lacks the firm contours and sure outlines of the poetry of Rossetti and Morris, but it has the sonority of the rhymes which links the verses together. From his youth Swinburne displayed an extraordinary skill in versification and a gift of imitating widely different rhythms, not only those of English poets, but also those of the Latin, the Greeks, and the French. It is in fact in the music of verse that Swinburne is pre-eminent. When once asked at an Oxford gathering, which English poet had the best ear, he answered, "Shakespeare, without doubt; then Milton; then Shelley; then, I do not know what other people would do, but 'I should put myself.'" This claim, though made in all simplicity, is quite justified, and there is no doubt that Swinburne is one of the great masters in metrical technique. He handled the familiar forms, of verse with such freedom that he revealed their latent melody for the first time.

Swinburne's poetry deals with great romantic themes—like Shelley's revolt against society, the hatred of kings and priests and the struggle against conventional morality. He was also inspired by the French romantics, Victor Hugo and Baudelaire. The appearance of his *Poems and Ballads* in 1866 created great excitement. The Victorians who had accepted Tennyson as the great poet of the age, resented the audacity of this upstart who, though possessing high technical skill, cared nothing for restraint and dignity. Arnold found many of his lines meaningless, and called him "a young pseudo-Shelly". Serious persons were perturbed by his downright heterodoxy. His violent paganism was the first far-heard signal of revolt that was to become general till a generation later. The young, however, were carried away by the passion of his verse, his intoxicating rhythms, and the new prospects of beauty which seemed to be opening in English poetry.

Swinburne first became known by his *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), a poetic drama, distinguished by some great choruses, especially the one that opens, 'Before the beginning of the years'.

Swinburne was essentially lyrical even when he attempted drama, and the success of *Atalanta in Calydon* was due to the choral passages possessing great lyrical quality. Dramatic movement and the creation of characters were outside Swinburne's range. He wrote other dramas—*Bothwell* (1874), and *Mary Stuart* (1881) both on a period of history in which he was passionately interested. But, above all, Swinburne is a lyrical poet and he never surpassed or equalled the *Poems and Ballads*, (1886). In his later poems—*Laus Veneris*, *The Garden of Proserpine*, *The Tynm to Proserpine*, *The Triumph of Time*, *Ltlylus and Dolores*, there is a repetition of images and ideas already familiar. These songs of love were succeeded by poems dedicated to national

liberty, especially that of Italy, for Swinburne was an ardent admirer of Mazzini. In *A Song of Italy* (1867) and *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) he gave lyrical expression to his passion for freedom. Two other volumes of *Poems and Ballads* appeared in 1878 and 1889. His later poems—*Studies in Song* (1880), *A Century of Roundels* (1883) and *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882) show more of metrical skill than lyrical power.

Though much of Swinburne's poetry, especially that of his later years, seems unsubstantial and almost empty of meaning, he is not merely a technician in verse. His love of liberty, hatred of tyranny in all forms and voluptuous paganism were quite genuine impulses which inspired much of his poetry. At his best, when he sings in *Hertha* of the birth and destiny of man, no one can deny him the title of a great-poet.

(b) The Decadent or Aesthetic Movement

The Pre-Raphaelite Movement in English poetry was followed by Decadent or Aesthetic Movement, though it is not so well defined. In the later part of the nineteenth century (1890-1900) there was a tendency among the literary artists to lay greater emphasis on the idea of Art for Art's sake. They were obviously influenced by Walter Pater and the French authors like Baudelaire and Verlaine, who tried to break with conventional values. They believed that all themes must be excluded from poetry except the record of the few deeply moving movements of passion or sadness of emotional exaltation or distress. They sought themes from pleasures which the virtuous forbid, and inflicted agonies upon themselves to achieve perfection of form. These they conveyed for their own sake with exquisite brevity. They found this conception not only in the study of French models but in the critical work of Walter Pater, and their adherence to these self-imposed limitations separates them from earlier English romanticism and from pre-Raphaelite verse. Swinburne had already been subjected to similar influence, but he had wider interests—enthusiasm for medieval legends, for Elizabethan drama and his love of liberty and hatred for tyranny. The Decadents, on the other hand, were not interested in any great subject, theme or idea. They showed anxiety about the right word and were fussy about vowel and consonant patterns. Moreover, they emphasised the passion rather than the intellect. Pater, in his essay on the pre-Raphaelites, and above all in his *Conclusions to Studies in the Renaissance*, had given a double suggestion which greatly affected this group of poets. First, there accompanies life an inevitable mortality, "the undefinable taint of death is upon all things"; and, secondly, "out of life may be seized some few moments of deep passion or high intellectual endeavour." The poets belonging to the Aesthetic Movement attempted to express in a most beautiful manner such evanescent moods of pleasure and pain for their own sake without any extraneous motive of conveying any moral. In fact they were pitted against all conventional morality and rebelled against established social and moral laws. They knew neither philosophy nor religion but were the worshippers of Beauty for its own sake. Their object was to afford the readers merely aesthetic pleasure.

(i) Oscar Wilde (1856-1900)

Oscar Wilde was the first to come under the influence of Walter Pater. Though in his early poems he had dealt with religious and spiritual experiences, in *New Helen* he declared himself as the votary of Beauty.

Of heaven or hell I have no thought or fear

Seeing I know no other god but thee.

In *The Garden of Eros* he reaffirmed his belief that the pursuit of beauty is the only desirable form of human activity. Like the pre-Raphaelites he also pointed out that modern civilisation opposes this ideal:

*Spirit of beauty, tarry yet awhile
Although the cheating merchants of the mart
With iron rods profane our lovely isle,
And break on whirling wheels the limbs of art.*

In the short poem, *Panthea*, Wilde almost gives a paraphrase of Pater's aesthetic creed:

*Nay, let us walk from fire to fire,
From passionate pain to deadlier delight.
I am too young to live without desire,
Too young art thou to waste this summer night
Asking those idle questions which of old
Man sought to see and oracle made no reply.*

(ii) Ernest Dowson (1867-1900)

Ernest Dowson symbolises in his work the Aesthetic Movement of the eighteen nineties. He came under the influence of Rossetti, Swinburne and the French romanticists who believed in the doctrine of Art for Art's sake. Following Pater's artistic principles the recorded in his poetry moments of sensations to the utter exclusion of all moral and philosophical comment. He dealt mainly with the theme of the brevity of life and the fading of things that once were beautiful:

*They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate;
I think they have no portions in us after we pass the gate.*

Dowson possessed a love of words for their very shape and appearance on the page, apart from their values of sound and association. He also possessed an unusual prosodic skill. His *Cynara* holds a pre-eminent place in his work mainly on account of the sweet melody of its verse. His central poetic theme is most profoundly treated in *Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration* knowing that the 'world is wild and passionate; and that the rose of the world would fade', the poet views with sad admiration those whose ascetism allows them to stand aside and make their nights and days, 'Into a long returning rosary':

*Calm, sad, secure; behind high convent walls,
These watch the sacred lamp, these watch and pray;
And it is one with them when evening falls,
And one with them the cold return of day.*

(iii) Lionel Pigot Johnson (1867-1902)

Lionel Johnson was an associate of Oscar Wilde and Dowson who created the aesthetic poetry of the eighteen nineties. Though he was greatly influenced by old Christianity and wrote a good deal of religious verse, yet along with passages of religious enthusiasm can be found paragraphs marked by aestheticism.

(iv) Arthur Symonds

Next to Dowson the most consistent follower of the Aesthetic Movement was Arthur Symonds. Though he did not possess the unfaltering artistic perfection of Dowson's poetry where the images burn clearly and steadily, yet his poetic range was wider, and he was a great critic.

(c) Other Important Poets

Other important poets of the Later Victorian Period were Patmore, Meredith and Hardy, though the last two are better known as novelists. Coventry Patmore was a pre-Raphaelite in the sense that he believed in 'the simplicity of art' theory, but much of his poetry expresses his own individuality rather than any literary or aesthetic doctrine. His most popular poem is *The Angel in the House* which contains some very fine things. His great Odes covered by the title *The Unknown Eros* convey in beautiful, controlled free verse, the mysticism of love combined with an intense religious feeling as no other poems in the English language do.

Though George Meredith was associated with Rossetti and Swinburne, as a poet he had nothing in common with the pre-Raphaelite group except his belief that art should not be the handmaid of morality. He looked upon life as glorious, increasingly exciting and always worth while. The tremendous vigour and metrical skill of his long lyrics—*The Lark Ascending and Love in the Valley* remind one of Swinburne. His greatest poetical work, *Modern Love* written in sonnets of sixteen lines, is a novel in verse, and is of its own kind in English literature. It is no doubt the most successful long poem written during the later Victorian period.

Thomas Hardy, though a novelist, expressed himself, like Meredith, in verse also. His greatest work, *The Dynasts*, is written in the form of an epic in which the immense Napoleonic struggle unrolls itself as drama, novel, tragedy, and comedy. In his verse sometimes he is as prosaic as Wordsworth in his later poetry, but at times his poems like 'Only a man harrowing clods' he gives expression to his pessimistic philosophy, but in others he gives a true picture of human experience with a queer sense of super reality. *Moments of Vision*, the title of one of his volume, in an apt description of his poems as a whole, because most of them give us visions of emotional moments charged with the inheritance of past ages of emotions, combined with irrational half-conscious feelings which are recognized by the contemplative mind as being part of every-day experience.

Novelists of the Later Victorian Period

The novel in the later Victorian period took a new trend, and the novels written during this period may be called 'modern' novels. George Eliot was the first to write novels in the modern style. Other important novelists of the period were Meredith and Hardy. The year 1859 saw the publication not only of George Eliot's *Adam Bede* but also of Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. Though they are vastly different from each other, they stand in sharp contrast to the works of established novelists that appeared the same year—as Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and Thackeray's *Virginians*.

The novelists of the early Victorian period—Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope and others—had followed the tradition of English novel established by Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. Their

conception of themselves was modest, and their conscious aim nothing much more elevated than Wilkie Collins's "make them laugh, make them cry, make them wait." Set against this innocent notion of the novelist's function, the new novelists of England as well of other countries of Europe, began to have high ambitions of making the novel as serious as poetry. The Russian novelists—Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and the French novelists like Flaubert, all began to look upon the novel as a medium of conveying profound thoughts. Flaubert especially arrogated to himself the rights and privileges of the poet, and he talked about his talent and medium as seriously as poets do theirs. He stated his ambition as a novelist thus: "To desire to give verse rhythm to prose, yet to leave it prose and very much prose, and to write about ordinary life as histories and epics are written, yet without falsifying the subject. It is perhaps an absurd idea. But it may also be a great experiment and very original". These words of Flaubert show that the European novelists in the middle of the nineteenth century were making the same claims about their vocation as the Romantic poets in England did in the beginning of the century. The seriousness of these European novelists was both moral and aesthetic, and it came to English fiction with George Eliot and Meredith. Both of them were intellectuals and philosophers and had associates among such class of people. On the other hand, their predecessors, Dickens and Thackeray, had association with journalists, artists and actors, and they themselves belonged to their group. George Eliot lived in a much larger world of ideas. These ideas conditioned her views of fiction, determined the shape of her novels and the imagery of her prose. Meredith who was partly educated in Germany and was influenced by French writers, developed a highly critical view of England and its literature. Thus specially equipped, these two novelists—George Eliot and Meredith—gave a new trend to the English novel, and made it 'modern'. They were followed by Hardy who extended the scope of the novel still further.

(a) George Eliot (1819-1880)

The real name of George Eliot was Mary Ann Evans. For a long time her writings was exclusively critical and philosophic in character, and it was when she was thirty-eight that her first work of fiction *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857) appeared. It was followed by *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1863), and *Middlemarch* (1871-72).

George Eliot was born in Warwickshire, where she lived till her father's death in 1849. It was her Warwickshire experience—the life of an English village before the railway came to disturb it, which provided the substance of most of her novels. Gifted with a wonderful faculty of observation, she could reproduce faithfully the mannerism of rustic habit and speech. Having a thorough knowledge of the countryside and the country people, their hierarchies and standards of value, she could give a complete picture of their life. Moreover, she could beautifully portray the humour and pathos of these simple folk as no English novelist had done before. Just as we look to Dickens for pictures of the city streets and to Thackeray for the vanities of society, we look to George Eliot for the reflection of the country life in England.

In George Eliot the novel took its modern form. Every story derives its unity from its plot. The different episodes are all related to one another and subordinated to the main story. The chief appeal to the emotions of the reader is made by the inevitable catastrophe towards which the whole action moves. This unity of plot construction was lacking in the English novel before George Eliot appeared on the scene. This was a singular contribution of hers to the development of the English novel. Another important feature of George Eliot's novels is that they reflect more clearly than any other Victorian novels the movement of contemporary thought. They specially appeal to the mind which is troubled by religious and ethical difficulties. The mood of much of her work is like that of Matthew Arnold's poems. She shares also with him his melancholy and depressing mood.

In her novels George Eliot takes upon herself the role of a preacher and moraliser. Though profoundly religious at heart, she was greatly affected by the scientific spirit of the age; and finding no religious creed or political system satisfactory, she fell back upon duty as the supreme law of life. In all her novels she shows in individuals the play of universal moral forces, and establishes the moral law as the basis of human society. The principle of law which was in the air during the Victorian era and which deeply influenced Tennyson, is with George Eliot like fate. It is to her as inevitable and automatic as gravitation and it overwhelms personal freedom and inclination.

All the novels of George Eliot are examples of psychological realism. She represents in them, like Browning in his poetry, the inner struggle of a soul, and reveals the motives, impulses and hereditary influences which govern human action. But unlike Browning who generally stops short when he tells a story, and either lets the reader draw his own conclusion or gives his in a few striking lines, George Eliot is not content until she has minutely explained the motives of her characters and the moral lessons to be learned from them. Moreover, the characters in her novels, unlike in the novels of Dickens, develop gradually as we came to know them. They go from weakness to strength, or from strength to weakness, according to the works that they do and the thoughts that they cherish. For instance, in *Romola* we find that Tito degenerates steadily because he follows selfish impulses, while Romola grows into beauty and strength with every act of self-renunciation.

(b) George Meredith (1829-1909)

Another great figure not only in fiction, but in the general field of literature during the later Victorian period, was Meredith who, though a poet at heart expressed himself in the medium of the novel, which was becoming more and more popular. The work of Meredith as a novelist stands apart from fiction of the century. He did not follow any established tradition, nor did he found a school. In fact he was more of a poet and philosopher than a novelist. He confined himself principally to the upper classes of society, and his attitude to life is that of the thinker and poet. In his novels, he cared little for incident or plot on their account, but used them principally to illustrate the activity of the 'Comic Spirit'. Comedy he conceives of as a Muse watching the actions of men and women, detecting and pointing out their inconsistencies with a view to their moral improvement. She never laughs loud, she only smiles at most; and the smile is of the intellect, for she is the handmaid of philosophy. Meredith loves to trace the calamities which befall those who provoke Nature by obstinately running counter to her laws. A certain balance and sanity, a fine health of body and soul are, in his view, the means prescribed by Nature for the happiness of man.

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, which is one of the earliest of Meredith's novels, is also one of his best. Its theme is the ill-advised bringing up of an only son, Richard Feverel, by his well-meaning and officious father, Sir Austen Feverel. In spite of his best intentions, the father adopts such methods as are unsuited to the nature of the boy, with the result that he himself becomes the worst enemy of his son, and thus an object of ridicule by the Comic Spirit. Besides containing Meredith's philosophy of natural and healthy development of the human personality the novel also has some fine passages of great poetic beauty. *Evan Harrington* (1861) is full of humorous situations which arise out of the social snobbery of the Harrington family. *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), *Sandra Belloni* (1864), *Harry Richmond* (1871) and *Beauchamp's Career* (1876) all contain the best qualities of Meredith's art—intellectual brilliance, a ruthless exposure of social weaknesses, and an occasional poetic intensity of style. In all of them Meredith shows himself as the enemy of sentimentality. In *The Egoists* which is the most perfect illustration of what he meant by 'comedy', Meredith reached the climax of his art. The complete discomfiture of Sir Willoughby Patterne, the egoist, is one of the neatest things in English literature. This novel also

contains Meredith's some of the best drawn characters—the Egoist himself, Clara Middleton, Laetitia Dale, and Crossjay Patterne.

Like George Eliot, Meredith is a psychologist. He tries to unravel the mystery of the human personality and probe the hidden springs there. Being at heart a poet, he introduced in his earlier novels passages of unsurpassable poetic beauty. A master of colour and melody when he wills, Meredith belongs to the company of Sterne, Carlyle and Browning who have whimsically used the English language. He seldom speaks directly, frequently uses maxims and aphorisms in which are concentrated his criticism of contemporary life. Like Browning, Meredith preaches an optimistic and positive attitude to life. Influenced by the theory of Evolution, he believes that the human race is evolving towards perfection. This process can be accelerated by individual men and women by living a sane balanced and healthy life. They should follow the golden mean and steer clear of 'the ascetic rocks and sensual whirlpools'. On account of this bracing and refreshing philosophy, the novels of Meredith, though written in a difficult style, have a special message for the modern man who finds himself enveloped in a depressing atmosphere.

(c) Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

The greatest novelist of the later Victorian period was Thomas Hardy. Like Meredith, he was at heart a poet, and expressed himself also in verse. But unlike Meredith whose attitude to life is optimistic, and who has written comedies, Hardy's attitude to life is rather pessimistic and he has written tragedies. Hardy thinks that there is some malignant power which controls this universe, and which is out to thwart and defeat man in all his plans. It is especially hostile to those who try to assert themselves and have their own way. Thus his novels and poems are, throughout, the work of a man painfully dissatisfied with the age in which he lived. He yearned for England's past, and he distrusted modern civilisation because he suspected that its effect was frequently to decivilise and weaken those to whom Nature and old custom had given stout hearts, clear heads and an enduring spirit. In his books, ancient and modern are constantly at war, and none is happy who has been touched by 'modern' education and culture. Hardy also resists the infiltration of aggressive modernity in the quiet village surroundings.

Hardy passed the major portion of his life near Dorchester, and his personal experiences were bound up with the people and customs, the monuments and institutions of Dorset and the contiguous countries of south-western England, which he placed permanently on the literary map by the ancient name "Wessex". Thus Hardy has left a body of fiction unique in its uniformity. No other novelist in England has celebrated a region so comprehensively as Hardy has done. Though he has dealt with a limited world, he has created hundreds of characters, many of whom are mere choral voices as in Greek drama.

On account of Hardy's philosophy of a malignant power ruling the universe which thwarts and defeats man at every step, his novels are full of coincidences. In fact, chance plays too large a part in them. For this Hardy has been blamed by some critics who believe that he deliberately introduces coincidences which always upset the plans of his characters. In real life chance sometimes helps a man also, but in Hardy's novel chance always comes as an upsetting force. The great novels of Hardy are *The Woodlanders*, *The Return of the Native*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. Though most of Hardy's novels are tragedies, yet the role of tragedy becomes intensified in *The Return of the Native*, *Tess* and *Jude*. The last chapter of *Tess* outraged the religious conscience of 1891; to-day it offends the aesthetic conscience by its violation of our critical sense of order and imaginative sufficiency. Hardy had said enough in *Tess* before the beginning of the last chapter. As it stands, the novel is a masterpiece, but it is scarred by an unhappy final stroke, the novel is a masterpiece, but it is scarred by an unhappy final stroke. *Jude the Obscure*, though a very powerful novel is spoiled by Hardy's ruthlessness. At no time are Sue and Jude permitted to

escape the shadowing hand of malignant destiny. They are completely defeated and broken. As a writer of tragedies Hardy can stand comparison with the great figures in world literature, but he falls short of their stature because he is inclined to pursue his afflicted characters beyond the limits of both art and nature. In the use of pathos Hardy is a past master. As for Hardy's style, his prose is that of a poet in close contact with things. In his evocation of scenes and persons, his senses bring into play a verbal incantation that relates him to the pre-Raphaelites. He describes characters and scenes in such a manner that they get imprinted on the memory.

The main contribution of Hardy to the history of the English novel was that he made it as serious a medium as poetry, which could deal with the fundamental problems of life. His novels can be favourably compared to great poetic tragedies, and the characters therein rise to great tragic heights. His greatest quality as a writer is his sincerity and his innate sympathy for the poor and the down-trodden. If at times he transgressed the limits of art, it was mainly on account of his deep compassion for mankind, especially those belonging to the lower stratum.

(d) Some Other Novelists

Besides George Eliot, Meredith and Hardy there were a number of other Victorian novelists during the later Victorian period. Of these Stevenson and Gissing are quite well-known.

(i) Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94)

Stevenson was a great story-teller and romancer. He took advantage of the reader's demand for shorter novels. His first romance entitled *Treasure Island* became very popular. It was followed by *New Arabian Nights*, *Kidnapped*, *The Black Arrow*, which contain romances and mystery stories. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* he departed from his usual manner to write a modern allegory of the good and evil in the human personality. In *The Master of Ballantre* Stevenson described the story of a soul condemned to evil. At his death he was working on unfinished novel, *Weir of Hermiston*, which is considered by some critics as the most finished product of his whole work. In it he dramatised the conflict between father and son—the Lord Justice-Clerk, the hanging judge, and his son Archie who has the courage to face him.

The contribution of Stevenson to the English novel is that he introduced into it romantic adventure. His rediscovery of the art of narrative, of conscious and clever calculation in telling a story so that the maximum effect of clarity and suspense is achieved, meant the birth of the novel of action. He gave a wholly new literary dignity and impetus to light fiction whose main aim is entertainment.

(ii) George Gissing (1857-1903)

Gissing has never been a popular novelist, yet no one in English fiction faced the defects of his times with such a frank realism. Like Dickens he paints generally the sordid side of life, but he lacks Dickens's gusto and humour and Dickens's belief that evil can be conquered. Working under the influence of French realists and Schopenhauer's philosophy, he sees the world full of ignoble and foolish creatures. He considers the problem of poverty as insoluble; the oppressed lower classes cannot revolt successfully and the rich will not voluntarily surrender their power. Under such circumstances it is the intellectuals who suffer the most, because they are more conscious of the misery around them. This is the moral of all Gissing's novels, chief among which are *Worker in the Dawn* (1880), *The Unclassed* (1884), *Domes* (1886), *The Emancipated* (1889), *New Grub Street* (1891), *Born in Exile* (1892). One can guess the subjects treated in them from their titles.

All Gissing's novels bear unmistakable traces of his many years of struggle against poverty,

obstruction and depreciation. He drew his inspiration from Dickens, but he made the mistake of omitting altogether that which is present in Dickens even to excess—the romance and poetry of poverty. He saw the privations of the poor, but unlike Dickens, he was blind and deaf to their joyousness. In his later years he discovered his mistake, and in 1903 he brought out *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, a great autobiographic fiction, which is written in a most delightful manner revealing his inner life.

Prose-Writers of the Later Victorian Period

In the later Victorian period there were two great prose-writers—Newman and Pater. Newman was the central figure of the Oxford Movement, while Pater was an aesthete, who inspired the leaders of the Aesthetic Movement in English poetry.

(a) Newman and the Oxford Movement

The Oxford Movement was an attempt to recover a lost tradition. England had become a Protestant country in the 16th century under the reign of Elizabeth, and had her own Church, called the Anglican Church, which became independent of the control of the Pope at Rome. Before that England was a Catholic country. The Anglican Church insisted on simplicity, and did not encourage elaborate ceremonies. In fact it became too much rational having no faith in rituals and old traditions. Especially in the eighteenth century in England religion began to be ruthlessly attacked by philosophers as well as scientists. The protagonists of the Oxford Movement tried to show that the Middle Ages had qualities and capacities which the moderns lacked. They wished to recover the connection with the continent and with its own past which the English Church had lost at the Reformation in the sixteenth century. They recognised in the medieval and early Church a habit of piety and genius of public worship which had both disappeared. They, therefore, made an attempt to restore those virtues by turning the attention of the people to the history of the Middle Ages, and by trying to recover the rituals and art of the medieval Church. From another point of view the Oxford Movement was an attempt to meet the rationalist attack by emphasising the importance of tradition, authority, and the emotional element in religion. It sought to revive the ancient rites, with all their pomp and symbolism. It exalted the principle of authority the hierarchy and dogmatic teaching. Instead of being inspired by the doctrines of liberalism which were being preached in the Victorian period, it resumed its connection with the medieval tradition. It was favourable to mystery and miracles and appealed to the sensibility and imagination which during the eighteenth century had been crushed by the supremacy of intellect. The aesthetic aspect of the Oxford Movement, or the Catholic Reaction, had a much wider appeal. Even those who were not convinced by the arguments advanced by the supporters of the Movement, were in sympathy with its aesthetic side. The lofty cathedrals aglow with the colours of painting, stately processions in gorgeous robes, and all the pomp and circumstance of a ceremonial religion, attract even such puritanic minds as Milton's and are almost the only attraction to the multitudes whose God must take a visible shape and be not too far removed from humanity. Thus many who were only alienated by the arguments in favour of the Catholic Reaction, were in sympathy with this aspect of the reaction, with the bringing back of colour and beauty into religious life, with the appeal to the imagination and the feelings.

The germ of the Oxford Movement is to be found in 1822 in Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sketches*. Although Wordsworth here showed himself a follower Catholic past which survived there. He regretted the suppressions of the ritual, lamented the dissolution of the monasteries, the end of the worship of saints and the virgin, the disappearance of the ancient abbeys, and admired the splendours of the old Cathedrals. It was one of Wordsworth's disciples, John Keble,

professor of poetry at Oxford, who some years later started the Oxford Movement. The first impulse towards reaction was given by his sermon on 'national apostasy' in 1833. In this movement which Keble heralded there were two phases. The first was the High Church revival within the framework of the Anglican Church. The second was reverting to Roman Catholicism. But both laid emphasis on ceremonies, dogmatism and attachment to the past.

Others who took up this movement were E. B. Pusey and John Henry Newman, both belonging to Oxford. (In fact this movement was called the Oxford Movement, because its main supports came from Oxford.) To explain their point of view they wrote pamphlets called *Tracts for the Times* (1833-41) whence the movement got its name the 'Tractarian Movement' E.B. Pusey (1800-82) who was a colleague of Keble originated 'Puseyism', the form of Anglicanism which came nearest to Rome without being merged into Romanism.

John Henry Newman (1801-90) who joined later, became soon the moving force in the movement. He was, in fact, the once great man, the one genius, of Oxford Movement. Froude calls him the 'indicating number', all the rest but as ciphers. This judgment is quite sound. It was he who went to the length of breaking completely with Protestantism and returning to the bosom of the Roman Church. Newman, the most important personality of the movement, is also its most conspicuous writer. He dreamt of a free and powerful Church, and aspired to a return to the spirit of the Middle Ages. At first he believed that this reform could be accomplished by Anglicanism, but he was distressed to find lack of catholicity in the Anglican Church. Universality and the principle of authority he could find only in Rome. So after a period of hesitation he was converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845. In 1879 he was made a Cardinal.

Newman was great writer of prose and verse. His greatest contribution to English prose is his *Apologia*, in which he set forth the reasons for his conversion. This fascinating book is the great prose document of the Oxford Movement, and it is eminently and emphatically literature. From first to last it is written in pure, flawless and refined prose. His style is a clear reflection of his character. Refinement, severity, strength, sweetness, all of these words are truly descriptive of the style as well as of the character of Newman. Another special characteristic of Newman's style is its wide range. He can express himself in any manner he pleases, and that most naturally and almost unconsciously. In his writings sarcasm, biting irony glowing passion are seen side by side, and he can change from one to the other without effort. His art of prose writing is, therefore, most natural and perfectly concealed.

(b) Walter Pater (1839 – 1894)

Pater belongs to the group of great Victorian critics like Ruskin and Arnold, though he followed a new line of criticism, and was more akin to Ruskin than to Arnold. He was also the leader of the Aesthetes and Decadents of the later part of the nineteenth century. Like Ruskin, Pater was an Epicurean, a worshipper of beauty, but he did not attach much importance to the moral and ethical side of it as Ruskin did. He was curiously interested in the phases of history; and chiefly in those, like the Renaissance and the beginnings of Christianity, in which men's minds were driven by a powerful eagerness, or stirred by proud conflicts. He thus tried to trace the history of man through picturesque surroundings as his life developed, and he laid great stress on artistic value. From these studies – *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), *Greek Studies* and others – it becomes clear that Pater considered that the secret principle of existence that actually possesses and rules itself is to gather as many occasions of psychical intensity which life offers to the knowing, and to taste them all at their highest pitch, so that the flame of consciousness should burn with its full ardour. Far from giving itself away, it shall suck in the whole world and absorb it for its own good. Pater's most ambitious and, on the whole, his greatest work, *Marius*

the Epicurean, the novel in which most of his philosophy is to be found also spiritualises the search for pleasure. Pater's aestheticism was thus spent in tasting and intensifying the joys to be reaped from the knowledge of the past and the understanding of the human soul.

As a critic Pater stands eminent. His method is that impressionism which Hazlitt and Lamb had brilliantly illustrated. His approach is always intuitional and personal, and, therefore, in his case one has to make a liberal allowance for the 'personal equation'. His studies are short 'appreciations' rather than judgments. But few writers have written more wisely upon style, and the sentence in which he concentrates the essence of his doctrine is unimpeachable: "Say what you have to say, what you have a will to say, in the simplest, the most direct and exact manner possible, and with no surplusage; there is the justification of the sentence so fortunately born, entire, smooth and round, that it needs no punctuation, and also (that is the point) of the most elaborate period, if it be right in its elaboration." Few again have more wisely discriminated between the romantic and classical elements in literature. According to him the essential elements of the romantic spirit are "curiosity and the love of beauty," that of the classical spirit – "a comely order". He believes that "all good art was romantic in its day", and his love for and affinity to the romantic spirit is obvious. But he attempts to make romantic more classical, to superimpose the "comely order" upon beauty, so that its strangeness may be reduced. His point of view, therefore, is similar to that of Arnold, but he lacks Arnold's breadth of outlook, and his attitude is more of a recluse who has no part to play in the world.

As a writer of prose, Pater is of the first rank, but he does not belong to the category of the greatest, because there is such an excess of refinement in his style that the creative strength is impoverished. Moreover, he does not possess the capacity of producing the impression of wholeness in his work. His chief merit, however, lies in details, in the perfection of single pages, though occasionally some chapters or essays are throughout remarkable for the robustness of ideas. Like a true romanticist Pater gives flexibility to his prose which beautifully corresponds to his keen sensitive perception and vivid imagination. He is capable of producing more intense and acute effects in his poetic prose than other great masters of this art – Sir Thomas Browne, De Quincey and Ruskin. And more than any other prose-writer he brushed aside the superficial barrier between prose and poetical effects and he clothed his ideas in the richly significant garb of the most harmonious and many-hued language.

Modern Literature (1900-1961)

The Modern Age in English Literature started from the beginning of the twentieth century, and it followed the Victorian Age. The most important characteristic of Modern Literature is that it is opposed to the general attitude to life and its problems adopted by the Victorian writers and the public, which may be termed 'Victorian'. The young people during the first decade of the present century regarded the Victorian age as hypocritical, and the Victorian ideals as mean, superficial and stupid.

This rebellious mood affected modern literature, which was directed by mental attitudes moral ideals and spiritual values diametrically opposed to those of the Victorians. Nothing was considered as certain; everything was questioned. In the field of literary technique also some fundamental changes took place. Standards of artistic workmanship and of aesthetic appreciations also underwent radical changes.

What the Victorians had considered as honourable and beautiful, their children and grandchildren considered as mean and ugly. The Victorians accepted the Voice of Authority, and acknowledged the rule of the Expert in religion, in politics, in literature and family life. They had the innate desire to affirm and confirm rather than to reject or question the opinions of the experts in their respective fields. They showed readiness to accept their words at face value

without critical examinations. This was their attitude to religion and science. They believed in the truths revealed in the Bible, and accepted the new scientific theories as propounded by Darwin and others. On the other hand, the twentieth century minds did not take anything for granted; they questioned everything.

Another characteristic of Victorianism was an implicit faith in the permanence of nineteenth century institutions, both secular and spiritual. The Victorians believed that their family life, their Constitution, the British Empire and the Christian religion were based on sound footings, and that they would last for ever. This Victorian idea of the Permanence of Institutions was replaced among the early twentieth century writers by the sense that nothing is fixed and final in this world. H. G. Wells spoke of the flow of things and of "all this world of ours being no more than the prelude to the real civilisation". The simple faith of the Victorians was replaced by the modern man's desire to prob and question, Bernard Shaw, foremost among the rebels, attacked not only the 'old' superstitions of religion, but also the 'new' superstitions of science. The watchwords of his creed were: *Question! Examine! Test!* He challenged the Voice of Authority and the rule of the Expert. He was responsible for producing the interrogative habit of the mind in all spheres of life. He made the people question the basic conceptions of religion and morality. Andrew Undershaft declares in Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*: "That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political institutions". Such a radical proclamation invigorated some whereas others were completely shaken, as Barbara herself: "I stood on the rock I thought eternal; and without a word it reeled and crumbled under me."

The modern mind was outraged by the Victorian self-complacency. The social and religious reformers at first raised this complaint, and they were followed by men of letters, because they echo the voice around them. Of course, the accusation of self-complacency cannot be rightly levelled against many of the Victorian writers, especially the authors of *Vanity Fair*, *David Copperfield*, *Maud*, *Past and Present*, *Bishop Blouhram*, *Culture and Anarchy*, *Richard Fernal* and *Tess*. But there was felt the need of a change in the sphere of literature also because the idiom, the manner of presentment, the play of imagination, and the rhythm and structure of the verse, of the Victorian writers were becoming stale, and seemed gradually to be losing the old magic. Their words failed to evoke the spirit.

Thus a reaction was even otherwise overdue in the field of literature, because art has to be renewed in order to revitalise it. The Victorian literature had lost its freshness and it lacked in the element of surprise which is its very soul. It had relapsed into life of the common day, and could not give the reader a shock of novelty. At the end of the Victorian era it was felt that the ideas, experiences, moods and attitudes had changed, and so the freshness which was lacking in literature had to be supplied on another level.

Besides the modern reaction against the attitude of self-complacency of the Victorians, there was also failure or disintegration of values in the twentieth century. The young men who were being taught by their elders to prize 'the things of the spirit' above worldly prosperity, found in actual experience that nothing could be attained without money. Material prosperity had become the basis of social standing. Whereas in 1777 Dr. Johnson affirmed that 'opulence excludes but one evil Poverty', in 1863, Samuel Butler who was much ahead of his time, voiced the experience of the twentieth century, when he wrote: "Money is like antennae; without it the human insect loses touch with its environment. He who would acquire scholarship or gentility must first acquire cash. In order to make the best of himself, the average youth must first make money. He would have to sacrifice to possessiveness the qualities which should render possession worthwhile."

Besides the immense importance which began to be attached to money in the twentieth century, there was also a more acute and pressing consciousness of the social life. Whereas some of the Victorians could satisfy themselves with the contemplation of cosmic order, identification with

some Divine Intelligence or Superhuman plan which absorbs and purifies our petty egoisms, and with the merging of our will in a higher will, their successors in the twentieth century could not do so. They realised every day that man was more of a social being than a spiritual being, and that industrial problems were already menacing the peace of Europe. Instead of believing in the cult of self-perfection as the Victorians did, they were ready to accept the duty of working for others. A number of twentieth century writers began to study and ponder seriously over the writings of Karl Marx, Engels, Ruskin, Morris, and some of them like Henry James, discussed practical suggestions for the reconstruction of society.

The Victorians believed in the sanctity of home life, but in the twentieth century the sentiments for the family circle declined. Young men and women who realised the prospect of financial independence refused to submit to parental authority, and considered domestic life as too narrow. Moreover, young people who began early to earn their living got greater opportunity of mixing with each other, and to them sex no longer remained a mystery. So love became much less of a romance and much more of an experience.

These are some of the examples of the disintegration of values in the twentieth century. The result was that the modern writers could no longer write in the old manner. If they played on such sentiments as the contempt for money, divine love, natural beauty, the sentiments of home and life, classical scholarship, and communication with the spirit of the past, they were running the risk of striking a false note. Even if they treated the same themes, they had to do it in a different manner, and evoke different thoughts and emotions from what were normally associated with them. The modern writer had, therefore, to cultivate a fresh point of view, and also a fresh technique.

The impact of scientific thought was mainly responsible for this attitude of interrogations and disintegration of old values. The scientific truths which were previously the proud possessions of the privileged few, were now equally intelligible to all. In an age of mass education, they began to appeal to the masses. The physical and biological conclusions of great scientists like Darwin, Lyell and Huxley, created the impression on the new generation that the universe looks like a colossal blunder, that human life on our inhospitable globe is an accident due to unknown causes, and that this accident had led to untold misery. They began to look upon Nature not as a system planned by Divine Architect, but as a powerful, but blind, pitiless and wasteful force. These impressions filled the people of the twentieth century with overwhelming pity, despair or stoicism. A number of writers bred and brought up in such an atmosphere began to voice these ideas in their writings.

The twentieth century has become the age of machine. Machinery has, no doubt, dominated every aspect of modern life, and it has produced mixed response from the readers and writers. Some of them have been alarmed at the materialism which machinery has brought in its wake, and they seek consolation and self-expression in the bygone unmechanised and pre-mechanical ages. Others, however, being impressed by the spectacle of mechanical power producing a sense of mathematical adjustment and simplicity of design, and conferring untold blessings on mankind, find a certain rhythm and beauty in it. But there is no doubt, that whereas machinery has reduced drudgery, accelerated production and raised the standard of living, it has given rise to several distressing complications. The various scientific appliances confer freedom and enslavement, efficiency and embarrassment. The modern man has now to live by the clock applying his energies not according to mood and impulse, but according to the time scheme. All these ideas are found expressed in modern literature, because the twentieth century author has to reflect this atmosphere, and he finds little help from the nineteenth century.

Another important factor which influenced modern literature was the large number of people of the poor classes who were educated by the State. In order to meet their demand for reading the publishers of the early twentieth century began whole series of cheaply reprinted classics. This was supplemented by the issue of anthologies of Victorian literature, which illustrated a stable

society fit for a governing class which had established itself on the economic laws of wealth, the truth of Christianity and the legality of the English Constitution. But these failed to appeal to the new cheaply educated reading public who had no share in the inheritance of those ideals, who wanted redistribution of wealth, and had their own peculiar codes of moral and sexual freedom. Even those who were impressed by the wit and wisdom of the past could not shut their eyes to the change that had come about on account of the use of machinery, scientific development, and the general atmosphere of instability and flux in which they lived. So they demanded a literature which suited the new atmosphere. The modern writers found in these readers a source of power and income, if they could only appeal to them, and give them what they wanted. The temptation to do so was great and it was fraught with great dangers, because the new reading public were uncertain of their ideologies, detached from their background, but desperately anxious to be impressed. They wanted to be led and shown the way. The result was that some of the twentieth century authors exploited their enthusiasm and tried to lead their innocent readers in the quickest, easiest way, by playing on their susceptibilities. In some cases the clever writer might end as a prophet of a school in which he did not believe. Such was the power wielded by the reading public.

One great disadvantage under which the modern writers labour is that there is no common ground on which they and their readers meet. This was not so during the Victorian period, where the authors and the reading public understood each other, and had the common outlook on and attitude to life and its problems. In the atmosphere of disillusionment, discontent and doubt, different authors show different approaches to life. Some lament the passing of old values, and express a sense of nostalgia. Some show an utter despair of the future; while others recommend reverting to an artificial primitivism. Some concentrate on sentiment, style or diction in order to recover what has been lost. Thus among the twentieth century writers are sometimes found aggressive attempts to retain or revitalise old values in a new setting or, if it is not possible, to create new values to take their place.

The twentieth century literature which is the product of this tension is, therefore, unique. It is extremely fascinating and, at the same time, very difficult to evaluate, because, to a certain extent, it is a record of uncoordinated efforts. It is not easy to divide it into school and types. It is full of adventures and experiments peculiar to the modern age which is an age of transition and discovery. But there is an undercurrent in it which runs parallel to the turbulent current of ideas which flows with great impetuosity. Though it started as a reaction against 'Victorianism' in the beginning of the twentieth century, it is closely bound up with the new ideas which are agitating the mind of the modern man.

Modern Poetry

Modern poetry, of which T. S. Eliot is the chief representative, has followed entirely a different tradition from the Romantic and Victorian tradition of poetry. Every age has certain ideas about poetry, especially regarding the essentially poetical subjects, the poetical materials and the poetical modes.

These preconceptions about poetry during the nineteenth century were mainly those which were established by great Romantic poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats.

According to them the sublime and the pathetic were the two chief nerves of all genuine poetry. That is why Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton were given a higher place as poets than Dryden and Pope, who were merely men of wit and good sense, and had nothing of the transcendently sublime or pathetic in them. During the Victorian Age, Matthew Arnold, summing up these very assumptions about poetry stated:

Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.

The difference between genuine poetry and the poetry of Dryden and Pope and all their school is briefly this; their poetry is conceived and composed in their wits; genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul.

Arnold shared with the age the prejudice in favour of poetry which in Milton's phrase was "simple, sensuous and passionate." It was generally assumed that poetry must be the direct expression of the simple, tender, exalted, poignant and sympathetic emotions. Wit, play of intellect and verbal jugglery were considered as hinderances which prevented the readers from being "moved".

Besides these preconceptions, a study of the nineteenth century poetry reveals the fact that its main characteristic was preoccupation with a dream world, as we find in Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* and Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*. O'

Shaughnessy's following lines express the popular conception of the poet during the nineteenth century:

*We are the music-makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;
World-losers and world-forsakers
On whom the pale moon shines.*

Such conceptions of the poet and his art prevailed during the Victorian period not because they were right, but because they suited the age, and moreover they had the prestige of the Romantic achievement behind them. But they could not find favour with the poets and critics of the twentieth century on account of the radical changes that had taken place. Under the stress and strain of new conditions they could not take the dream habit seriously. Though during the Victorian period Tennyson was aware of the new problems which were creeping in on account of scientific and technical discoveries, yet under the impact of the popular conception of poetry, and also because of his own lack of intellectual vigour, he expressed in his poems more of a spirit of withdrawal and escape, rather than of facing squarely the problems confronting his age. This is illustrated by his *The Palace of Art*. The explicit moral of the poem is that an escape from worldly problem is of no avail; but instead of effectively conveying this moral, the poem stands for withdrawal and escape. In the songs of Swinburne about Liberty and Revolution we do not find the preciseness and genuineness of Shelley's ideals.

The Victorian poetry was obviously other-worldly. Its cause was stated by Arnold when he referred to:

.....this strange disease of modern life
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts.....
(*A Summer Night*)

But in spite of the fact that Arnold among all the Victorian poets was the most frank in his expression of the 'disease' of his age, his response to it was not fundamentally unlike that of the other poets of his age. For him the past was out of date, the future was not yet born, and not much could be done. He studied Wordsworth and the Greek poets mainly with the purpose of escaping to the freshness of the early world. In his own poems like *A Summer Night*, where he refers to the disease of modern life, he slips away from 'this uncongenial place, this human life' into the beautiful moon-lit region, and forgets the iron time in the midst of melodious sentiments. Arnold, therefore, was not qualified to give a new direction to poetry. Browning on the other hand, though a greater poet, was unaware of the disharmonies of his time. He was too optimistic to face the realities of life and new problems which had crept in. He was a poet of simple

emotions and sentiments, and though he could understand psychologically the past ages, he had no aptitude to understand the complexities of modern life. He was also, therefore, not in a position to provide the impulse to bring back poetry to the proper and adequate grappling with the new problems which had arisen.

William Morris, though a practical socialist, reserved poetry for his day-dreams. Moreover, some of the distinguished authors like Meredith and Hardy turned to the novel, and during the early part of the twentieth century it was left to the minor poets like Houseman and Rupert Brooke to write in the poetic medium. Thus there was the greatest need for some great poets to make poetry adequate to modern life, and escape from the atmosphere which the established habits had created. For generations owing to the reaction of aesthetes against the new scientific, industrial and largely materialistic world, the people in England had become accustomed to the idea that certain things are 'not poetical,' that a poet can mention a rose and not the steam engine, that poetry is an escape from life and not an attack on life, and that a poet is sensitive to only certain beautiful aspects of life, and not the whole life. So the twentieth century needed poets who were fully alive to what was happening around them, and who had the courage and technique to express it.

The great poetical problem in the beginning of the twentieth century was, therefore, to invent technique that would be adequate to the ways of feeling, or modes of experience of the modern adult sensitive mind. The importance of T. S. Eliot lies in the fact that, gifted with a mind of rare distinction, he has solved his own problem as a poet. Moreover, being a poet as well as a critic his poetical theories are re-inforced by his own poetry, and thus he has exerted a tremendous influence on modern poetry. It is mainly due to him that all serious modern poets and critics have realised that English poetry must develop along some other line than that running from the Romantics to Tennyson, Swinburne and Rupert Brooke.

Of the other important poets of the twentieth century Robert Bridges belonged to the transitional period. He was an expert literary technician, and it was his "inexhaustible satisfaction of form" which led him to poetry. His metrical innovations were directed to the breaking down of the domination of the syllabic system of versification, overruling it by a stress prosody wherein natural speech rhythms should find their proper values. He was convinced that it was only through the revival of the principle of quantitative stress that any advances in English versification could be expected. A. E. Houseman a classical scholar like Robert Bridges, rejected the ecstasies of romantic poetry, and in his expression of the mood of philosophic despair, used a style characterised by Purity, Simplicity, restraint and absence of all ornamentation. W. B. Yeats, the founder of the Celtic movement in poetry and drama, a phase of romanticism which had not been much exploited hitherto, gave expression to the intellectual mood of his age.

The twentieth century poets who were in revolt against Victorianism and especially against the didactic tendency of poets like Tennyson, Browning, Arnold and even Swinburne and Meredith, felt that the poet's business was to be uniquely himself, and to project his personality through the medium of his art. Poetry to them was not a medium for philosophy and other extraneous matters; nor was it singing for its own sake. It was a method first of discovering one's self, and then a means of projecting this discovery. Thus the problem before each of them was how to arrive at a completely individual expression of oneself in poetry. Naturally it could not be solved by using the common or universally accepted language of poetry. On account of the change in the conceptions of the function of poetry, it was essential that a new technique of communicating meaning be discovered. It was this necessity which brought about the movements known as imagism and symbolism in modern poetry.

Symbolism was first started in France in the nineteenth century. The business of the symbolist poet is to express his individual sensations and perceptions in language which seems best

adapted to convey his essential quality without caring for the conventional metres and sentence structures. He aims at inducing certain states of mind in the reader rather than communicating logical meaning. The imagists, on the other hand, aim at clarity of expression through hard, accurate, and definite images. They believe that it is not the elaborate similes of Milton or extended metaphors of Shakespeare which can express the soul of poetry. This purpose of poetry can be best served by images which by their rapid impingement on the consciousness, set up in the mind fleeting complexes of thought and feeling. In poetry which is capable of capturing such instantaneous state of mind, there is no scope for Wordsworth's "emotion recollected in tranquillity". In it suggestion plays the paramount part and there is no room for patient, objective descriptions.

The symbolist poetry in England came into prominence with the appearance of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. But it had actually started right during the Victorian Age, which is evident from the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89), a Jesuit priest whose poems were published thirty years after his death. It was the poetry of Hopkins and T. S. Eliot which exerted the greatest influence on English poetry between the two wars.

The technique of the symbolist is impressionistic and not representational. In order to prevent any obstruction in the way of emotive suggestion by any direct statement of experience, he gives a covering of obscurity to his meaning. There is also in symbolist poetry a strong element of charm or incantation woven by the music of words. Repetition is often resorted to by the symbolist poets as we find in Tennyson's *The Marriage of Geraint*:

*Forgetful of his promise to the king
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name
Forgetful of the principedom and its cares.*

But the repetitive rhythms which the symbolists use have in them a hypnotic quality. They also recall the texture of dreams of the subconscious states of mind, and because of absence of punctuation they can express the continuous "stream of consciousness".

The symbolists also give more importance to the subjective vision of an object or situation rather than the object or the situation itself. Moreover, unlike the Romantics who create beauty out of things which are conventionally beautiful, like natural objects, works of art etc., the symbolists find beauty in every detail of normal day-to-day life. Naturally to accomplish that and create beauty out of such prosaic material requires a higher quality of art and a more sensitive approach to life. Moreover, besides including all sorts of objects and situations in the poetical fold, the symbolist has broken fresh grounds in language also. He considers that every word in the language has a potentiality for being used in poetry as well in prose. For him the language of poetry is not different from that of prose. As he uses all sorts of words which were never used in poetry by the Romantics, the symbolist has to invent a new prosody to accommodate such words as were banned previously from the domain of poetry. Thus the symbolist does not consider any particular topic, diction or rhythm specially privileged to be used in poetry.

Modern Poets

1. Robert Bridges (1840-1930)

Robert Bridges, though a twentieth century poet, may be considered as the last of the Great Victorians as he carried on the Victorian tradition. He is not a poet of the modern crisis except for his metrical innovations. Belonging to the aristocracy his work is also concerned with the leisured and highly cultivated aristocratic class of society.

In his poetry we find beautiful descriptions of English landscapes, clear streams, gardens, songs of birds. The world that he depicts is haunted by memories of the classics, of music and poetry and decorous love making. He carries on the tradition of Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, against which the young men of his times were in open revolt. We do not find in his poetry any bold attempt to face the critical problems facing his generation. Even his greatest poem, *The Testament of Beauty*, does not contain any consistent treatment of deep philosophy. That is why Yeats remarked that there is emptiness everywhere in the poetry of Bridges.

The importance of Bridges in modern poetry, however, is in his metrical innovations. He was lover of old English music and many of his early lyrics are obviously influenced by the Elizabethan lyricists, especially Thomas Campion. He was a remarkable prosodist, the first English poet who had a grasp of phonetic theory. He was tireless experimenter in verse form. He himself admitted: "What led me to poetry was the inexhaustible satisfaction of form, the magic of speech, lying as it seemed to be in the masterly control of the material." Working under the influence of his friend, Hopkins, to whom he dedicated the second book of shorter poems, Bridges wrote his poems following the rules of new prosody. The best of Bridges' metrical experiment is the sprung rhythm, a kind of versification which is not, as usual, based on speech rhythm, but on "the hidden emotional pattern that makes poetry." And it was a definite contribution to the development of English verse.

The lyrics of Bridges like *A Passer-By*, *London Snow*, *The Downs*, are marked by an Elizabethan simplicity. In the sonnets of *The Growth of Love*, we find the calm, the mediative strain of Victorian love poetry. A believer in Platonic love, he exalts the ethical and intellectual principle of beauty. In his greatest poem, *The Testament of Beauty*, he has given beautiful expression to his love for 'the mighty abstract idea of beauty in all things' which he received from Keats. Here he has also sought to 'reconcile Passion with peace and show desire at rest.' In his poetry Bridges thus transcended rather than solved the modern problems by his faith in idealism and the evolutionary spirit. He has no sympathy for the down-trodden and less fortunate members of humanity, and so whenever he deals with a simple human theme, as in the poem *The Villager*, he reflects the mind of the upper class which has lost touch with common humanity. Bridges is, therefore, rightly called the last Great Victorian, and his greatest poem, *The Testament of Beauty*, the final flower of the Victorian Spirit.

2. Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

Hopkins who died in 1889, but whose poems were not issued during his lifetime, and who only became widely known after his friend Robert Bridges edited the collection in 1918, exerted a great influence on modern English poetry. The poems of Hopkins were so eccentric in style that Bridges dared not publish them till thirty years after his death. Hopkins had tried to revive the 'sprung rhythm', the accentual and alliterative measure of Langland and Skelton, which had dropped out of use since the sixteenth century. In this rhythm there are two currents, the undercurrent and the overcurrent, which are intertwined. This effect is produced by inducing the metre to run back on itself, sometimes making a second line reverse the movement of one before; sometimes in the same line confronting a metric foot by its opposite, for instance, an iambic followed by a trochee. As these variations produce the momentary effect of a break or split, Hopkins called this device *sprung rhythm*. This rhythm follows the system of beats and stresses unlike the quantitative metres where every syllable is counted. As in conversation we stress significant words and syllables with so much emphasis that accompanying syllables and words are left to take care of themselves, the 'sprung' rhythm is nearer to natural speech. That is why it

has appealed to the modern poets who in their poetry attempt to convey the everyday experience of modern life and its multifarious problem in a most natural manner. The 'sprung' rhythm of Hopkins, therefore, is his greatest contribution to modern poetry. Of course he was not the first to invent it; there are examples of it in the poetry of all great poets, especially Milton. But Hopkins revived it and laid special emphasis on it, and exerted a great influence because the twentieth century needed it.

Hopkins, like Keats, was endowed with a highly sensuous temperament, but being a deeply religious man having an abiding faith in God, he refined his faculty and offered it to God. He avoided all outward and sensuous experiences, but enjoyed them in a deeply religious mood as intimations of the Divine Presence. He could perceive God in every object, and tried to find its distinctive virtue of design or pattern the inner kernel of its being, or its very soul which was expressed by its outer form. This peculiarity or the immanent quality in each thing which is the manifestation of Beauty was called by Hopkins as 'inscape', a term which he borrowed from Don Scotus. For example, the inscape of the flower called 'blue bell', according to Hopkins, is mixed strength and grace. Thus to him not only trees, grass, flower, but each human spirit had its personal inscape, a mystic, creative force which shapes the mind. This 'inscape' Hopkins expressed in a style also which was peculiar to himself, because he could not be satisfied with the conventional rhythms and metres which were incapable of conveying what came straight from his heart.

The poems of Hopkins are about God, Nature and Man, and all of them are pervaded with the immanence of God. His greatest poem is *The Wreck of Deutschland*, which is full of storm and agony revealing the mystery of God's way to men. All his poetry is symbolic, and he means more than he says. Some of his lyrics are sublime, but the majority of his poems are obscure. It is mainly on account of his theory—*sprung rhythm*, and *inscape*, that he has exerted such a tremendous influence on modern poets.

3. A. E. Houseman (1859-1936)

Alfred Edward Houseman was a great classical scholar. He wrote much of his poetry about Shropshire, which like Hardy's Wessex, is a part of England, full of historic memories and still comparatively free from the taint of materialism. Out of his memories of this place, Houseman created a dream world, a type of arcadia. His most celebrated poem, *Shropshire Lad*, which is a pseudo-pastoral fancy, deals with the life of the Shropshire lad who lives a vigorous, care-free life.

Houseman was disgusted with the dismal picture which the modern world presented to him, but he did not possess a sufficiently acute intellect to solve its problems. However, in some of his poems he gives an effective and powerful expression to the division in the modern consciousness caused by the contrast between the development of the moral sense and the dehumanised world picture provided by scientific discoveries. In one of his poems based on his memories of Shropshire, he has achieved tragic dignity:

*Men loved unkindness then, but lightless in the quarry
I slept and saw not; tears fell down, I did not mourn;
Sweat ran and blood sprang and I was never sorry;
Then it was well with me, in days ere I was born*

Houseman also wrote a few poems expressing the horrible destruction caused by modern wars, and their utter futility and inhumanity. But he was on the whole a minor poet who could not attain the stature of T. S. Eliot or W. B. Yeats.

4. The “Georgian” Poets

Besides Bridges and Houseman, who did not belong to any group, there was in the first quarter of the twentieth century a group of poets called the “George Group.” These poets flourished in the reign of George V (1911-1936). They possessed various characteristics and were not conscious of belonging to a particular group. In reality they were imitators of the parts, who shut their eyes against the contemporary problems. But they were presumptuous enough to think of themselves as the heralds of a new age. Robert Graves who first claimed to belong to this group, and subsequently broke away with it, wrote about the Georgian poets. “The Georgians’ general recommendations were the discarding of archaistic diction such as ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ and ‘flower’d’ and ‘when’er’, and of poetical construction such as ‘winter clear’ and ‘host on armed host’ and of pomposities generally... In reaction to Victorianism their verse should avoid all formally religious, philosophic or improving themes; and all sad, wrecked cafe-table themes in reaction to the nineties. Georgian poets were to be English but not aggressively imperialistic, pantheistic rather than atheistic; and as simple as a child’s reading book. Their subjects were to be Nature, love, leisure, old age, childhood, animals, sleep... unemotional subject.”

This is rather a severe account of the Georgian poets but it is not wholly unjustified. Though the quantity of work produced by the Georgian poets is great, the quality is not of a high order. The poets generally attributed to this group are roughly those whose work was published in the five volumes of *Georgian Poetry*, dated respectively 1911-12, 1913-15, 1916-17, 1918-19 and 1920-22. The important poets who contributed to these volumes were Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, Rupert Brooke, G. K. Chesterton, W. H. Davis; Walter De La Mare, John Masefield, J. E. Flecker, W. W. Gibson; D. H. Lawrence, John Drinkwater, Sturge Moore, Laurence Binyon, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen.

Among these the poets whose work has some lasting value are Walter De la Mare, W. H. Davis, Laurence Binyon and John Masefield. The greatest of them is Walter De La Mare (1873-1957) who writes in a simple, pure, lyrical style about beautiful sights and sounds of the country, about children and old people but there is always in his poetry a strange enchantment produced by the apprehension of another world existing side by side with the everyday world. His poetry has the atmosphere of dreamland, as he himself says in his introduction to *Behold, This Dreamer*: “Every imaginative poem resembles in its onset and its effect the experience of dreaming.” He has the faculty of bridging the gulf between waking and dreaming, between reality and fantasy. Besides this he has great skill in the management of metre, and successfully welding the grotesque with the profoundly pathetic.

William Henry Davies (1871-1940) is one of the natural singers in the English language. Being immensely interested in Nature, the experiences which he describes about natural objects and scenes are authentic. His lyrics remind us of the melodies of Herrick and Blake. Though living in the twentieth century, he remained wholly unsophisticated, and composing his poems without much conscious effort, he could not give them polish and finish. But in spite of this he has left quite a number of lyrics which on account of their lively music have an enduring appeal to sensitive ears.

Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), a scholar and poet who translated Dante into English had a sense of just word and its sound. Generally he wrote about classical themes. The most notable of such poems is his *Attila*, a dramatic poem which is a well-constructed play. Its vehement blank verse and speed of action remind the readers of Shakespeare. The First World War stirred him to profound feelings and he wrote some very moving poems, for example, the one beginning with the unforgettable line—

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old.

The Second World War had a great saddening effect on him, and in his last years he wrote poems in which he contrasted old pleasures and dreams with the horrible war oppressed present. They were posthumously published in 1944 under the title *The Burning of the Leaves and other Poems*. Though these poems were written under the shadow of war and they deal with the transient nature of things and their tendency to decay, yet they express the hope, like Browning's poetry, that nothing that is past is ultimately gone.

John Masefield (born 1878) who has been Poet Laureate since 1930, has been composing poems for the last forty years, but he has not attained real greatness as a poet. As a young man he was a sailor, and so most of his early poetry deals with life at sea and the various adventures that one meets there. The poems which give expression to this experience are contained in the volumes *Salt Water Ballads* (1902) and *Ballads* (1906). In 1909 he produced his best poetic tragedy—*The Tragedy of Nan*. After that he gave up writing on imaginative themes, and produced poems dealing with the graver aspects of modern life in a realistic manner, e.g. *The Everlasting Mercy* (1911), *The Widow in the Bye-Street Dauber* (1913), *The Daffodil Fields* (1913). All these poems narrate a stirring story with an excellent moral. Now he is looked upon as one of the 'prophets' of modern England.

5. The Imagists

The first revolt against the Victorian Romantic poetic tradition came from a group of poets called the Imagists. Their activities extended for about ten years—from 1912 to 1922. They realized that the poetry of the Georgians did not introduce any new vitality in English poetry. At its best it displayed both power and individuality, but it did not alter the fact that each of the Georgian poets was content to delimit or modify the poetic inheritance of the nineteenth century rather than abandon it in favour of a radically different approach. Neither Masefield, whose poetry is realistic in subject and vocabulary, nor De la Mare, who is the last of the true romantic poets of England, pointed to the new paths in English poetry.

The poetic revolution engineered by the Imagists, which began in the years immediately preceding the First World War, and which was both produced and further encouraged by T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, preferred the older tradition in English poetry to the Victorian Romantic tradition. The Romantic and the Victorian poets tried to express their personalities in their poems. For them poetry was a means of self-expression and they appealed to the cultivated sensibility of their reader. They treated of themes dealing with their personal hopes and fears and often indulged in the emotions of nostalgia and self-pity. That is why the Victorian poetry especially had a tendency of running to elegy. The Imagists believed that the function of poetry is not self-expression, but the proper fusion of meaning in language. According to them poems are works of art and not pieces of emotional autobiography or rhetorical prophecy. As the purpose of poetry is the exploration of experience, the poet must strive after a kind of poetic statement, which is both precise and passionate, profoundly felt and desperately accurate, even if it means the twisting of the language into a new shape. There must be the fusion of thought and emotion which is found among the Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. The Imagists did not look upon the poet as the sweet singer whose function was to render in sweet verse and conventional imagery some personal emotions, but he was the explorer of experience. Therefore, he must use the language in order to build up rich patterns of meaning which required very close attention before they were communicated. The rebels were conscious of the fact that the poetry of their own time represented the final ebb of the Victorian Romantic tradition, and that the time was ripe to give a new direction to English poetry.

The new movement began with a revolt against every kind of sweet verbal impression and romantic egotism which persisted throughout the nineteenth century. Its originator, T. E. Hulme,

who was killed in war in 1917, in an article which he wrote in 1909, declared his preference for precise and disciplined classicism to sloppy romanticism. He advocated hardness and precision of imagery “in order to get the exact curve of the thing” together with subtler and more flexible rhythms. He with the help of Ezra Pound, who had come from America, founded the movement called Imagism. Defining the Imagists, Pound wrote in 1912: “They are in opposition to the numerous and unassembled writers who busy themselves with dull and interminable effusions, and who seem to think that a man can write a good long poem before he learns to write a good short one, or even before he learns to produce a good single line.” Giving a fuller statement of the aims of the Imagist movement, F. S. Flint pointed out in 1913 that three rules the Imagists observed were—(a) “direct treatment of the “thing”, (b) “to use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation”, and (c) “to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.” Pound emphasised that the Imagists should “use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something”, and that they should avoid abstraction. The Imagist movement spread in England and America, and it was helped by the seventeenth century metaphysical poetry and the nineteenth century symbolists, who contributed their techniques and attitudes to the revolution.

The leader of the Imagists was Ezra Pound. Other poets who were included in this group were F. S. Flint, Richard Aldington, F. M. Hueffer, James Joyce, Allan Upward, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams. Instead of imitating the English romantics like the Georgians, the Imagists attempted to reproduce the qualities of Ancient Greek and Chinese poetry. They aimed at hard, clear, brilliant effects instead of the soft, dreamy vagueness of the English nineteenth century. Their aims which were expressed in the introduction to *Some Imagist Poets* (1915), can be summarised as follows:

- (1) To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly exact, nor the merely decorative word.
- (2) To produce poetry that is hard and clear, and not deal in vague generalities, however, magnificent and sonorous.
- (3) To create new rhythms and not to copy old rhythms which merely echo old ones.

The Imagists were greatly influenced by the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, which appeared in 1918, thirty years after the death of the poet. It was the complete absence of any sign of laxness in Hopkins’ poetry, the clear signs of words and rhythms which were perfectly controlled by the poet to produce the desired effect, with no dependence at all on the general poetic feeling, which made an immediate appeal to the new poets.

Regarding the subject matter of poetry, the Imagists, believing that there was no longer a general public of poetry lovers, concentrated on expressing the modern consciousness for their own satisfaction and that of their friends. They gave up the old pretence that humanity was steadily progressing towards a millennium. Instead they recognised that in the new dark age of barbarism and vulgarity, it is the duty of the enlightened few to protect culture and escape the spiritual degradation of a commercialised world. This attitude seems to be similar to that of the aesthetes of the last decade of the nineteenth century, but it is not so. Whereas the aesthetes hating the vulgarity of the contemporary world tried to lose themselves among beautiful fantasies by withdrawing into an ivory tower, the Imagists, on the contrary, faced the new problems and tried to create a very precise and concentrated expression, a new sort of consciousness because the traditional poetic techniques were inadequate for that purpose. Opposed to the romantic view of man as “an infinite reservoir of possibilities”, they looked upon him as a very imperfect creature “intrinsically limited but disciplined by order.” Unlike the romantics who regarded the world as a glorious place with which man was naturally in harmony, the Imagists regarded it “as landscape with occasional oasis... But mainly deserts of dirt, ash-pits of cosmos, grass on ashpits”. They did believe in the words of Hulme, in “no universal ego, but a few definite persons gradually built up”. In his essay on *Romanticism and Classicism*, he predicted that “a period of dry, hard,

classical verse is coming” and expressed the opinion that “there is an increasing proportion of people who simply can’t stand Swinburne.”

The Imagists could not adequately tackle the contemporary problems, because they lived too much among books, were rather irresponsible in their conduct, did not possess sharp intellect, and were not in close contact with actualities. The result is that their poetry is as nerveless and artificial as the neo-romantic poetry of the Georgians. But they certainly deserve the credit of showing that English poetry needed a new technique, and that unnecessary rules and a burdensome mass of dead associations must be removed.

The poets belonging to the Imagist group did not produce great poetry on account of the reasons stated above. Ezra Pound is a poet of real originality, but his too much and rather undigested learning which he tries to introduce in his poems, makes them difficult to understand, and also gives them an air of pedantry. His greatest contribution to modern poetry is his development of an unrhymed ‘free verse’, and other metrical experiments which influenced T. S. Eliot.

The most important writer, who in spite of his being not a regular member of their group, was directly connected with the Imagists, was David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930). He contributed both to Georgian poetry and the Imagist anthologies. Most of his mature poetry deals with the theme of duel of sex, a conflict of love and hate between man and wife, and expresses an annihilation of the ego and a sort of mystical rebirth or regeneration. His most remarkable poem *Manifesto* ends with a beautiful description of universe where all human beings have completely realised their individualities, where

*All men detach themselves and become unique;
Every human being will then be like a flower, untrammelled,
Every movement will be direct
Only to be will be such delight, we cover our faces when we think of it,
Lest our faces betray us to some untimely end.*

The poems which he wrote in the last year of his life when he was dying of consumption, deal with the themes of death and eternity. Lawrence did a lot in rebuilding English poetry, and as a critic he set before the English poets the following ideal, which has greatly influenced the modern English poets.

“The essence of poetry with us in this age of stark unlovely actualities is a stark directness, without a shadow of a lie, or a shadow of deflection anywhere. Everything can go, but this stark, bare, rocky directness of statement, this alone makes poetry to-day.”

6. Trench Poets

The First World War (1914-18) gave rise to war poetry, and the poets who wrote about the war and its horrors especially in the trenches are called the War Poets, or the “Trench Poets.” The war poetry was in continuation of Georgian poetry, and displayed its major characteristics, namely, an escape from actuality. For example, E. W. Tennant describes the soldiers in *Home Thoughts in Laventie*, as

*Dancing with a measured step from wrecked and shattered town.
Away upon the Downs.*

Instead of facing squarely the horrors of war, these poets looked upon the terrible present as a mere dream and the world of imagination the only reality. Following the Georgian tradition with its fanciful revolution from the drabness of urban life and its impressionistic description of the

commonplace in a low emotional tone, a number of poets who wrote about the war, described incidents of war and the ardours and pathos of simple men caught in the catastrophe. Their method was descriptive and impressionistic, and on account of lack of any intense, sincere and realistic approach, they failed to arouse the desired emotions in the readers.

Out of a number of these war poets, only two—Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen – attained some poetic standard. Though Sassoon in his early period belonged to the Georgian group, his predominant mood was not lyrical but satiric, not ‘escapist’ but rebellious, because he felt that the soldier was being sacrificed for a false idealism. He looked upon him as

a decent chap

Who did his work and hadn't much to say

(A Working Party)

In his *Suicide in Trenches* he described the horrors of trench warfare. In *Song Books of the War* he dwelt on the short memory of the public who forget those who suffered and died for them during the war. Sassoon, who is still living, wrote some poems between the two great wars, in which he attacked the shallow complacency of his contemporaries, and gave voice to the disillusionment.

Wilfred Owen wrote war poems under the influence of Sassoon. He admired Sassoon because the latter expressed in a harsh manner the truth about war. Speaking about his own poetry he remarked, “Above all, I am not concerned with poetry. My subject is War and the poetry of War. The poetry is in the pity ... all a poet can do today is to warn. That is why the true poets must be truthful.” Though in his poems we find the mood of disillusioned irony, yet, unlike Sassoon, he does not completely lose his hope for man. His poems are free from bitterness and he rejoices in the exultation of battle as well as in the fellowship of comrades. Whereas in Sassoon’s poetry we find a mood of indignation and satire, in Owen’s poetry the mood is of reconciliation and elegy. The following remarkable lines in his poem *Strange Meeting* reveal Owen’s typical approach to War.

I am the enemy you killed, my friend...

Let us sleep now.

As an experimenter in metre Owen’s contribution to modern English poetry is great. Against the Georgian laxity, he introduced accumulative use of balance and parallelism. And above all, he brought a new dignity to war poetry.

7. W. B. Yeats (1865 – 1939)

William Butler Yeats was one of the most important of modern poets, who exerted a great influence on his contemporaries as well as successors. He was an Irish, and could never reconcile himself to the English habits and way of thinking. By temperament he was a dreamer, a visionary, who fell under the spell of the folk-lore and the superstitions of the Irish peasantry. Like them he believed in fairies, gnomes, and demons, in the truth of dreams, and in personal immortality. Naturally with such a type of temperament, Yeats felt himself a stranger in the world dominated by science, technology and rationalism.

Being convinced that modern civilisation effaces our fundamental consciousness of ourselves, Yeats trusted in the faculty of imagination, and admired those ages when imagination reigned supreme. Thus he went deeper and farther in the range of folk-lore and mythology. He discovered the primitive and perennial throb of life in passions and beliefs of ancient times, and he wanted to revive it, because he felt that modern civilisation has tamed it by its insistence on

dry logic and cold reason.

Yeats was anti-rationalist. He believed in magic, occult influences and hypnotism. He thus led the 'revolt of the soul against the intellect', in the hope to acquire 'a more conscious exercise of the human faculties'. He also believed in the magic of words, the phrases and terms which appeal to common humanity. Therefore, he tried to rediscover those symbols which had a popular appeal in ancient days, and which can even now touch man's hidden selves and awaken in him his deepest and oldest consciousness of love and death, or his impulse towards adventure and self-fulfillment. Being disillusioned by lack of harmony and strength in modern culture, he tried to revive the ancient spells and incantations to bring about unity and a spirit of integration in modern civilisation which was torn by conflicts and dissensions.

All these factors inclined Yeats towards symbolism. Believing in the existence of a universal 'great mind', and a 'great memory' which could be 'evoked by symbols', he came to regard that both imagery and rhythm can work as incantations to rouse universal emotions. He liked Shelley's poetry because of the symbolism inherent in the recurrent images of leaves, boats, stars, caves, the moon. He found that Blake invented his own symbols, but his own task was easier because he could draw freely on Irish mythology for the symbols he required. Coming under the influence of French Symbolists like Verlaine, Mactierlinck, he tried to substitute the wavering, meditative and organic rhythms, which are the embodiment of imagination, for those energetic rhythms as of a running man which are not suited to serious poetry.

As a symbolist poet Yeats' aim was to evoke a complex of emotions not by a direct statement but by a multitude of indirect strokes. The result is that sometimes the symbols used by him are not clear as they have been derived from certain obscure sources. For example, the symbols used in the following lines from *The Poet Pleads with the Elemental powers* demand a commentary:

*Do you not hear me calling white deer with no horns?
I have been changed to a hound with one red ear!
I would that the Boar without bristles had come from the west
And had rooted the sun and moon and stars out of the sky
And lay in the darkness, grunting, and turning to his rest.*

In most of his poems, however, the symbols used by Yeats are obvious. One very common symbol in his poetry is 'the moon', which stands for life's mystery.

Yeats, therefore, tried to reform poetry not by breaking with the Past, but with the Present. According to him, the true poet is he who tells the most ancient story in a manner which applies to the people today. His early poems, like *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), express Yeats' deepest idealism in the simple outlines of primitive tales. The same attempt, though more effective and mature, was made in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) and *The Shadowy Waters* (1900). But up to this time Yeats had not found himself; he was groping in the dreamland for wisdom and illumination.

The First World War (1914-18) and the Irish disturbances during those eventful years gave to Yeats a more realistic direction. These conflicts, of course, did not completely efface his dreams, but they turned his eyes from mythology to his own soul which was divided between earthly passions and unearthly visions. Yeats realised that the highest type of poetry is produced by the fusion of both—"the synthesis of the *Self and Anti-self*" as he called it. *The Anti-self* is our soaring spirit which tries to rise above the bondage of our mental habits and associations. Yeats' lyrics which give the most effective expression to these views are *The Wild Swan at Coole* (1917), *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair* (1929). Here he gave a very satisfying presentation of the wholeness of man—his *Self and Anti-self*.

In his later poetry Yeats reached a maturity of vision and style which may be described as hard, athletic and having a metallic glint. Instead of serving as symbols and having certain indefinite

associations, his last poems expressed 'Cold passion' in images which are chastened and well-defined. That is why, it is no exaggeration to say that Yeats was influenced by the Imagists, and influenced them in return. *A Thought from Propertius* is in every respect an Imagist poem. In his last years Yeats retired to the solitude of his own mind, and he wrote poems dealing with his early interests—love of dreams (*Presences*), admiration of simple joy of youth and old civilisations, but the disintegration of modern civilisation under the impact of war pained Yeats, and he believed that a revolutionary change is in the offing. In *Second Coming* he describes what lies at the root of the malady;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity

For about half a century Yeats exerted a tremendous influence on modern poetry on account of his utter sincerity and extraordinary personality and genius. He recognised no external law, but like a true and great artist, he was a law unto himself.

8. T. S. Eliot (1888)

Thomas Stearns Eliot is the greatest among the modern English poets, and he has influenced modern poetry more than any other poet of the twentieth century. He combines in himself strange and opposing characteristics. He is a great poet as well a great critic; he is a traditionalist rooted in classicism as well as an innovator of a new style of poetry; he is a stern realist acutely conscious of modern civilisation with its manifold problems as well as a visionary who looks at life beyond the limits of time and space.

T. S. Eliot was born in 1888 in the U.S.A. He was educated at Harvard University. After that he received education at Paris and Oxford, and settled in England which he has made his literary home. He came into prominence as a poet in the decade following the First World War i.e., between 1920 and 1930, during which period he wrote the poems for which he is best known. There was at that time in England a tendency in favour of classicism which directly influenced Eliot. Being himself a great classical scholar, and finding around him petty poets of the Georgian group, he set himself to establish principles of a sound classicism. To him classicism stands for order. It is a tradition not established by the authority of Aristotle or any other ancient critic, but by the whole body of great writers who have contributed to it in the course of centuries. He conceives of literature as a continuous process in which the present contains the past. The modern poet, according to Eliot, should carry on that process, follow the permanent spirit of that tradition, and thus create fresh literature by expressing the present on a new and modified manner. Thus Eliot is different from the neo-classicists of the eighteenth century who insisted on implicitly following the narrowly defined rules of writing. To him classicism means a sort of training for order, poise and right reason. In order to achieve that the modern writer should not defy the permanent spirit of tradition, and must have "a framework of accepted and traditional ideas."

But the surprising thing about Eliot is that in spite of his being a professed classicist and an uncompromising upholder of tradition, he was the man who led the attack on the writing of "traditional" poetry, and came out as the foremost innovator of modern times. He thought that the literary language which had served its purpose in the past was not suited for modern use. So he rejected it outright. According to him, the modern writer while carrying on the literary tradition of 'poise, order and right reason' need not follow the old and obsolete idiom of his predecessors, but should invent entirely a new medium which is capable of digesting and expressing new objects and new feelings, new ideas, and new aspects of modern life. The

language used by the modern poet must be different from the language of the past because modern life dominated by science and technology is radically different from the life of the past ages characterised by slow and steady development.

In his attempt to find a new medium for poetry Eliot became interested in the experiments of Ezra Pound, the leader of the Imagists. Like Pound, Eliot also sought to extend the range of poetic language by introducing words used in common speech but commonly regarded as inappropriate in literature. But Eliot is different from Pound in this respect that having a profound knowledge of classical literature he can, whenever he likes, borrow phrases from well-known poets and thus create an astonishing effect. Thus in his poem one finds colloquial words expressing precisely and exactly the meaning which he wants to convey, along with archaic and foreign words used by ancient poets, philosophers and prophets, which sound like voice far away beyond a mountain.

Eliot is acutely aware of the present and the baffling problems which face mankind in the modern times. The poems of his early period as *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1917) express the disillusion, irony and disgust at the contemplation of the modern world which is trivial, sordid and empty. In his greatest poem, *The Waste Land*, the poet surveys the desolate scene of the world with a searching gaze. He relentlessly uncovers its baffling contrasts and looks in vain for a meaning where there is only

*A heap of broken images, where the sun heats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.*

The same attitude is expressed in the *Hollow Men* (1925):

*We are the hollow men,
We are stuffed men,
Leaning together,
He Headpiece filled with straw.*

But it is not merely the present with which Eliot is preoccupied. He is a mystic who has a profound sense of the past and he looks into the future. His aim is to look beyond the instant, pressing moment, and think of himself as belonging to what was best in the past and may be prolonged into the future. For him the spirit exists in one eternal Now, in which Past, Present and Future are blended. In order to experience it one should surrender one's ego and relax in a mood of humble receptivity. Only then one can absorb the fleeting moment in such a way that the scheme of existence purged of all one's personal prejudices, narrowness and resentment is felt all around one's self. It is in this mood that his later poems published together in *Four Quartets*, consisting of *Burnt Norton* (1936), *East Coker* (1940), *The Dry Salvages* (1941), and *Little Gidding* (1942) are written. In the last mentioned poem the poet lets his thoughts go free amid the ruined chapel at Little Gidding from which all recollection of conflict and effort has vanished, but where the intensity of spiritual prayer can still be left.

Burnt Norton begins with the significant lines

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.*

Thus T. S. Eliot who is a force in modern English literature, is a many-sided personality. He is a classicist, innovator, critic, poet, social philosopher and mystic—all combined into one. He makes the reader aware not merely of the problems of modern life but also of mankind as a whole. The soul of man finds itself in horror and loneliness in the *Waste Land* unless it is redeemed by courage and faith. Though a great and acute thinker, he has a spiritual approach to life, which is rare in the twentieth century dominated by science and materialism. And he has expressed his ideas and feelings in a language which is devoid of all superfluous ornamentation and is capable of conveying the bewildering and terrifying aspects of modern life. Of all the

living English poets he has done most to make his age conscious of itself, and aware of the dangers inherent in modern civilisation.

9. Poets after T. S. Eliot

T. S. Eliot dominated the English poetic scene till 1930; after that a new school of English poets came to the forefront. It is headed by W. H. Auden, and the other leading poets of this group are Stephen Spender and Cecil Day Lewis. They follow the example of Hopkins and make use of the technical achievements of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. These poets are conscious of the bareness of modern civilisation and strive to find a way out of the Waste Land. Their ideal is the creation of a society in which the real and living contact between man and man may again become possible.

The most original and the most poetically exciting among the modern poets is W. H. Auden who settled in America shortly before the Second World War. He also considers the Waste Land as symbolic of modern civilisation, but whereas to T. S. Eliot it is a symbol of a state of spiritual dryness, to Auden it is a symbol of the depressing physical and psychological condition in the English social life. He is greatly distressed by the upper and lower classes. It is the sense of imminent crisis which pervades his early poetry.

In his later poetry Auden has given up the psychological-economic diagnosis of the troubles of the times, and developed a more sober, contemplative and religious approach to life. But he is also capable of writing light verse full of puns and ironic overtone. But whatever he writes is full of symbols and images derived not from mythology as in the case of Yeats and Eliot, but from the multifarious of everyday life.

Stephen Spender who began writing under the influence of Auden composed lyrics in which he expressed sympathy for the working classes:

*Oh young men, oh young comrades,
It is too late now to stay in those houses
Your fathers built where they built you to breed money on money.*

But in his later poetry he has developed his own quiet, autobiographical style, which is unlike the style of any modern poet.

What I expected was
Thunder, fighting.
Long struggle with men
And climbing,
After continual straining
I should grow strong;
Then the rocks would shake
And I should rest long.
What I had not foreseen
Was the gradual day
Weakening the will
Leaking the brightness away,
The lack of good to touch
The fading of body and soul
Like smoke before wind
Corrupt, unsubstantial.

Cecil Day Lewis also wrote his early poetry under the influence of Auden. But his later poetry has become more and more reflective and reminiscent. Moreover, he has adopted the Victorian diction. On account of his profound knowledge of technique he may be called the academic poet of the present age. In his poems the imagery is primarily rural and his tone is elegiac. These

characteristics associate him with the Georgians.

Other important English poets of the present age are Louis Mac Niece, Edith Sitwell, Robert Graves, Roy Campbell, Geoffrey Grigson, George Barker and Dylan Thomas. Though they do not form any definite group, yet there is a tendency among them to Romanticism in English poetry which had become metaphysical and classical under the influence of Hopkins, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and the Auden group of poets. They do not give so much importance to 'dry, hard' images, and being visionary rather than speculative, their presiding genius is Blake rather than Donne. Dylan Thomas who is the most popular of the young poets finds unity of man with nature, of the generations with each other, of the divine with the human, of life with death. Death does not mean destruction, but a guarantee of immortality, of perpetual life in cosmic eternity:

And death shall have no dominion

Dead men naked they shall be one

With the man in the wind and the west moon;

When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,

They shall have stars at elbow and foot;

Though they go mad they shall be sane,

Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;

Though lovers be lost love shall not,

And death shall have no dominion.

But in spite of this tendency towards Romanticism in the poetry of the present age in England, Eliot, and his school of poetry which is akin to classicism, still hold the field. All modern poetry possesses intellectual toughness and there is no attempt to return to the melodious diction of Tennyson and Swinburne or to the imaginative flights of Shelley. Of course, the tension that we find in Eliot's poetry has ceased and the trend is towards Wordsworthian quietness.

Modern Drama

After the death of Shakespeare and his contemporaries drama in England suffered a decline for about two centuries. Even Congreve in the seventeenth, and Sheridan and Goldsmith in the eighteenth, could not restore drama to the position it held during the Elizabethan Age. It was revived, however, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and then there appeared dramatists who have now given it a respectable place in English literature.

Two important factors were responsible for the revival of drama in 1890's. One was the influence of Ibsen, the great Norwegian dramatist, under which the English dramatists like Bernard Shaw claimed the right to discuss serious social and moral problems in a calm, sensible way. The second was the cynical atmosphere prevailing at that time, which allowed men like Oscar Wilde to treat the moral assumptions of the great Victorian age with frivolity and make polite fun of their conventionality, prudishness or smugness. The first factor gave rise to the Comedy of Ideas or Purpose, while the second revived the Comedy of Manners or the Artificial Comedy.

Under the influence of Ibsen the serious drama in England from 1890 onward ceased to deal with themes remote in time and place. He had taught men that the real drama must deal with human emotions, with things which are near and dear to ordinary men and women. The new dramatists thus gave up the melodramatic romanticism and pseudo-classical remoteness of their predecessors, and began to treat in their plays the actual English life, first of the aristocratic class, then of the middle class and finally of the labouring class. This treatment of actual life made the drama more and more a drama of ideas, which were for the most part, revolutionary, directed against past literary models, current social conventions and the prevailing morality of Victorian England. The new dramatists dealt mainly with the problems of sex, of labour and of

youth, fighting against romantic love, capitalism and parental authority which were the characteristic features of Victorianism. The characters in their plays are constantly questioning, restless and dissatisfied. Youngmen struggle to throw off the trammels of Victorian prejudice. Following the example of Nora, the heroine in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, who leaves her dull domineering husband who seeks to crush her personality and keep her permanently in a childlike, irresponsible state, the young women in these plays join eagerly the Feminist movement and glory in a new-found liberty. Influenced by the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the psychological investigations of Freud, the new dramatists no longer held love or the relation between the sexes as something sacred or romantic as their forefathers did. They looked upon it as a biological phenomenon directed by Nature, or the 'life force' as Bernard Shaw calls it. Thus these dramatists introduced Nature and Life in drama, and loved to make them play their great parts on the stage.

In the new drama of ideas, where a number of theories had to be propounded and explained, action became slow and frequently interrupted. Moreover, inner conflict was substituted for outer conflict, with the result that drama became quieter than the romantic drama of the previous years. The new researches in the field of psychology helped the dramatist in the study of the 'soul', for the expression of which they had to resort to symbols. By means of symbolism the dramatist could raise the dark and even sordid themes to artistic levels. The emphasis on the inner conflict led some of the modern dramatists to make their protagonists not men but unseen forces, thereby making wider and larger the sphere of drama.

In the field of non-serious comedy there was a revival, in the twentieth century, of the *Comedy of Manners*. The modern period, to a great extent, is like the Augustan period, because of the return of the witty, satirical comedy which reached its climax in the hands of Congreve in 1700.

Though this new comedy of manners is often purely fanciful and dependent for its effect upon pure wit, at times it becomes cynical and bitter when dealing with social problems. Mainly it is satirical because with the advancement of civilisation modern life has become artificial, and satire flourishes in a society which becomes over-civilised and loses touch with elemental conditions and primitive impulses.

The two important dramatists who took a predominant part in the revival of drama in the last decade of the nineteenth century were George Bernard Shaw, and Oscar Wilde, both Irishmen. Shaw was the greatest practitioner of the *Comedy of Ideas*, while Wilde that of the new *Comedy of Manners*. Shaw, who was a great thinker, represented the Puritan side of the Anglo-Irish tradition. Wilde, on the other hand, lived a life of luxury and frivolity, was not a deep thinker as Shaw was; and his attitude to life was essentially a playful one.

The success of Oscar Wilde as a writer of artificial comedy or the comedy of manners was mainly due to his being a social entertainer, and it is mainly as 'entertainments' that his plays have survived. Wilde may be considered, therefore, as the father of the comedy of pure entertainment as Shaw is the father of the *Comedy of Ideas*. Other modern writers who have followed Wilde directly are Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward. But the artificial comedy of the last fifty years in England does not compare well with the artificial comedy of the Restoration. The reason is that in the twentieth century there is a lot of confusion and scepticism about social values, and for the production of a really successful artificial comedy the recognition and establishment of some high and genuine code of behaviour, which most people find it too hard to live up to, is essential. Moreover, social manners change so rapidly in the modern time, that the comedy of manners grows out of date more rapidly than any other type of drama. The same is the case with the modes of speech and attitudes to life which also undergo change in a decade. The result is that the appeal of such plays is not lasting, and many of them are no longer appreciated now though in their own day they were immensely successful and powerful.

This is not the case with the comedy of ideas or social comedy. George Bernard Shaw, the father

of the comedy of ideas, was a genius. His intellectual equipment was far greater than that of any of his contemporaries. He alone had understood the greatness of Ibsen, and he decided that like Ibsen's his plays would also be the vehicles of ideas. But unlike Ibsen's grim and serious temperament, Shaw's was characterised by jest and verbal wit. He also had a genuine artistic gift for form, and he could not tolerate any clumsiness in construction. For this purpose he had studied every detail of theatrical workmanship. In each of his plays he presented a certain problem connected with modern life, and his characters discuss it thoroughly. In order to make his ideas still more explicit he added prefaces to his plays, in which he explored the theme more fully. The main burden of his plays is that the civilised man must either develop or perish. If he goes on with his cruelty, corruption and ineffectuality, 'The Life Force' or God would wipe him out of existence. Shaw laughed at and ridiculed even things which others respected or held sacred. What saved him from persecution as a rebel was his innate sense of humour which helped him to give a frivolous cover to whatever he said or wrote. Other modern dramatists who following the example of Bernard Shaw wrote comedies of ideas were Granville Barker, Galsworthy, James Birdie, Priestley, Sir James Barrie and John Masefield, but none of them attained the standard reached by Shaw.

Besides the artificial comedy and the comedy of ideas, another type of drama was developed in England under the influence of the Irish Dramatic Movement whose originators were Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats. The two important dramatists belonging to this movement are J. M. Synge and Sean O'Casey. There has been the revival of the Poetic Drama in the Twentieth century, whose most important practitioner is T. S. Eliot. Other modern dramatists who have also written poetic plays are Christopher Fry, Stephen Philips and Stephen Spender. Most of the poetic plays written in modern times have a religious theme, and they attempt to preach the doctrines of Christianity.

Modern Dramatists

1. George Bernard Shaw (1856—1950)

The greatest among the modern dramatists was George Bernard Shaw. He was born and brought up in Ireland, but at the age of twenty in 1876 he left Ireland for good, and went to London to make his fortune. At first he tried his hand at the novel, but he did not get any encouragement. Then he began to take part in debates of all sorts, and made his name as the greatest debator in England. He read Karl Marx, became a Socialist, and in 1884 joined the Fabian Society which was responsible for creating the British Labour Party.

He was also a voracious reader, and came under the influence of Samuel Butler whom he described as the greatest writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Shaw was specially impressed by Butler's dissatisfaction with the Darwinian Theory of Natural Selection. According to Butler, Darwin had banished mind from the universe by banishing purpose from natural history. Shaw came to believe in the Force which Butler had described as 'the mysterious drive towards greater power over our circumstances and deeper understanding of Nature.' Shakespeare had described it as 'divinity that shapes our ends'. Shaw termed it the Life Force.

Two other writers who provoked the critical mind of Shaw during his formative period were Ibsen, a Norwegian dramatist; and Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher. From Nietzsche Shaw took his admiration for the intellectually strong, the aristocrats of the human species, the supermen who know their own minds, pursue their own purpose, win the battle of life and extract from it what is worth having. Ibsen whose doctrine, 'Be Thyself,' which was very much like Nietzsche's theory of the Superman who says 'Yea to Life', gave a dramatic presentation of it by picturing in his plays the life of the middle class people with relentless realism. In his plays Ibsen

had exposed sentimentality, romanticism and hypocrisy. He showed men and women in society as they really are, and evoked the tragedy that may be inherent in ordinary, humdrum life.

Working under the influence of Butler, Nietzsche and Ibsen, Shaw who up to the age of forty was mainly concerned in learning, in propagating ideas, in debating, and persuading people to accept his views about society and morals decided to bring the world round to his opinion through the medium of the theatre. With that end in view he studied the stage through and through, and came out with his plays which were theatrically perfect and bubbling with his irrepressible wit. The result was that he immediately attracted attention and became the most popular and influential dramatist of his time.

Shaw wrote his plays with the deliberate purpose of propaganda. He himself said, "My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals." He prepared the minds of the audience by written prefaces to his plays which are far more convincing than the plays themselves. That is why plays were more successful when they were produced a second or third time when the audience had read them in their published forms.

In most of his plays, Shaw himself is the chief character appearing in different disguises. Other characters represent types which Shaw had studied thoroughly. The only exceptions are *Candida*, *Saint Joan* and *Captain Shotover* in *Heartbreak House*. But mostly the characters in his plays are mere puppets in his hands taking part in the conflict of ideas. In all his plays he is a propagandist or prophet. He criticises mental servitude, moral slavery, superstition, sentimentalism, selfishness and all rotten and irrational ideas. As his plays are concerned with ideas, and he is a staunch enemy of sentimentalism, he passes by the subtler, finer elements in the individual, and fails to arouse emotions. But in spite of his being the severest critic of contemporary society, his inherent sense of humour, joviality and generous temperament produced no bitterness. His frankness and sincerity compelled the people to listen to him even when he provoked, exasperated and shocked many of them.

All the plays of Shaw deal with some problem concerning modern society. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* Shaw showed that for the evils of prostitution the society, and not the procuress, was the blame. In *Widower's House* he again put the blame on society, and not on the individual landlord for creating abuses of the right to property. In *Man and Superman* Shaw dealt with his favourite theme that it is the Life Force which compels woman to hunt out man, capture and marry him for the continuation of the race. In *Getting Married* he showed the unnaturalness of the home-life as at present constituted. In *The Doctor's Dilemma* he exposed the superstition that doctors are infallible. In *John Bull's other Island*, the hero talks exactly like Shaw, and the Englishman represents the worst traits in English character. *Caesar and Cleopatra* has no particular theme, and that is why it comes nearer to being a play than most of Shaw's works. In *The Apple Cart* Shaw ridiculed the working of democratic form of government and hinted that it needed a superman to set things right. In *Back to Methuselah* he goes to the very beginning of things and forward as far as thought can reach in order to show the nature of the Life Force and its effect on the destiny of Man. It was in *St. Joan* that Shaw reached the highest level of his dramatic art by dealing in a tragic manner a universal theme involving grand emotions.

2. Oscar Wilde (1856-1900)

Another dramatist who took an important part in the revival of drama in the later part of the nineteenth century was Oscar Wilde. It was only during the last five years of his life that he turned his attention to writing for the stage. During his lifetime his plays became very popular, and they were thought to represent a high mark in English drama. But their importance was exaggerated, because they are merely the work of a skilled craftsman. It was mainly on account

of their style—epigrammatic, graceful, polished and full of wit—that they appealed to the audience. Oscar Wilde had the tact of discovering the passing mood of the time and expressing it gracefully. Otherwise, his plays are all superficial, and none of them adds to our knowledge or understanding of life. The situations he presents in his plays are hackneyed, and borrowed from French plays of intrigue.

Lady Windermere's Fan (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* are the four important comedies of Wilde. The first three plays are built on the model of the conventional social melodramas of the time. They are given sparkle and literary interest by the flashing wit of the dialogue. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, on the other hand, is built on the model of the popular farce of the time. Wilde calls this a trivial comedy for serious people. It is successful because of its detachment from all meaning and models. In fact this play proved to Wilde that the graceful foolery of farce was the form which was best suited to the expression of his dramatic genius. The playfulness of the farce helped Wilde to comment admirably on frivolous society. Encouraged by the success of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde would have written more such plays and perfected this form of artificial comedy, but for the premature closing of his literary career by his imprisonment in 1895.

3. John Galsworthy (1867-1933)

Galsworthy was a great dramatist of modern times, who besides being a novelist of the first rank, made his mark also in the field of drama. He believed in the naturalistic technique both in the novel and drama. According to him, "Naturalistic art is like a steady lamp, held up from time to time, in whose light things will be seen for a space clearly in due proportion, freed from the mists of prejudice and partisanship." Galsworthy desired to reproduce, both upon the stage and in his books, the natural spectacle of life, presented with detachment. Of course his delicate sympathies for the poor and unprivileged classes make his heart melt for them, and he takes sides with them. The important plays of Galsworthy are *Strife* (1909), *Justice* (1910), *The Skin Game* (1920), and *The Silver Box*. All these plays deal with social and ethical problems. *Strife* deals with the problem of strikes, which are not only futile but do immense harm to both the parties. *The Skin Game* presents the conflict between the old-established landed aristocracy and the ambitious noisy, new rich manufacturing class. *Justice* is a severe criticism of the prison administration of that period. *The Silver Box* deals with the old proverb that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

Though the plays of Galsworthy are important on account of the ideas which they convey, they are no less remarkable for their technical efficiency. He effects in all of them a strict economy of style and characterisation and they are denuded of all superfluity. But sometimes he carries simplicity of aim and singleness of purpose too far and the result is that his plays lack human warmth and richness which are essential elements in literature.

4. Harley Granville-Barker (1877-1946)

Granville-Barker belonged to that group of dramatists like Galsworthy who dealt with Domestic Tragedy and Problem Plays. Though he wrote a number of plays of different sorts in collaboration with other playwrights, he occupies his place in modern drama mainly as a writer of four "realistic" plays—*The Marrying of Anne Leete* (1899), *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905), *Waste* (1907) and *The Madras House* (1910). Each of these plays deals with a dominant problem

of social life.

The Marrying of Anne deals with the Life Force, and attacks the convention and hypocrisy surrounding the social culture of the time *The Voysey Inheritance* deals, like Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, with the problem of prostitution. In *Waste*, Granville-Barker again deals with the problem of sex. It is the tragedy of a woman with no motherly instinct. The hero, Trebell, who suffers on account of his wife's misdoings, possesses tragic majesty of Shakespeare's heroes. *The Madras House* deals with social forces which play havoc in the lives of individuals who try to oppose them.

The importance of Granville-Barker in the twentieth century drama lies in his fine delineation of character and realistic style. His plays seem to be excerpt of real life to a greater extent than even those of Galsworthy. The dialogue is very natural and near to ordinary conversation. The life presented in these plays is the narrow and petty life lived by the upper-middle class in England in his days.

5. John Masefield (1878-1967)

Another dramatist belonging to the same school as Galsworthy and Granville-Barker is Masefield. He passionate enthusiasm and cold logic, fantasy and realism. Though he clings to the natural world and is a confirmed realist, he is wrapped in the spirit of mysticism. All these conflicting qualities are seen in his greatest play—*The Tragedy of Nan*, which is the best modern example of the form of domestic tragedy. The social forces do not play any significant part in it. The sufferings of Nan who becomes a veritable outcast on account of her father having been hanged for stealing a sheep, and her connection with the half-mad old Gaffer, have been raised to tragic heights by the playwright's imaginative passion which is given an appropriate poetic expression. But in spite of the supernatural and imaginative cast of the play, the story is one of unflinching realism.

Other plays of Masefield are the *The Daffodil Fields*, *Reynard the Fox*, *Melloney Holtspur*, *Esther and Berenice*, *The Campden Wonder* and *Mrs. Harrison*. In *Melloney Holtspur* Masefield has introduced spirit forces, but not quite successfully. *The Campden Wonder* and *Mrs. Harrison*, are also domestic tragedies, but they do not come to the high standard of *The Tragedy of Nan*, which is undoubtedly Masefield's masterpiece.

6. J. M. Barrie (1860-1937)

J. M. Barrie did not belong to any school of dramatists. The best of his work is marked by imaginative fantasy, humour and tender pathos. His most characteristic and original play is *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), a drawing-room comedy in which the family butler is the hero. As Barrie did not find himself at peace with himself and the society, he was fond of capturing and treasuring a child's dream of what life ought to be. This is exactly what we find in this play.

From day-to-day life of London we are wafted to a world of romance, of innocence, which is a so refreshing after the sordid picture of real life. Three other plays *Peter Pan*, *The Golden Bird* and *The Golden Age* have the children story-book characters in them, who are brought to life by the writer's skill.

Barrie also wrote *A Kiss for Cinderella*, a fantasy; *Dear Brutus* which tries to prove that character is destiny. In all these plays Barrie shows himself as a pastmaster in prolonging our sense of expectancy till the end of the last act. Moreover, no one since the Elizabethan era, has so

effectively suggested the close proximity of the fairyland with the visible world.

Barrie's last and most ambitious drama was *The Boy David* (1936) in which he has given a fine picture of the candid soul of boyhood. As the play deals with a story from the Bible, which is well-known, Barrie could not here effectively make use of the element of surprise, which is his strongest point in other plays.

On the whole, Barrie is a skilled technician. The episodes in his plays grow out of each other with refreshing unexpectedness, giving rise to crisp dialogue and contrast of character. He discovered that in an age of affectations and pretensions, the theatre-goers needed the sincerity and innocence of childhood, and he earned his popularity by giving them what they needed.

7. The Irish Dramatic Revival

One of the important dramatic movement of modern times was the Irish Dramatic Revival. This was a reaction against the new realistic drama of Shaw and Wilde. The protagonists of this new movement—Lady Gregory, W. B. Yeats, and J. M. Synge, were all Irish dramatists who wanted to introduce flavour richness and poetry into drama. Being dissatisfied with the intellectual drama where everything proceeded logically, they thought that especially in Ireland where the people were highly imaginative and the language was rich and living, it was possible to produce plays rich and copious in words and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. According to them, such plays dealing with the profound and common interests of life and full of poetic speeches would be different from the intellectual plays of Ibsen and Shaw, which dealt with the realities of life, only of the urban population, in a dry and joyless manner. They tried to exploit in their plays the richness of peasant culture of Ireland and appeal to the popular imagination of their countrymen as against the intellectual plays of Shaw and others, which, they thought, had failed on account of their being too rational and dealing with urban complexities.

The leader of the new movement was William Butler Yeats. He was born in Dublin, and in his youth he became interested in the Gaelic League which had been formed to revive popular interest in the old fairy stories and folk-lore of the Irish people. Under the inspiration of the Gaelic movement, Yeats was convinced that through a wide dissemination of these Celtic myths, not alone Ireland but the whole world might be stimulated. As at that time drama was the most popular literary medium for moving a large number of audience, Yeats, who was primarily a lyrical poet, turned to drama. But as commercial theatre with its elaborately decorated stage and other technical devices was unsuited to his simple, poetical and symbolical plays, he, with the help of Lady Gregory, established the Irish Literary Theatre. This theatre gave performances of Yeats plays, and in course of time it became so important that out of it grew the Irish National Theatre Society, which constructed the famous Abbey Theatre, Dublin. Here the play was the main thing, and the stage setting comparatively unimportant.

Though Yeats wrote about thirty plays, the most important and widely known ones are *The Countess Cathleen* (1892) and *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894). But the popularity of these plays depended more upon poetic charm and strangeness than upon dramatic power. Yeats' plays are defective in their organic constructions, and they do not maintain the proper balance between poetry, action and characterisation. The poetic element obtrudes too much and prevents the creation of the illusion of possible people behaving credibly and using an appropriate speech medium. As the characters have to speak long passages in verse, they look artificial, arrogating to themselves an exaggerated importance. The fact is that Yeats was essentially a romantic lyric poet and, therefore he did not handle the dramatic form with ease.

Lady Gregory (1852-1932) made several experiments in her dramatic work. Like Yeats she drew

much of her material from the folk-lore of her country, and also wrote Irish historical plays. Her best known pieces are the *Seven Short Plays* (1909). The characters in her plays, who are mostly peasants, are more human than in the plays of Yeats or Synge, and the audience get a thrill of joy on account of the sweet savour of the dialogue.

John Millington Synge (1871-1909), who graduated from Dublin, spent a number of years among the peasants of Ireland. With them he lived like a peasant, using their language, learning their tales, and observing closely their customs and characters, until he started writing his plays which, in the opinion of some critics, are second only to Shakespeare's.

Synge exercises strictest economy in his plays, and he rarely admits a superfluous word. The result is that sometimes his humour becomes too grim and his tragedy bitterly painful. He has not got the generous superfluity of Shakespeare which gives us an impression of the superabundance of life. His *Riders to the Sea* (1909), which is one of the greatest tragedies written in the twentieth century, is considered by some critics as too harrowing and ruthless. His comedy, *The Shadow of the Glen*, aroused much protest because in it the heroine, an Irish woman, is shown as proving unfaithful to her husband. The people of Ireland could not tolerate this as they thought that Irish women were more virtuous than English women. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, in which he gave an impression that Irishmen were capable of glorifying as murderers, provoked riots. But it proved to be very popular because it gives an impressive representation of Irish peasant phrases which the author had heard on the roads, or among beggar women and ballad-singers around Dublin.

Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory were the leading figures of the older generation of dramatists in the modern Irish theatre. In the younger generation the most prominent dramatist is Sean O'Casey. It was his play *Juno and the Paycock* (1925) which placed him, along with Synge, at the head of the Abbey Theatre dramatists. Mostly he draws material for his plays, in which there is a mixture of tragedy and comedy, from the grim slum-dwellings and the recent history of Ireland. The reason why he mixes tragedy and comedy in plays as in *The Plough and the Stars*, is that they are symbolic of the condition of Ireland, where virtue and vice, heroism and cowardice, beauty and foulness, poetry and profanity, were inextricably mingled. These plays are written in the language of the slums, but it is full of beauty. The only faults of O'Casey are those of indiscipline and exuberance. He is at his best in the portrayal of women. His later plays *The Silver Tassie* (1928) and *Within the Gates* (1933) are full of satire on modern society, especially its injustice to the under-privileged.

8. Poetic Drama

In the twentieth century there has been a revival of the poetic drama, and some of the great poets as Yeats and Eliot have written poetic plays. This was a reaction against the prose plays of Shaw and others, which showed a certain loss of emotional touch with the moral issues of the age.

Yeats did not like the harsh criticism of the liberal ideas of the nineteenth century at the hands of revolutionary dramatists like Shaw. He felt that in the past people had a higher tradition of civilisation than in our own time. The drama of ideas was thus failing to grasp the realities of the age. On the other hand, the drama of entertainment, or the artificial comedy, was becoming dry and uninteresting. Thus the tradition of realistic drama needed an injection of fresh blood.

It was under these circumstances that some modern writers who had made reputation as poets made the attempt in the 1930's and 1940's to revive the tradition of the poetic drama which had been dead since the Restorations. This revival of the poetic drama took various forms, and it is significant that the new attempts at poetic drama had a much closer connection with the deeper religious beliefs or social attitudes of their authors than had most of the prose drama of the time.

T. S. Eliot commenced his career as a practical dramatist by writing a pageant play called, *The Rock*, to encourage the collection of funds for the building of new London churches. His second play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, however, is a proper play. It was written to be performed in Canterbury Cathedral at the yearly Canterbury Festival, commemorating the death of St. Thomas Becket, Canterbury's famous martyr, who had been murdered in the very Cathedral where Eliot's play was first performed. Obviously the impulse behind this play was also religious rather than a properly theatrical one, as in the case of *The Rock*. But *Murder in the Cathedral* is closer to being a drama than *The Rock* is. Here T. S. Eliot has made a very effective use of the chorus which is made up of the women of Canterbury, who are presented very realistically. St. Thomas, though a dignified and impressive character, is more of a symbol than a person. Other characters in the play are also personifications of various simple, abstract attitudes. The most important 'action' in the play is St. Thomas' triumphing over various temptations, which takes place in his mind. Thus *Murder in the Cathedral* is strictly 'interior', and the outward value of the play is rather that of a spectacle and a commemorative ritual.

Whereas *The Rock* and *Murder in the Cathedral* belong to the special religious occasions rather than to the wider world of the theatre, and one has to approach them in a religious frame of mind, T. S. Eliot's next play, *The Family Reunion*, is not a religious play. Its primary aim is not edification or commemoration. It deals with the return of a young nobleman, Harry, Lord Monchensey to his ancestral home, where his widowed mother, Amy, wants him to settle as the head of the aristocratic country-house. But Harry feels restless as he is obsessed with the ideas of having killed his wife, and on account of that he is pestered by Furies. This is nothing but hallucination produced from the inherited, unconscious memory of his father's desire to kill his mother, because he (the father) was in love with his wife's (Amy's) sister Agatha. This fact is revealed to Harry by his aunt Agatha. Harry believes that the Furies are not instruments of blind revenge, but rather of purification, and so he decides to leave his ancestral home, and sets out again on his travels. His mother is so much shocked by Harry's decision that she dies.

The Family Reunion does not contain so many memorable and eloquent passages as *Murder in the Cathedral*, because here T. S. Eliot tried to catch the tones, idioms, and rhythms of contemporary speech. But on account of this *The Family Reunion* conveys the illusion of reality. There are also more minor characters in this play than in the previous plays. Moreover, T. S. Eliot has deliberately written it in a plain manner in order to convince his audience of the reality of what they are listening to.

T. S. Eliot's latest play, *The Cocktail Party*, deals with a more profound and serious theme, that of the various kind of self-deceptions in which even cultivated and pleasant and well-meaning people tend to indulge. The play begins with a cocktail party which has been arranged by the wife, and the husband does not know all the guests. The disappearance of the wife adds to the embarrassment of the husband. When the party is over, one of the guests, who is psychiatrist, stays behind. He knows the secret. The husband does not love his wife, and has a mistress. The wife, on the other hand, has been having her own love affair with a youngman, who is secretly in love with her husband's mistress. The psychiatrist solves the tangle by advising the husband and wife that they should not expect too much from each other. Instead of yearning for a romantic drama, they should honestly realise their limitations, and accept a moral basis for successful marriage. So they are reconciled to each other. The husband's mistress becomes a missionary and after a short time becomes a martyr in a primitive country. The youngman who has been in love with her as well as with the wife joins film industry in Hollywood.

In *The Cocktail Party*, T. S. Eliot has dealt with a typical problem of ordinary behaviour in modern time. Moreover, he has managed to write a play which at once keeps us continually amused and expectant. Of course, it does not have the poetic richness of *Murder in the Cathedral*, though it does have a few eloquent passages. On the whole, *The Cocktail Party* is the most successful of T. S. Eliot's plays from the theatrical point of view.

Another great modern poet who has written poetic plays is Stephen Spender. His most important play is *The Trail of a Judge*. The judge, the hero of the play, tries to administer justice impartially between the Fascists and Communists. But the Fascists who are in power, charge him with Communistic leanings, and he is disgraced, imprisoned and killed. The judge who stands for abstract justice is a dignified figure. He embodies in himself permanent human values. The rhetorical tendency of Spender's poetry helps him in conveying the emotional tone of the character speaking under stress of strong feeling. On account of these reasons *The Trial of a Judge* is one of the most effective pieces of poetic drama in the modern age.

W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood have also written verse and prose plays—Auden contributing the verse chorus and Isherwood crisp and neat prose dialogue. One of their important plays is *The Dog Beneath the Skin*—a gay, satirical farce. On the other hand, *The Ascent of F6* and *Across the Frontier* are serious plays dealing with modern problems through symbolism.

Besides these, another poet who has written poetic plays is Christopher Fry. He has mainly written verse comedies, e.g., *A Phoenix too Frequent*, *The Lady's Not for Burning* and *Venus Observed*. In his plays there is a fantastic wealth of language which reminds us of young Shakespeare of *Love's Labour's Lost*. But he does not have a coherent conception of his play as a whole, and therefore his plays often betray an air of wonderfully clever improvisations.

9. Historical and Imaginative Plays.

The latest movement in drama in England is the rapid development of the historical play. The exploitation of historical themes is the result of a deliberate endeavour to escape from the trammels of naturalism and to bring back something of the poetic expression to the theatre. The close association between the poetic school and historical school is well exemplified by John Drinkwater and Clifford Bax. Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* (1918) was such a great success that it made the author internationally famous. He wrote several other historical plays, as *Mary Stuart* (1921) *Oliver Cromwell* (1922) and *Robert E. Lee* (1923). In all these plays Drinkwater has built the action round a particular theme. Lincoln pursues war against the Southern States resolutely but not vindictively. His aim is not the crushing of the enemy, but the raising of a new understanding born out of the turmoil of the conflict. In *Oliver Cromwell* and *Robert E. Lee* the author gives greater importance to the political and social problems than to the presentation of history. In *Mary Stuart*, he gives us a subtle study of a woman who cannot find any one man great enough to satisfy her soul's love.

Clifford Bax has written several poetic plays, of which the important ones are *Socrates* (1930), *The Venetian* (1932), *The Immortal Lady* (1931), and *The Rose Without the Thorn* (1932). They are all lyrical and philosophical plays, and the characters in them are developed within a pattern, based on historic facts, but shaped by his imagination.

Besides Drinkwater and Bax, other dramatists who have written historical and imaginative plays, are Ashley Dukes and Rudolf Besier. The most popular plays of Ashley Duke are *The Man with a Load of Mischief* (1924), *The Fountain Head* (1928) and *Tyle Ulenspiegel* (1930), Rudolf Besier's *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* in which he deals with the courtship of Browning and Miss Elizabeth Barrett (Mrs. Browning), their elopement and marriage, is the most successful of all the historical plays produced in the twentieth century.

The modern drama in England is in a transitional stage, and it is difficult to understand where it stands. The naturalistic method of Shaw still makes an appeal; there are dramatists like Somerset Maugham who have written very successful comedies of manners; and at the same time the new experiments in non-realistic and imaginative drama also excite the audience. In fact all these

tendencies are found in modern drama, and no one in particular holds the predominant place at present.

The Modern Novel

This is the most important and popular literary medium in the modern times. It is the only literary form which can compete for popularity with the film and the radio, and it is in this form that a great deal of distinguished work is being produced. The publication of a new novel by a great novelist is received now with the same enthusiastic response as a new comedy by Dryden or Congreve was received in the Restoration period, and a new volume of poems by Tennyson during the Victorian period. Poetry which had for many centuries held the supreme place in the realm of literature, has lost that position. Its appeal to the general public is now negligible, and it has been obviously superseded by fiction.

The main reason for this change is that the novel is the only literary form which meets the needs of the modern world. The great merit of poetry is that it has the capacity to convey more than one meaning at a time. It provides compression of meaning through metaphorical expression. It manages to distil into a brief expression a whole range of meanings, appealing to both intellect and emotion. But this compression of metaphor is dependent upon a certain compression in the society. In other words, the metaphor used in poetry must be based on certain assumptions or public truths held in common by both the poet and the audience. For example the word 'home' stood for a settled peaceful life with wife and children, during the Victorian home. So if this word was used as a metaphor in poetry its meaning to the poet as well to the audience was the same. But in the twentieth century when on account of so many divorces and domestic disturbances, home has lost its sanctity, in English society, the word 'home' cannot be used by the poet in that sense because it will convey to different readers different meanings according to their individual experiences.

For poetry to be popular with the public there must exist a basis in the individuals of some common pattern of psychological reaction which has been set up by a consistency in the childhood environment. The metaphors or 'ambiguities' which lend subtlety to poetic expression, are dependent on a basis of common stimulus and response which are definite and consistent. This is possible only in a society which in spite of its eternal disorder on the surface, is dynamically functioning on the basis of certain fundamentally accepted value.

The modern period in England is obviously not such a period when society is functioning on the basis of certain fundamental values. This is the age of disintegration and interrogations. Old values have been discarded and they have not been replaced by new values. What Arnold said of the Victorian period applies more truly to the modern period—'Caught between two worlds, one dying, the other seeking to be born'. It is the conflict between the two that the common basis of poetry has disappeared. In England of today the society is no longer homogenous; it is divided in different groups who speak different languages. Meanings that are taken for granted in one group are not understood in another. The western man is swayed by conflicting intentions, and is therefore erratic and inconsistent in his behaviour. It is difficult for him to choose between communism and capitalism, between belief in God and scepticism, confidence in science and fear of the atomic bomb, because every belief is riddled with doubts. In no department of life do we find postulates which can be accepted at their face values. In the absence of any common values compression of meaning is impossible. The poets of today find themselves isolated from society, and so they write in a language which cannot be understood by all. Sometimes the isolation of the poet is so extreme that his writing cannot be understood by anyone but himself. That is why poetry has lost its popularity in the modern time. But the very reasons which make the writing of poetry difficult have offered opportunity to fiction to flourish. In prose the

ambiguity can be clarified. Those things which are no longer assumed can be easily explained in a novel.

But it is not merely on account of the loss of common pattern of psychological response, and the absence of common basis of values, that the novel has come into ascendancy. Science, which is playing a predominant role today, and which insists on the analytical approach, has also helped the novel to gain more popularity, because the method of the novel is also analytical as opposed to the synthetical. The modern man also under the influence of science, is not particularly interested in metaphorical expression which is characteristic of poetry. He prefers the novel form because here the things are properly explained and clarified. Moreover the development of psychology in the twentieth century has made men so curious about the motivation of their conduct, that they feel intellectually fascinated when a writer exposes the inner working of the mind of a character. This is possible only in the novel form.

After discussing the various reasons which have made the novel the most popular literary form today, let us consider the main characteristics of the modern novel. In the first place, we can say that it is *realistic* as opposed to *idealistic*. The 'realistic' writer is one who thinks that truth to observed facts—facts about the outer world, or facts about his own feelings—is the great thing, while the 'idealistic' writer wants rather to create a pleasant and edifying picture. The modern novelist is 'realistic' in this sense and not in the sense of an elaborate documentation of fact, dealing often with the rather more sordid side of contemporary life, as we find in the novels of Zola. He is 'realistic' in the wider sense, and tries to include within the limits of the novel almost everything—the mixed, average human nature—and not merely one-sided view of it. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* had proved that the texture of the novel can be made as supple and various as life itself. The modern novelists have continued this experiment still further, and are trying to make the novel more elegant and flexible. Under the influence of Flaubert and Turgenev, some modern novelists like Henry James have taken great interest in refining the construction of the novel so that there will be nothing superfluous, no phrase, paragraph, or sentence which will not contribute to the total effect. They have also tried to avoid all that militates against plausibility, as Thackeray's unwise technique of addressing in his own person, and confessing that it is all a story. They have introduced into the novel subtle points of view, reserved and refined characters, and intangible delicacies, of motive which had never been attempted before by any English novelist.

In the second place, the modern novel is *psychological*. The psychological problem concerns the nature of consciousness and its relation to time. Modern psychology has made it very difficult for the novelist to think of consciousness, as moving in a straight chronological line from one point to the next. He tends rather to see it as altogether fluid, existing simultaneously at several different levels. To the modern novelists and readers who look at consciousness in this way, the presentation of a story in a straight chronological line becomes unsatisfactory and unreal. People are what they are because of what they have been. We are memories, and to describe as truthfully at any given moment means to say everything about our past. This method to describe this consciousness in operation is called the 'stream of consciousness' method. The novelist claims complete omniscience and moves at once right inside the characters' minds. In this kind of a novel a character's change in mood, marked externally by a sigh or a flicker of an eyelid, or perhaps not perceived at all, may mean more than his outward acts, like his decision to marry or the loss of a fortune. Moreover, in such a novel the main characters are not brought through a series of testing circumstances in order to reveal their potentialities. Everything about the character is always there, at some level of his consciousness, and it can be revealed by the author by probing depthwise rather than proceeding lengthwise.

Since the 'stream of consciousness' novelists, like Virginia Woolf, believe that the individual's reaction to any given situation is determined by the sum of his past experience, it follows that everyone is in some sense a prisoner of his own individuality. It therefore means that 'reality'

itself is a matter of personal impression rather than public systematisation, and thus real communication between individuals is impossible. In such a world of loneliness, there is no scope for love, because each personality, being determined by past history, is unique. This idea is further strengthened on account of disintegration of modern society in which there is no common basis of values. That is why the modern novelist regards love as a form of selfishness or at least as something much more complicated and problematical than simple affection between two persons. D. H. Lawrence believes that true love begins with the lover's recognition of each others' true separateness. Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway rejected Peter Welsh, the man she really loved, because of the fear that his possessive love would destroy her own personality. It is in the technique of characterisation that the 'stream of consciousness' novelist is responsible for an important development. Previously two different methods were adopted by the novelists in the delineation of character. Either the personalities of characters in fiction emerge from a chronological account of a group of events and the character's reaction to it; or we are given a descriptive portrait of the character first, so that we know what to expect, and the resulting actions and reactions of characters fill in and elaborate that picture. The first method we see in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, where in the beginning there is no hint of Michael's real nature or personality. That emerges from the story itself. The second method is seen in Trollope's *Barchester Towers*, where in the early chapter we get general sketches of the characters of Dr. Proudie and Mrs. Proudie, and in the later chapter we see the application to particular events of the general principle already enunciated. Some time both these methods are adopted as in the case of Emma Woodhouse by Jane Austen. Though the methods adopted in all these cases are different, we find that consistent character-portrait emerges. The 'stream of consciousness' novelist, on the other hand, is dissatisfied with these traditional methods. He has realised that it is impossible to give a psychologically accurate account of what a man is at any given moment, either by static description of his character, or by describing a group of chronologically arranged reactions to a series of circumstances. He is interested in those aspects of consciousness which are essentially dynamic rather than static in nature and are independent of the given moment. For him the present moment is sufficiently specious, because it denotes the ever fluid passing of the 'already' into the 'not yet'. It not merely gives him the reaction of the person to a particular experience at the moment, but also his previous as well as future reactions. His technique, therefore, is a means of escape from the tyranny of the time dimension. By it the author is able to kill two birds with one stone; he can indicate the precise nature of the present experience of his character, and give, incidentally, facts about the character's life previous to this moment, and thus in a limited time, one day for example, he gives us a complete picture of the character both historically and psychologically.

This 'stream of consciousness' technique not only helps to reveal the character completely, historically as well as psychologically, it also presents development in character, which is in itself very difficult. Thus James Joyce in *Ulysses* is not only able, while confining his chronological framework to the events of a single day, to relate so much more than merely the events of that single day, and to make his hero a complete and rounded character, but by the time the book closes, he had made the reader see the germ of the future in the present without looking beyond the present. Similarly Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* by relating the story of one day in the life of a middle-aged woman, and following her 'stream of consciousness' up and down in the past and the present, has not only given complete picture of Mrs. Dalloway's character, but also she has made the reader feel by the end of the book that he knows not only what Mrs. Dalloway is, and has been, but what she might have been—he knows all the unfulfilled possibilities in her character. Thus what the traditional method achieves by extension, the 'stream of consciousness' method achieves by depth. It is a method by which a character can be presented outside time and place. It first separates the presentation of consciousness from the chronological sequence of events, and then investigates a given state of mind so completely, by

pursuing to their end the remote mental associations and suggestions, that there is no need to wait for time in order to make the potential qualities in the character take the form of activity. Besides being psychological and realistic, the novelist is also frank especially about sexual matters. This was rather an inevitable result of the acceptance of the 'stream of consciousness' technique. Some time a striking sexual frankness is used by writers like D. H. Lawrence to evade social and moral problems. An elaborate technique for catching the flavour of every moment helps to avoid coming into grips with acute problems facing the society. Moreover, on account of the disintegration of society, and an absence of a common basis of values, the modern novelist cannot believe that his impressions hold good for others. The result is that whereas the earlier English novel generally dealt with the theme of relation between gentility and morality, the modern novel deals with the relation between loneliness and love. So whereas Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray wrote for the general public, the modern novelist considers it as an enemy, and writes for a small group of people who share his individual sensibilities and are opposed to the society at large. E. M. Forster calls it the 'little society' as opposed to the 'great society'. D. H. Lawrence was concerned with how individuals could fully realise themselves as individuals as a preliminary to making true contact with the 'otherness of other individuals'. He deals with social problems as individual problems. Virginia Woolf, who was particularly sensitive to the disintegration of the public background of belief, was concerned with rendering experience in terms of private sensibility. Thus the novel in the hands of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence, Dorothy Richardson or Katherine Mansfield, borrowed some of the technique of lyrical poetry on account of emphasis on personal experience. There are such fine delicacies of description and narrative in modern novels, that they remind us of the works of great English poets.

Modern Novelists

1. The Ancestors

The immediate ancestors of the modern English novel, who dominated the earlier part of the twentieth century, were Wells, Bennet, Conard, Kipling and Forster.

(i) H. G. Wells (1866-1946)

Among the writers of twentieth century Herbert George Wells was the greatest revolutionary, and like Barnard Shaw, he exerted a tremendous influence on the minds of his contemporaries. Wells was the first English novelist who had a predominantly scientific training, and who was profoundly antagonistic to the classics. He insisted that classical humanism should be discarded in favour of science, and that Biology and World History should take the place of Latin and Greek.

Moreover, he had no respect for accepted conventions which he criticised most ruthlessly. He was untouched by sentiment and had no loyalty to the past, with the result that he rejected what was hitherto considered sacred and part of the English cultural inheritance.

The novels of Wells fall into three divisions. First he wrote the scientific romances; next he tried his hand on the domestic novel, with its emphasis on character and humour; and then when he had gained sufficient fame as a writer, he wrote a series of sociological novels in which he showed his concern with the fate of humanity as a whole.

As a writer of scientific romances, Wells stands unrivalled; they are masterpieces of imaginative power. He looks at life on earth from a higher level by projecting himself to a distant standpoint, to the moon, the future, the air, or another planet. In these romances Wells has shown an extraordinary ability to look into the future, and many of his predictions have proved to be true. His first scientific romance was *The Time Machine* (1895), in which the hero invents a 'time machine', which enables him to accelerate the time consciousness and project himself into the future. Here is also described in a most vivid manner the grim picture of the earth divided between a master race and their resentful serfs, the Marlocks, belonging to the sub-race. His next work, *The War of the Worlds* (1898), deals with the theme of the invasion of the earth by the people living on the planet Mars. They spread destruction by the use of a death-ray, but they are ultimately defeated on account of their lack of immunity from bacteria. In this way the earth is saved. The other scientific romances written by Wells were *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899), *The First Man in the Moon* (1901) and *The Food of the Gods* (1904). These were the most exciting scientific thrillers which ever appeared in English fiction, and in them Wells anticipated various forms of warfare including the atom bomb.

From fantastic romances, Wells then turned to domestic fiction. He was thoroughly familiar with the life in London suburbs, which he described with enthusiasm in *Kipps* (1905), a comedy of class instincts. The hero Kipps, rises from the position of a draper's assistant to a man of fortune. The high society accepts him and trains him in its culture, but Kipps feels relieved only when he loses his fortune, and relapses to the lower class from where he rose. This novel is full of satire and humour typical of Wells. In *Tono Bungay* (1909), Wells gives a most remarkable picture of the disintegration of English society in the later nineteenth century and the advent of the new rich class. In *Anna Veronica* (1909) which is the full-length study of a modern young woman. There is the first attempt in English fiction at a frank and open treatment of sex relationship. In *Love and Mrs. Lewisham* (1910), and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910), Wells gives us realistic, humorous and sympathetic studies of the lower middle class life, with which he was quite familiar.

By this time Wells had gained great reputation as a writer. He then started a series of novels dealing with great social problems confronting the men of his time. This series includes *The New Machiavelli* (1911), which is a study of political and sociological creeds in the guise of a biography; *Mr. Britling sees it Through* (1916), a study of the reaction of the people to the First World War; *The Undying Fire* (1919) which is a religious and satiric fantasy; *Mr. Blettsworth on Rampole Island* (1928) and *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* (1930), an attack on capitalism. Wells believed that human civilisation can survive only if people discipline their instincts by means of reason. He also visualised a World State to which nations must owe allegiance. He was looked upon by the post-war world as teacher, prophet and guide. His greatest weakness was that being too much scientific minded, he lacked spiritual wisdom. He was undoubtedly the most intellectual of the ancestors of the modern novel.

(ii) Arnold Bennett (1867-1931)

Unlike Wells, Bennett was more concerned with the craft of fiction and was not disposed to preach in his novels. That is why, during his time he was the most popular novelist. He looked at the world as a spectacle and recorded in his novels his impressions with complete detachment. Following the example of French novelists, Maupassant, Flaubert and Balzac, he aimed at recording life—its delights, indignities and distresses—without conscious intrusion of his own personality between the record and the reader. He was a copyist of life, and only indirectly did he play the role of a commentator, an interpreter, or an apologist. On account of these qualities,

Bennett may be called the 'naturalistic' novelist, though this term can be applied to him only partially. The reason is that the purpose of a purely 'naturalistic' novelist is to be as dispassionate and detached as a camera, but Bennett even while desisting from utilizing his novels as an instrument of moral and social reforms was compelled to select certain things as relevant and significant, and reject certain others as irrelevant and insignificant, in order to determine the nature of his picture of life. Moreover, though intellectually he was 'naturalistic' temperamentally he was not so. No doubt, he looked at life as a spectacle, but sometimes that spectacle became for him so wonderful thrilling and awesome that he could no longer remain detached as a mere spectator.

The spectacle of life, which Bennett presents in his novels, is not drab or diseased. On the other hand he interprets it romantically as 'sweet, exquisite, blissful, melancholy. He never regrets that life has lost its glamour and pines for the past glory of Greece and Rome. On the contrary, he finds sufficient grandeur in the modern everyday life of the Five Towns, his native district, which he has made as famous in English fiction as Hardy's Wessex.

Bennett wrote three most popular novels—*The Old Wives Tale* (1908), *Clayhanger* (1910) and *Riceyman Steps* (1923) which place him high among English novelists. His other novels are *Buried Alive* (1908), and *The Card* (1911), which are first-rate humorous character novels; and *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902), which provides good entertainment. In all these novels, the characters spend most of their time in the small area of the Five Towns—the Staffordshire pottery towns. The readers become familiar not only with the principal streets and buildings and landmarks, but also with the men and women who walked the streets. By an accumulation of carefully chosen details, Bennett gives a life-like quality to his novels. Though ugliness and coarseness are also presented in that otherwise pleasant picture, they, however make it more true to real life.

Though Bennett confines himself to a small area—The Five Towns, he sketches in these novels the social and historical background with considerable skill. Moreover, he illumines his books with a sense of beauty and universal sympathy which are indispensable to creative artist. Above all, he writes in a style which is simply delightful. No doubt, Bennett won the hearts of his readers and became the most popular novelist of his time.

(iii) Henry James (1843-1916)

Henry James, one of the important of elder novelists, was an American naturalised in England. It was, perhaps, because of his foreign origin, that Henry James was untouched by the pessimism of the age, whereas almost all his contemporaries who tried to investigate the human mind showed unmistakable signs of depression. Moreover, his characters have no background, and they move from country to country. The emphasis is more on their mental and emotional reactions.

In his earlier novels such as *The Europeans* (1879), Henry James is chiefly concerned with the clash between the American and European mind. In his next important novel, *What Masie Knew* (1897), he gives us an exquisitely delightful picture of the young American girls brought up in the sentimental Victorian surroundings, and introduced to a modern society entirely devoid of sentiment. His later novels also deal with similar simple situations, pregnant with the most complex psychological effects. *The Golden Bowl* (1905) for instance, deals with the interactions of five characters—the American millionaire and his daughter, the Italian noble whom she marries, her penniless friend who has a love-affair with the Italian, and an elderly friend of both girls. It is the psychological complications both before and after the wedding, of the friends and the father, which provide the whole material of the story. Everything is narrated in a quiet

undertone, and it is the nobility and decency which all the characters preserve in their behaviour, which gives a unity to the novel. The love for antique, beautiful things which the American millionaire exhibits in his character, is the theme of Henry James, two other novels—*The Spoils of Poynton* and *The Sense of the Past*.

The main contribution of Henry James to the technique of the novel is his use of narrative at second hand. Through this method the story unfolds itself completely in the mental plane. The reader is permitted only vague glimpses even of what the character thinks. Thus James transferred to the psychological novel the methods of the detective novel. As a stylist, James aims at expressing the exact shade of emotion or apprehension which he wishes to convey. The later psychological novelists like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, were greatly influenced by Henry James' style as well as the indirect technique of narration.

(iv) Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)

Chief among those who used the technique of Henry James was Conrad, a Pole, who wrote exquisite English. He was gifted with great love for his fellow creatures, and through it he acquired an unusual insight in all that was going on around him. Being a sailor he spent twenty years of strenuous life in the ship or the port. All this experience revealed to him one central problem of human nature, that is, the tension between our higher and lower selves. As his own sailor's life provided him with the memory of mistakes, humiliations and corrections under authority, he took a sort of morbid interest in people whose souls are harassed and tormented by other. Moreover, as a sailor learns the histories of people at second hand, in hotels, clubs etc. Conrad developed the plots of his novels through a third person as if in conversation, in which the voice and personality of the narrator becomes extremely suggestive quite apart from the story he is telling.

Conrad was influenced by Henry James' artistic rectitude and psychological subtlety. He learned the attitude of detachment and an acute observation of environment from the French novelists, Flaubert and Maupassant. From Turgenev and Dostoevsky, Conrad imbibed a cosmopolitan outlook, and also a love for portraying characters who are in conflict with themselves, who are frustrated by their own passions and impulses, and who on account of having missed their life purpose become introverts and find their only outlet in crime. But unlike these great novelists, Conrad had neither the experience nor the opportunity to examine such characters as social types or psychological puzzles. His imagination thrived on glimpses which suggested a mystery. For example, Lord Jim, hero of the novel of same name, seems to feel himself always under a cloud. The themes of Conrad's novels transcend temporary and material interests. Unlike some of the contemporary novelists he scorned to expose social abuses, or laugh at social prejudices. He lived on his past, which on account of the lapse of years invoked in him nobler qualities, especially his capacity for intellectual sympathy and single-heartedness. He was thus always true to himself and to the characters he created.

The masterpieces of Conrad are *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1898), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Typhoon* (1902), *Nostromo* (1904). These series cover an immense range of human activity. We have in them man's conflict with the internal sea, his avarice for fabulous wealth in a mine, and the tribal wars between savages. The characters in them are not refined or fashionable people; they become slaves to their peculiar idiosyncrasies. They have tormented souls, and often border on tragedy. Conrad's greatest merit in these novels lies in his descriptive power by which he, like Milton, can make us see the unseen as he can see it. The result is that the readers get an impression that the scenes are described by one who knows how things happen in the modern world, and this gives a touch of realism to the stories. Moreover, Conrad in all his novels exhibits

the great ideals of impartiality, practical wisdom, sense of fitness and freedom sentimentality, which earned for him the admiration of his English readers.

(v) Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

Kipling's view of life and his range of subjects were rather similar to Conrad's. Like Conrad, he very much admired the strong, brave, silent man, but unlike Conrad's his is the slightly wistful admiration of the intellectual, who has wanted very much to be a man of action, and never succeeded in becoming one. He was born in India and after being educated in England he returned to India at the age of seventeen and became the editor of an Anglo-Indian paper. He derived the material for his early stories—*Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Under the Deodars*, *Soldiers Three* from his experiences in India. Of his novels, the important are *The Light that Failed* (1890), *The Naulakha* (1892), *Captain Courageous* (1897), and *Kim* (1901). *The Light that Failed* is supposed to be the story of an artist who goes blind and loses his love. *The Naulakha* deals with the life of a medical missionary in India, and its moral is that woman's place is in the home. *Captain Courageous* relates the story of a miserable dull boy who is swept overboard a ship, and is then picked by a fishing schooner and restored to his parents. *Kim* is a long story in which a well-defined central character travels through circumstances towards a goal.

Though Kipling wrote about India in his tales and novels, yet he never got very deep into India. His knowledge is very superficial and he looks at everything from the point of the view of British rulers. His main importance as a writer lies in his rich vocabulary and technical excellence. Like Defoe, he borrowed from all great writers, and his opening sentences are the most wonderful in literature.

(vi) John Galsworthy (1867-1933)

Besides being a dramatist, Galsworthy belonged to the front rank of the novelists of his time. He was exactly the contemporary of Arnold Bennet, but unlike him Galsworthy belonged to the upper class, and was most at his ease describing the life of the country gentry or people of inherited wealth living in London. Moreover, unlike Bennet Galsworthy always wrote with a purpose and the reformer in him sometimes got the better of the artist.

Galsworthy found in English society that majority of people clung to old established traditions, while a small minority wanted change. In his novels he tried to hold the balance between opposed ideas or between characters with opposite tendencies. In his preface to *The Island Pharisees*, Galsworthy contrasts these opposite elements in society. His novels which are collectively called *The Forsyte Saga*, all deal with the same theme. In the first novel of this group, *The Man of Property* (1906), he holds the balance between the mechanical mind of Soames Forsyte and the impulsive Irene; in *The Country House* (1907), which is the most attractive of all his novels, between the unimaginative Squire and his perceptive, compassionate wife; in *Fraternity* (1909) and in *The Patrician* (1919) between the tolerant and the advocates of 'an eye for an eye'. In these early novels, Galsworthy stands on the 'middle line', but he enlists the sympathy of the readers for the young in mind, the generous, the rash and the wilful, and on the other hand, he exposes those who are tradition-ridden, and survivors of an old and outworn order.

But the First World War effected a change in the attitude of Galsworthy. He began to regard with

respect and even tenderness those elder men who having formed habits stuck to them rigidly. On the other hand, he lost sympathy with the young, restless troublous spirits in whose life he found no aim. This changed attitude is reflected in his later novels—*In Chancery* (1920), *To Let* (1921), *The White Monkey* (1924), *The Silver Spoon* (1930). In these novels it appears that Galsworthy the pioneer and humanist has been replaced by Galsworthy the moralist and disciplinarian. He himself became a pillar of the institutions he himself criticised in his earlier days. But in spite of this change in his attitude, he gets the credit of awakening the Edwardian England from intellectual lethargy. Moreover, he was a true artist, and a man of generous impulses, who believed that literature has also a social function to fulfil, that is, to reform society.

(vii) E. M. Forster (1879-1970)

Forster belonged to the group of elder novelists of the twentieth century and occupied an exceptional place in the history of the modern novel. Unlike his contemporaries, Forster had never tried to impose on his readers a new creed or astonish him by some technical novelty. Though he was the most popular of all living novelists, yet his production had been small. His last novel—*A Passage to India*, was published in 1924, and after that he did not write any new novel except a few volumes of short stories.

Forster's earliest novel *Where Angels Feared to Tread* appeared in 1905. It was followed by *The Longest Journey* in 1907, and *A Room with a View* in (1908). By this time Forster's reputation had been firmly established. In 1910 appeared *Howards End*, a novel of great power and beauty, which attracted great attention. His last great novel, *A Passage to India*, appeared in 1924. Forster belonged to the tradition of cultural liberalism at its best. In his early years he admired the liberal tradition of Western civilisation, which had given opportunities for leisure and personal relations. But as time passed, he became more and more aware of the darker side of the picture, and his attitude became gravely reflective. When after the First World War, Fascism and Communism came to the forefront in many European countries, he saw that the way of life which he had favoured might be an oasis rather than an enduring possibility. So he put his weight on the side of Parliamentary democracy, which seemed to him to be the only hope in the modern world of stress and strain.

In all Forster's novels there is a conflict between good and evil, between what is cruel, philistine and unperceiving, and the good which is lively, entertaining and sensitive. He wants a harmonious development of man in which there is combination of body and spirit, reason and emotion, work and play, architecture and scenery, laughter and seriousness. He believes that the aim of the civilised life is to enhance the quality of personal relation. This can be achieved not by pomp and power and aggressiveness in the personality, but by gentle and quiescent qualities. Feeling that Europe was degenerating to barbarism. Forster became attracted to the Eastern and especially Indian conception of personality, which is free from aggressive possessiveness.

In all the novels of Forster we find an extraordinary lightness of touch, and a sensitive spirit, but he is never weak or sentimental. Death comes suddenly and unexpectedly to the characters of Forster, because his philosophy is that the contemplation of the idea of death is necessary to the good life. Death destroys a man; the idea of Death saves him. Thus Forster, in spite of his great brilliance of incident and dialogue, basically remains a moralist. But his morality is individual, and his philosophy has a mystical background. He insists on the distinction between the civilised and the barbarous, between those 'who have a room with a view and those who have not.'

Forster possessed gift of rhythmic prose, rarely possessed by a novelist and an ironic spirit which he exercised with the skill of Meredith. As a story-teller he was very powerful. This became clear from his first novel—*Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Here his theme is the contrast of two

cultures—the English and the Italian, with further complications dealing with the contrast of two Italian cultures—idealistic and practical. In *The Longest Journey* (1907) contrast appears again. It is the novel of friendship, and of a bitterly unhappy marriage, of falsehood and shams, and of the good life. In *A Room with a View* (1908) Forster reached his full maturity. It was written in the form of a morality play, and deals with the theme of contrast between those who understand themselves and those who are caught in self-deception. In *Howard's End* (1910) Forster reached his highest achievement as a novelist. It shows the contrast between those who live in a civilised world and those who do not. This novel, which has a great variety in incident and character, is made by Forster as symbol of his plea that it is the people gifted with insight and understanding on whom civilisation really depends. His last great novel—*A Passage to India* (1924) is not technically superior to *Howard's End*, but here Forster has appealed to a very much larger audience, and has given a genuine picture of Indians and of the English during the British rule. Here he emphasised on personal relations, which had been his theme in all his previous novels. The atmosphere of the story is highly fascinating, and here Forster had presented a fine study of those who seek the good life by removing the barriers of civilisation, of race creed and caste. In all his novels Forster had expressed and strongly affirmed his faith in the individual, and it is this fundamental element in his philosophy which has given him a place of exceptional honour among the modern English novelists.

2. The Transitionalists

From the beginning of the First World War new experiments were made in the field of literature on account of the new forces which resulted from the war, and which broke the old tradition. In fiction James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley and Somerset Maugham played the prominent part.

(i) James Joyce (1822-1941)

James Joyce was a novelist of unique and extraordinary genius. He was born in Dublin, but he left Ireland in 1904 to become a European cosmopolitan. Most of his life was spent in retirement in Paris. He was a highly gifted man and was acutely responsive to observed details. By temperament he was an artist and symbolist. He found around him an atmosphere of frustration, aimlessness and disintegration, and thus in order to express himself as a novelist he had to create for himself a different medium. He learnt from the psychologists and biologists of his day that our speech occupies the dominant 'association area' in the brain. It is like a telegraph exchange which verbalises what we experience and hope or fear to experience. Himself a born linguist, Joyce looked upon language as a sixth sense, that machinery through which the human organism reveals its inner processes, an instinctive and therefore truthful comment on experience. He, therefore, thought that to explore the unconscious record of our psychic and psychological adjustments, would be a fascinating study if taken up by a novelist. As it was an unexplored field, and offered a new world for the artist to conquer, Joyce who was in search of a new medium, took it up, and did the pioneering work in the 'stream of consciousness' technique. The important novels of Joyce are *The Dubliners* (1914), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Exiles* (1918) and *Ulysses*. Of these *Ulysses* is his masterpiece. In all these novels, Joyce makes a study of the artist who frees himself from various shackles and ultimately comes to the realisation of his own true personality. In *Ulysses* the artist is shown at one with humanity

through insight into the psychology of speech, our most intimate faculty, in which all men share and have shared. This book is presented as an epic, the counterpart of Homer's *Odyssey*. But whereas Homer dwells on the adventures, and has very little to say about reactions of the adventurer, Joyce lays emphasis on the speeches of the hero, because according to him, speech, not action, is the token of humanity. Our nature reveals itself through our speech, and in order to demonstrate it fully twenty-four hours are quite sufficient, and there is no need of any change of scene.

Unlike great novels, *Ulysses* does not present truth to life. In that way it may be considered as a failure, though a magnificent one, because Joyce here has introduced a new technique, which exercises great intellectual appeal to the thoughtful readers. His is a pioneering work, because here he showed to the novelists to explore a new field—'the stream of consciousness', which was so far hidden from their view. Thus *Ulysses* holds an important place in the history of modern novel.

(ii) Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Virginia Woolf, who was the most distinguished woman writer of her generation, made a far more exciting use of the 'stream of consciousness' technique than James Joyce. She was greatly impressed by *Ulysses*, in which Joyce had found an alternative to the well-made plot and external characterisation. She found that this conception of the inner drama of the mind was fraught with tremendous possibilities, and she decided to exploit it to the fullest extent. This method suited her admirably because having a purely literary background, much of her experience had come from books rather than from actual life. Moreover, like Joyce, she had a fine sense of language, and was gifted with a poetic temperament.

Working under the influence of Joyce, and of the French novelist, Proust, who conceived personality as a continued process of decantation from state to state, Virginia Woolf ignored the outer personality regarding it simply as the 'semi-transparent envelope', through which she could study the 'reality', namely, the thoughts, feelings and impressions as they quickened into life. She herself pointed out, "It's life that matters, nothing but life, the process of discovering the everlasting and perpetual process." She depicts in her novels the stuff of life—the thought, feelings, impressions—steeped in the richest dyes of her imagination and turned into images by her poetic sensibility.

In her first novel—*The Voyage Out* (1913), Virginia Woolf followed the traditional pattern of story—telling. Here she relates the story of a young and inexperienced girl who comes to learn something of life and the relations between the sexes, falls in love and dies of tropical fever before she can realise herself. But the real interest in the novel centres on a vague awareness that there is a meaning in life. Her second novel, *Night and Day* (1919), offers an elaborate long drawn-out study of Katherine Hilberry, an intelligent young woman of the middle class and her relation with her mother and four friends. But the main interest lies not on the theme of love, but on the conversations and introspections in which the chief characters are engaged and which gradually reveal their doubts and hesitations as they face the reality of experience.

Her next novel, *Jacob's Room* (1922), represents her first serious experiment in the stream of consciousness' technique. Here she makes an attempt to construct pictorially the personality of a young Englishman from his infancy to the age of twenty-six, when he is killed in the war. Here the sunlit streams of youth are overshadowed by time. Frustration and death, and fires of love are quenched by human faithlessness. In this novel, Virginia Woolf's quest for the meaning of human experience goes on but the mystery is not yet solved. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) she explores and recreates the personality of a middle-aged woman, Mrs. Dalloway. Here she sets

down the incidents of a day in her life accompanied by visual, mental and emotional impressions. The day in her life is expressed in terms of a long interior monologue, the smooth flowing of the stream of consciousness, which is interrupted by the striking hours of the clock. Virginia Woolf's most successful novel in the new 'stream of consciousness' method is *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Here the scene is set on an unnamed island, and the Lighthouse symbolize in some queer way the 'reality' which is never experienced. Her next novel, *Orlando*, which is liveliest of all, relates in a series of vivid scenes and dramatic climaxes the mental experiences of a poet while writing a prize poem. In *The Waves* (1931) Virginia Woolf returned to a much simpler form of fiction. It is the novel of the generations in which the fortunes of a middle-class family from 1880 to the present time are rather sketchily represented. Her last novel *Between the Acts* (1941), is filled with a sense of her personal failure to wrest meaning from experiences, and the spectacle of the world at war deepens the despair.

(iii) Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

As a novelist Aldous Huxley is concerned with the search for a workable faith in the bewildering world of today, and being pre-eminently an intellectual, whatever faith he finally accepts must be one justifiable by logical argument, not merely by appeals to feeling or tradition. In order to understand the generation that came to maturity between the First and Second World Wars, the writings of Huxley are the best guide. Though he lacks the imaginative power of Lawrence, and the poetic sensitivity of Virginia Woolf, he is better intellectually equipped than either. He represents the small percentage of the people of his generation who have ideas.

In his early novels *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923) and *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), Huxley presented the dangerously attractive doctrine of hedonism, that is, pleasure is the greatest thing in life. The style of these novels has a seductive charm, and here the author fully exploits his scientific and literary vocabulary. The characters in these novels include middle-aged cultured voluptuaries who ask little more of life than readable books, amusing conversation, art and quiet comfortable life. Of these three novels, *Crome Yellow*, which is touched with lyricism possesses the greatest charm. *Antic Hay* which is the liveliest of the three, is a rollicking satire on the life-worshippers. *Those Barren Leaves* has a number of finely-drawn characters, who are easy-going pagans. They take it for granted that the universe has no meaning and therefore the only thing to do is to enjoy oneself and take no thought for the morrow. But there is one exception—Calamy, who takes a serious view of life and believes that there is an inner life within him which should be properly understood.

In his next novel, *Point Counter Point*, Huxley studies the frustration brought about by the conflict between passion and reason. Here he shows that man's foolish attempt to deny the validity of the sense and pretend that he is a spiritual being, has condemned him to wretchedness and self-destruction. There is thus a self-division in human personality. The romantics find that passion divorced from reason makes life a mockery. The rational intellectual with his analytic reason destroys spontaneity and the power to feel and sympathise. Thus there is no escape. The total effect of *Point Counter Point* is one of bitter disillusionment with society.

In *Brave New World* (1932) Huxley accomplishes the combination of scientific materialism and hedonism. Here he searches for a new faith in spiritualism and Eastern philosophy. After presenting a future state dominated by science which has discovered how to produce life in the laboratory, Huxley points out that from such a life emotion has been eliminated, and there is no art, culture, religion, love, ideals, loyalty or personality. Into such a world Huxley introduces the Savage John, who represents the old world of religion and cultural values. He asks the people to revolt against spiritual slavery, but they do not understand him, and he is driven to suicide.

In *Brave New World*, Huxley is clearly on the side of the angels of death so long as he can have the assurance of the reality of the spirit. This respect for the spirit is further developed in his next novel—*Eyless in Gaza* (1939). Here he reveals a deeper concern for the quality of human personality. In the latter part of this book there is a long sermon on non-attachment and the oneness of life. Huxley derived these mainly from Hindu philosophy with its emphasis on non-attachment and universal pity.

This new philosophy is further developed in Huxley's succeeding novels—*Ends and Means* (1938) and *Grey Eminence* (1940). Here he accepts the existence of supramundane reality. He also believes that we are bound to this world of illusion through desire, which springs from self-hood. These ideas are very much akin to the philosophy of the *Bhagwad Gita*. Huxley's last novel—*After Many a Summer*, deals with the contrast between two conceptions of time, that of the mystic and that of the scientist. The biologist believes that eternity is a mere extension of physical life. The mystic, on the other hand, believes that it is through expansion and intensification of consciousness which is a spiritual activity, that mystic eternity can be experienced here and now.

Huxley did not make any notable contribution to the technique of the novel. His novels in fact are essays and conversations strung together on a slender thread of a plot. But he did for the novel what Shaw did for the drama; that is, he made the novel a form capable of propagating great ideas and thus making an appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions of the reader. He turned fiction into an image of the dynamic world of ideas that underlies the changing outward society.

(iv) D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

Lawrence was a great and original writer who brought a new kind of poetic imagination to English fiction. To the man in the street Lawrence is still a great 'sex novelist'. But he himself said, "I, who loathe sexuality so deeply am considered a lurid sexuality specialist' Lawrence was a passionate Puritan, and his sexual idea was high and lofty. He believed that there can be no satisfying union on the physical plane alone. "Once a man establishes a full dynamic communication at the deeper and the higher centres, with a woman, this can never be broken...very often not even death can break it." "If man makes sex itself his goal, he drives on towards anarchy and despair, and his living purpose collapses. Sex is the door. Beyond lies an ultimate, impersonal relationship, free of all emotional complications. Beyond lies the service of God."

If we study the novels of D. H. Lawrence from this point of view, our attitude towards them would be different. His first novel, *The White Peacock* (1911) struck the lyrical note of much of his best work; his second *The Trespasser* (1912), was more melodramatic. With *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence came to his own. In this novel, in which he describes the boy's life in the miner's household and his wonderful relationship with his mother, has been recognised as one of the great pieces of English autobiographical fiction. His next novel *The Rainbow* (1915) starts in much the same way, but there is far more poetry and beauty in it than in *Sons and Lovers*. His next novel, *Woman in Love* (1921), is rather obscene. In *The Lost Girl* (1920) Lawrence's feeling for nature appears at its best. In *Aeron's Rod* (1922) he discusses the theme of male comradeship and leadership, which is continued in the Australian novels, *Kangaroo* (1923) and *The Bay in the Bush* (1924). In *Plumed Serpent* (1926) Lawrence turns his back on everything that man has achieved since he began his long climb out of dust. In his last great novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Lawrence returned to the sex theme.

Regarding the relation between the sexes, Lawrence resents man's subjection to woman, not woman's subjection to man. He believes that it is the modern woman's rebellion against man

which lies at the heart of the disease that is killing civilisation. Unless man is supreme, the relation that he develops with the woman is a filial relation, which amounts to incest.

Regarding the modern civilisation, Lawrence believes that man has cut himself off from the living cosmos, which is God. Without the restoration of that contact society will perish. But this cannot be brought about by the mind, which is at the centre of all this mischief. We should have more trust in our flesh and blood rather than in intellect. Man must “let his will lapse back into his unconscious self”, and arrive at “mindlessness” which is akin to the state of *Smadhi* as explained in Hindu scriptures.

Lawrence was a rebel, and he continued, and perhaps, won the fight for freedom which began with Hardy.

3. The Moderns

Among the moderns the most important novelist is Somerset Maugham (1874), who is equally famous as a dramatist and short story writer. He believes in working in a narrow life and his method is ‘naturalistic’ as that of Maupassant. His important novels are *Liza of Lambath* (1897), *Of Human Bondage* (1915), *Cakes and Ale* (1930) and *The Razor’s Edge*. *Liza of Lambath* is the completest specimen of Naturalistic novel in English. Here he gives us a picture of life which has long ceased to be, but in spite of this the novel remains remarkably fresh. In *Of Human Bondage*, Maugham plays the role of the impartial spectator as a boy and Youngman. Though the views expressed by him in it are outdated, yet it has got its value because here the author expressed his honest, unflinching acceptance of his belief in the meaninglessness of life. It is an autobiographical novel, and contains one of the most moving accounts of loneliness in English fiction. *Cakes and Ale* which is a witty, malicious, satirical comedy, is highly entertaining. In *The Razor’s Edge*, Maugham seeks the meaning of life, like Aldous Huxley, in Hindu philosophy with its emphasis on detachment and renunciation.

J. B. Priestley (1894) is another important novelist, who revived the sane and vital telling of a story in *The Good Companions*, which in spite of its having the defect of being too sentimental, is a great novel in the English tradition. His other novels are *Let the People Sing*, *Daylight on Saturday and Bright Day*.

Though there are a large number of minor modern novelists, the well-known among them are the followings;

- (a) Charles Morgan, who is philosophical in his approach. His important novels are *Portrait in Mirror*, *The Fountain*, *Sparkenbroke*, *The Vayage*, *The Judge’s Story*;
- (b) Clive Staples Lewis, who presents in his novels his ethical and philosophical views. Chief among his books are *Problem of Pain*, *The Screwtapa Letters*, *The Great Divorce* and *Miracles*;
- (c) Herbert Ernest Bates, who has evolved a use of English which will be effective in the development of prose style. His important novels are *A House of Women*, *Spella Ho*, *Fair Stood the Wind for France*, *The Cruise of the Bread Winner*, *The Purple Plain*;
- (d) Frederick Lawrence Greene who shows in his novels the inevitability of the power of human emotions which twist men round the designs they play for their own lives. Behind this is a pattern of life on a structure of religion against which human life is thrown in relief. All Greene’s important novels are related to a life after death, and his views about both the worlds are firm. His well-known novels are *On the Night of the Fire*, *The Sound of Winter*, *a Fragment of Glass*, *Mist on the Waters*;
- (e) In Graham Greene’s novels ‘culture’ is a living force. He believes that man is essentially good, but flamed by evil. His important novels are *The Man Within*, *Stamboul Train*, *England Made Me*, *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*;
- (f) Frank Swinnerton, who gives in his novels a detached but amiable appreciation of people, and

whose treatment of life and its significance are quite satisfying. His well-known novels are *Nocturne*, *The Georgian House* and *The Doctor's Wife Comes to Stay*;

(g) Richard Church, who has been mainly concerned with contemporary life. His important novels are *High Summer*, *The Porch*, *The Room Within*, *The Sampler* and *The Other Side*.

Post-Modern Literature

Understanding Post-modernism

Until the 1920's, the term "modern" used to mean new or contemporary, but thereafter it came to be used for a particular period, the one between the two World Wars (1914-1945). Then came up after about half a century the, magic term, "post-modern," meaning the period after the modern. Now, this sort of naming is certainly problematic. For how many "post" will have to be used for the further periods of literary history to follow? Since our purpose here is limited to writing the "history" of literature, we shall not go on with the issue, leaving the matter for the more qualified critics to give it a thought. Even as it is, there is a problem about the naming of the period between 1945 to 1965, during which period there was no consciousness of what is now called "post-modern". The period of the "post-modern" is said to date from the mid-sixties - some critics push it even further to the nineteen eighties. Dealing with the contemporary is always, of course, a little ticklish, because closer we stand to an object, more details we see of the picture. Once removed by some distance, the outline comes out clearly. As of today, critics have seen historical changes in literary styles from decade to decade, from even author to author. Perhaps we shall have to wait another half a century or so to be able to make greater generalizations about the later half of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, let us accept what has become almost conventional in the historical writing of English literature.

In his essay "The Post-Modern Condition," Krishan Kumar has clarified some confusion about the meaning of post-modernism:

Most theories claim that contemporary societies show a new or heightened degree of fragmentation, pluralism, and individualism.... It can also be linked to the decline of the nation-state and dominant national cultures. Political, economic, and cultural life is now strongly influenced by developments at the global level. This has as one of its effects, unexpectedly, the renewed importance of the local, and a tendency to stimulate sub-national and regional cultures....

Post-modernism proclaims multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies. It promotes the politics of difference! Identity is not unitary or essential, it is fluid and shifting, fed by multiple sources and taking multiple forms (there is no such thing as 'woman' or 'black').

The debate about contemporary society being "post-industrial," "post-modern," "post-structuralist," "post-colonial," "pluralistic," "multi-cultural," "fragmented," etc., goes on, with select pieces of literature used for illustration. The fact of the matter is that the theoretical discussion of the subject has been self-generative, proliferating all over the space, pushing literature to the periphery, leaving not much space for actual human narratives in the privileged domain. As such, it has not proved of much help to the historian of literature who would much rather record the literary happenings than discuss literary theories (unless, of course, the latter has been an integral part of the former). Until the time of the Modernists like Pound and Eliot, literary theory came from the leading literary writers. During the Post-modern period, however, it has come from the non-literary thinkers. Hence the problem of its meaningful application to literary works.

One quickly turns to Frederic Jameson, who seems to have aptly articulated the reader's dilemma about "post-modernism":

I occasionally get just as tired of the slogan 'post-modern' as anyone else, but when I am tempted to regret my complicity with it, to deplore its misuses and its notoriety, and to conclude with some reluctance that it raises more problems than it solves, I find myself pausing to wonder whether any other concept can dramatize the issues in quite so effective and economical a fashion.

In the absence of a more useful concept, therefore, as also because now the concept of post-modernism has come to stay, we have no choice but to go on with it, leaving the problems it has raised to time for whatever solution will become possible tomorrow. But we must know at the same time how and why the term 'postmodernism' has come about and what it has accumulated around itself as a description of certain distinctive characteristics of the post-War period, which is still going on.

The growth of post-modernism, in the words of Charles Jencks, a major theorist of architecture and the originator of the term, has been "a sinuous, even tortuous, path. Twisting to the left and then to the right, branching down the middle, it resembles the natural form of a spreading root, or a meandering river that divides, changes course, doubles back on itself and takes off in a new direction." (*What is Post-Modernism?* London: Academy Editions, 1986, p.2). We may cite and examine any number of definitions (out of the innumerable available to us), post-modernism proves slippery like a snake whose twists and twirls are impossible to pin down. From the very inception of the term in Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1947), the term has accumulated a lot of meanings many of which are mutually contradictory. How then do we go about understanding the term, making sense of all that it has accumulated? As Tim Woods has rightly observed:

The prefix 'post' suggests that any post-modernism is inextricably bound up with modernism, either as a replacement of modernism or as chronologically after modernism. Indeed with *post-modernism*, *post-feminism*, *post-colonialism* and *post-industrialism*, that 'post' can be seen to suggest a critical engagement with modernism, rather than claiming the end of modernism to survive, or it can be seen that modernism has been overturned, superseded or replaced. The relationship is something more akin to a continuous engagement, which implies that post-modernism needs modernism to survive, so that they exist in something more like a host-parasite relationship. Therefore, it is quite crucial to realize that any definition of *post-modernism* will depend upon one's prior definition of *modernism*. (*Beginning post-modernism*. Manchester University Press, 1999, p.6)

Seen from the viewpoint suggested above, one can see how post-modernism is a sort of *knowing* modernism, or a *self-reflective* modernism. In one sense, post-modernism is a modernism which does not agonise itself; it, in fact, does all that modernism does, but only in a mood of celebration, not in a mood of repentance. Rather than lament the loss of the past, the fragmentation of life, and the collapse of civilization as well as selfhood, postmodernism embraces these phenomena as a new form of social existence and behaviour. Thus, the difference between the two is best understood as difference in *mood* or *attitude*, rather than a chronological difference or as different institutions of aesthetic practices.

One core issue of this debate between postmodernism and modernism is the extent to which the Enlightenment values are still valuable. The Romantic philosophers, such as Rousseau, Kant and Hegel, had placed great faith in man's ability to reason as a means of securing our freedom. The modernist philosophers later raised doubts about man's ability to do so. This questioning of the Romantic philosopher's faith is mainly associated with the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard, for whom postmodernism is best understood as an attack on reason. As Sabina Lovibond has observed:

The Enlightenment pictured the human race as engaged in an effort towards universal moral and intellectual self-realization, and so as the subject of a universal historical experience; it also postulated a universal human *reason* in terms of which social and political tendencies could be

assessed as 'progressive' or otherwise.... Postmodernism rejects this picture: that is to say, it rejects the doctrine of the unity of reason. It refuses to conceive of humanity as a unitary subject striving towards the goal of perfect coherence (in its common stock of beliefs) or of perfect cohesion and stability (in its political practice). ("Feminism and Postmodernism", *New Left Review*, 178 (1989):6)

As against the universality of modernism and the long-standing conception of the human self as a subject with a single, unified reason. Postmodernism has pitted *reasons* in the plural, that is fragmented and incommensurable. Post-modern theory is suspicious of the notion that man possesses an undivided and coherent self which acts as the standard of rationality. It no longer believes that reasoning subjects can act as vehicles for historically progressive change. Here, we must also understand the difference between *post-modernism* and *post-modernity*. Post-modernity is used to describe the socio-economic, political and cultural condition of the present-day West; where people are living in post-industrial, 'service-oriented' economies; where human dealings like shopping are mediated through the computer interface, where communication is done through e-mail, voice-mail, fax, teleconference on video-link; where the wider world is accessed via the net; where the choice of entertainment falls on high-speed image bombardment of the pop video, etc. Such conditions of living are often described as "post-modernity".

Postmodernism on the other hand describes only the aesthetic and intellectual beliefs and attitudes often presented in the form of theory.

The term postmodernism, in use roughly since the 1960's, designates cultural forms that display certain characteristics, which include (i) the denial of an all-encompassing rationality; (ii) the distrust of meta-narratives; (iii) challenge to totalizing discourses; in other words, suspicion of discursive attempts to offer a universal account of existence; (iv) a rejection of modernism. Thus, rejecting belief in the infinite progress of knowledge; in infinite moral and social advancement; in rigorous definition of the standards of intelligibility, coherence and legitimacy; postmodernism seeks local or provisional, rather than universal and absolute, forms of legitimation.

INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1724-98)

Extensive and varied debates about *postmodernism* in philosophy and cultural theory notwithstanding, we can concentrate upon the key theorists whose ideas have shaped these debates about the philosophical effects and theoretical impact of the movement after modernism. The philosopher who is said to have put the first post-modern cat among the modernist pigeons was Jean-Francois Lyotard, whose *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) occupies a special place among a set of books which launched an attack on modernity. His argument is for a rejection of the search for logically consistent, self-evidently "true" grounds for philosophical discourse. Instead, he would wish to substitute *ad hoc* tactical manoeuvres as justification for what are generally considered eccentricities. Ultimately, he is suspicious of all claims to proof or truth. As he puts it, "Scientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power," (*Postmodern Condition*, p.46). In his considered view, beneath the facade of objectivity there always is a hidden and dominant discourse of *realpolitik*: "The exercise of terror" (p.64). Thus, any kind of legitimation is nothing but an issue of power. He believes that there is a connection, an intimate one, between power and the rhetoric of truth or value.

Lyotard identifies “an equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth,” and contends that it continually remains a question of: “No money, no proof—and that means no verification of statements and no truth. The games of scientific language become the games of the rich, in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right” (*Postmodern Condition*, p.45). He also demonstrates how utilitarianism is predominant in institutions:

The question (overt or implied) now asked by the professionalist student, the State, or institutions of higher education is no longer ‘Is it true?’ but ‘What use is it?’ In the context of the mercantilization of knowledge, more often than not this question is equivalent to: ‘Is it saleable?’ And in the context of power-growth: ‘Is it efficient?’ ... What no longer makes the grade is competence as defined by other criteria true/false, just/unjust, etc. (*Postmodern Condition*, p.51). From these ideas Lyotard develops a narrative of the difference between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics which does not conform to an historical period. In his argument, Modernism is:

an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace or pleasure....

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself, that which denies itself the solace of good forms...that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.

Thus, to sum up Lyotard’s view of Postmodernism, it is, first of all, a distrust of all metanarratives; it is also anti-foundational. Secondly, when it presents the unrepresentable, it does not do so with a sense of nostalgia, nor does it offer any solace in so doing. Thirdly, it does not seek to present reality but to invent illusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented. Fourthly, it actively seeks heterogeneity, pluralism, and constant innovation. Lastly, it challenges the legitimization of positivist science.

Jean Baudrillard (1929—)

Next to Lyotard, the founder of Postmodernism, comes Jean Baudrillard, another French intellectual who can be called the high priest of Postmodernism. According to Baudrillard, postmodernity is also characterized by “simulations” and new forms of technology of communication. His argument is that whereas earlier cultures depended on either face-to-face communication or, later, print, contemporary culture is dominated by images from the electronic mass media. Our lives today are increasingly being shaped by simulated events and opportunities on television, computer shopping at “virtual stores,” etc. Simulation is in which the images or ‘manufactured’ reality become more real than the real. In his view, the demarcation between simulation and reality implodes; and along with this collapse of distinction between image and reality, the very experience of the real world is lost. Hyper-reality, according to Baudrillard, is the state where distinctions between objects and their representations are dissolved. In that case, we are left with only simulacra. Media messages are prime examples that illustrate this phenomenon. In these messages, self-referential signs lose contact with the things they signify, leaving us witness to an unprecedented destruction of meaning. Advertisements present manipulated images to float a dream world only to trap the viewer for the sale of consumer goods. The manipulated simulation, manufacturing motivated reality, ignores or overlooks the harsh or unpleasant aspects associated with an image—say New York or New Delhi. Consequently, the images of sparkle and light casually erase the urgent socio-economic problems. His conclusion is that TV is the principal embodiment of these aesthetic

transformations, where the implosion of meaning and the media result in “the dissolution of TV into life, the dissolution of life into TV” (*Simulations*, New York, 1983, p.55). Baudrillard was the one who contributed to the *Guardian* of 11 January, 1991, the well-known article “The Gulf War Did Not Take Place.”

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)

Perhaps the most influential person among the Postmodernist intellectuals has been Jacques Derrida, who remains the principal theorist of Deconstruction. The publication of the three of his books in 1967, namely *Writing and Difference*, *Of Grammatology*, and *Of Speech and Phenomena*, laid the foundation of the theory of Deconstruction. Derrida has his precursors in Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1939), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who questioned the fundamental philosophical concepts such as “knowledge”, “truth”, and “identity” as well as the traditional concepts of a coherent individual consciousness and a unitary self. Although notoriously difficult and elusive, Derrida’s views can be summarised as under:

He insists that all Western philosophies and theories of knowledge, of language and its uses, of culture, are LOGOCENTRIC. What he means is that they are centred or grounded on a “logo” (which in Greek signified both “word” and “rationality.”). Using a phrase from Heidegger, he says that they rely on “the metaphysics of presence.” According to him, these philosophies and theories are logocentric in part because they are PHONOCENTRIC; that they, in other words, grant, implicitly or explicitly, logical “priority”, or “privilege”, to speech over writing as the model for analysing all discourse.

Derrida’s explanation for “logo” or “presence” is that it is an “ultimate referent”, a self-certifying and self-sufficient ground, or foundation, which is available to us totally outside the play of language itself. In other words, it is directly present to our awareness and serves to “centre” (that is to anchor, organise and guarantee) the structure of the linguistic system. As a result, it suffices to fix the bounds, coherence, and determinate meanings of any spoken or written utterance within the foundation in God as the guarantor of its validity. Another is Platonic form of the true reference of a general term. Still another is Hegelian “telos” or goal toward which all process strives. Intention, too, is an instance, which signifies something determinate that is directly present to the awareness of the person who initiates an utterance. Derrida questions these philosophies and shows how untenable these premises are. His alternative conception is that the play of linguistic meanings is “undecidable” in terms derived from Saussure’s view that in a sign-system (which is language), both the “signifiers” and the “signifieds” owe their seeming identities, not to their own inherent or “positive” features, but to their differences from other speech sounds, written marks, or conceptual significations.

Derrida’s most influential concept has been that of DIFFERENCE. His explanation for substituting ‘a’ for ‘e’ is that he has done it to indicate a fusion of two senses of the French verb “différer,” which are (I) to be different, and to defer. Thus, meanings of words are relational (in relation to other words). They are also contextual. In any case, there are no absolute meanings, nor are the meanings of words stable, as words always defer their meanings. Any utterance, therefore, oral or written, can be subjected to any number of interpretations, depending upon the reader’s ability to “play” with the various possible meanings each word is capable of yielding. This view of language and meaning has had great impact on both literary criticism as well as literary writing. Postmodernist texts as well as interpretations decentre and subvert the conventional or settled meanings and values of any given story or situation, concept or construction, system or structure.

Some of Derrida's sceptical procedures have been quite influential in deconstructive literary criticism as well as in feminist, postcolonial, and poststructuralist creative compositions. One of these is to subvert the innumerable binary oppositions—such as man/woman, soul/body, right/wrong, white/black, culture/nature, etc.—which are essential structural elements in logocentric language. In Derrida's view, as he shows, there is a tacit hierarchy implied in these binaries, in which the term that comes first is privileged and superior, while the one that comes second is derivative and inferior. What Derrida does is to invert the hierarchy, by showing that the secondary term can be made out to be derivative from, or a special case of the primary term. He does not, however, stop at that; rather, he goes on to destabilise both hierarchies, leaving them in a state of undecidability.

Derrida had not thought of Deconstruction as a mode of literary criticism. He had only suggested a way of reading all kinds of utterances so as to reveal and subvert the presuppositions of Western Metaphysics. But more than any other discipline of knowledge it is literary criticism which has adopted his theory of Deconstruction as a critical tool of literary analysis. His most ardent followers have, however, been in America, not in England. The most influential of these has been Paul de Man whose *Allegories of Reading* (1979) was the earliest application of Derrida's concepts and procedures. Then came Barbara Johnson, a student of de Man, whose work, *The Critical Difference* (1980), carried the task of appropriating Derrida to literary criticism still further. Later, J. Hillis Miller, once a leading American critic of the Geneva School, converted to Deconstruction and contributed to the theory's practical application his *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982), *The Linguistic Movement: From Wordsworth to Stevens* (1985), and *Theory Then and Now* (1991).

Michael Foucault (1926-84)

As he himself described, Foucault was a “specialist in history of systems of thought”, although we often call him a French philosopher and historian. Even though he wrote on a variety of subjects ranging from science to literature, his works that have influenced the course of Postmodern literature and literary criticism include *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *The Order of Things* (1966), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), *History of Sexuality* (1976), *Power/Knowledge* (1980), “What is an Author?” (1977), and *Madness and Civilization* (1961). In the book listed last, Foucault explores how madness is socially constructed by a wide variety of DISCOURSES that give rise to collective attitudes or mentalities defining insanity. Its basic thesis is that, like the lepers of the Middle Ages, the mad are excluded in a gesture that helps to construct modern society and its image of reason.

Foucault's major works examine the question why, in any given period, it is necessary to think in certain terms about madness, illness, sexuality or prisons. By clear implication he seems to ask if it is possible to think about those topics in different ways. The effect of Foucault has been to view with distrust all that has been passing in the name of essentials, universals, or natural, and take all these as social constructs reflecting the values of different cultures and societies.

In the history of philosophy, Foucault's work falls within the tradition established by Nietzsche, from whom he adopts the technique of “Genealogy” and the insight that the search for knowledge is also an expression of a will to power over others. For Foucault knowledge is always a form of power. He takes even psychiatry and mental health as new technologies that categorize certain forms of social and sexual behaviour as deviant in order to control them. The modern psychiatrist assumes the role of medieval priest, seeking confessions, imposing the values of the empowered. His thesis is that power is not something that one seizes, holds, or loses, but a network of forces in which power always meets with resistance. These views have

led to the challenging of all sorts of political, social, and gender constructs, taken as networks of power to repress the weak, the individual, the disadvantaged, the female, etc. Although Foucault's name was associated with structuralism and the controversial theme of Barthe's catchy title, *DEATH OF THE AUTHOR* (1968) and *DEATH OF MAN* (1966), his true concern remained with the formation and limitations of systems of thought. Although made an icon of *QUEER THEORY*, Foucault's contribution has been valuable to all the Postmodern critical approaches including the Feminist, Postcolonial, Poststructuralist, etc.

Roland Barthes (1915-80)

A French literary critic and theorist Barthes has been quite influential among the Postmodernist writers and critics. His principal concern, despite his varied writings, remains with the relationship between language and society, and with the literary forms that mediate between the two. The idea is that no literary composition can be studied in isolation, being one of the practices of a culture, an expression of society's ruling discourse. Hence, study of a text will be useful if it is done in relation to other contemporary practices of the same culture—even fashions of dress, cigarette smoking, or styles of wrestling. Cultural Studies, one of the aspects of Postmodernist critical theory, although founded by Richard Hoggart (*The Uses of Literary*, 1957) and Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society 1780-1950*, 1958), owes a good deal to the writings of Barthes as well.

Barthes's famous work *Mythologies* (1957), as well as his very first essay on writing in 1953, demonstrates that no form or style of writing is a free expression of an author's subjectivity, that writing is always marked by social and ideological values, that language is never innocent. A sense of the need for a critique of forms of writing that mask the historical-political features of the social world by making it appear 'natural', or inevitable, provides the impulse behind the analysis of *Mythologies*. Barthes's other books include *Elements of Semiology* (1964), *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975), and "The Death of the Author" (1968), later included in *Image-Music-Text* (1977) ed. By Stephen Heath. In his essay mentioned last, Barthes pleads for abandoning the conventional author-and-works approach in favour of an anthropological and psycho-analytical reading of canonical texts. His insistence is that literature as well as literary criticism, as well as language itself, is never neutral, and that the specificity of literature can be examined only within the context of a semiology or a general theory of signs. His ideas about language and author and their relation with social world promoted cultural studies as well as reader-response theory.

Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

A French psychoanalyst, also most controversial since Freud, Lacan has had an immense influence on the literary theory of our time, as well as on philosophy, feminism and psychoanalysis. Most of his important writings are included in his *Ecrits* (1966). His writings, full of allusion to Surrealism, contend that the unconscious is structured like a language. His notion of the Fragmented Body clearly shows his debt to surrealism. He elaborates an immensely broad synthetic vision in which psychoanalysis appropriates the findings of philosophy, the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, and the linguistics of Saussure. He also heavily relies on Jakobson's work of Phoneme analysis and Metaphor/Metonymy. He defines language as a synchronic system of signs which generates meaning through their interaction. In other words,

meaning insists in and through a chain of signifiers, and does not reside in any one element. For him there is never any direct correspondence between signifier and signified, and meaning is therefore always in danger of sliding or slipping out of control.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975)

A Russian literary theorist, Bakhtin has been a great influence on the contemporary theory of Discourse analysis. He is best known by his works named *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986), *Rabelais and his World* (1968), and *Problems of Dostoevski's Poetics* (1984). In these studies, there is a critique of Russian Formalism and an outline of his characteristic theme of "dialogism." He criticizes Formalism for its abstraction, for its failure to analyse the content of literary works, and for the difficulty it finds in analysing linguistic and ideological changes. This critique is then extended to linguistics, especially the Saussurean. In his view, the purely linguistic approach to both language and literature is highly limited in scope. It tends to isolate linguistic units or literary texts from their social context, having no analysis to offer of the relations that exist between both individual speakers and texts. Bakhtin's proposal is for a historical poetics or a "translinguistics" which can show how all social intercourse is generated from verbal communication and interaction, and that linguistic signs are conditioned by the social organization of the participants. In his later work, Bakhtin develops his historical poetics into a theory of "speech genres" or "typical forms of utterances." He claims that the weakness of Saussure's linguistics is that it focuses solely on individual utterances and is unable to analyse how they are combined into relatively stable types of utterance. Although his speech theory remains incomplete, Bakhtin was ambitious to apply it to everything from proverbs to long novels by analysing their common verbal nature.

With these major intellectual influences in the background, the Postmodern literature in the second half of the twentieth century grew to show greater impact of the new ideas on the continent and in America, with comparatively much less impact on the literature of the British islands. Mostly used as a periodising concept to mark literature in the later half of the twentieth century, Postmodernism is also used, as we have earlier discussed, as a description of literary and formal characteristics such as linguistic play, new modes of narrational self-reflexivity, and referential frames within frames. Going chronologically and genrewise, we shall try to explore the nature and extent of Postmodernism the literature in Britain absorbed and reflected during the period beginning with the 1950's.

Post-War Novel

After Hitler's devastation of Britain, the country was literally in ruins, torn apart by years of bombardment. "The landscape of ruins must also be recognized as forming an integral part of much of the literature of the late 1940's and the early 1950's. It was a landscape which provided a metaphor for broken lives and spirits." One of the best expressions in fiction of this ruin and its implications is a novel, *The World My Wilderness* (1950), by a female novelist of the post-War period, named Rose Macaulay (1881-1958). The novel's London is not only post-War but also post-Eliotic: "Here you belong; you cannot get away, you do not wish to get away, for this the maquis that lies about the margins of the wrecked world, and here your feet are set... 'Where are the roots that clutch, what branches grow out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, you cannot say, or guess....' But you can say, you can guess, that it is you yourself, your own roots, that clutch

the stony rubbish, the branches of your own being that grow from it and nowhere else.” Macaulay was, of course, not the only one to view the post-War period as one requiring the reassemblage of fragments of life and meaning. Another female novelist of the period, Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973), also gave powerful expression to the post-War experience in her *The Death of the Heart* (1938), *Look at all those Roses* (1941), *The Demon Lover* (1945), *The Heat of the Day* (1949), and *The Little Girls* (1964). Equally important among the post-War novelists was another female writer, Rebecca West (the pen name of Cecily Isabel Fairfield, 1892-1983), whose *The Fountain Overflows* (1956) and *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) depict the same devastated world. With her pen-name derived from an Ibsen play, and actively involved in the feminist cause, West wrote on political climate of the cold-war era.

Graham Greene

A major novelist of the postmodern or contemporary period was Graham Greene (1904-1991), who frequently gave direct expression to his pessimism, such as “For a writer, success is always temporary,” or “Success is only a delayed failure,” which he made in his autobiographical memoir *A Sort of Life* (1977). He emerged a popular writer with his very first novel, *The Comedians* (1965). He was a staunch anti-imperialist who resented the rising imperialism of America and despised the crumbling empire of Britain. He remained a Roman Catholic since 1926 when he was admitted to the Roman Church. Almost all of his work is haunted by the themes of a wounded world of the European colonies in Africa or the American imperialism in Latin America, a gloomy sense of sin and moral failure, and a commitment to “others” and rebels. Although Greene produced as many as twenty six novels, those necessary to know are *The Power and the Glory* (1940), focused on the character of a Whisky-priest in anti-clerical Mexico; *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) and *The End of the Affair* (1951) both of which are located in the twilight, blitzed London; *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), focused on the flyblown, rat-infested, and war-blitzed West-African colony; *The Quiet American* (1955), set in Vietnam, and *Our Man in Havana* (1955), set in Cuba, both expose the American imperialism. All of these novels present a grim picture of the world that emerged in the post-War period.

Anthony Powell

Another notable novelist of the period was Anthony Powell, whose sequence of 12 novels collectively named *A Dance to the Music of Time* “is neither a fictionalized war memoir, nor a prose elegy for the decline and fall of a ruling class. However, as a chronicle of British upper-middle-class life, set between the 1920’s and 1950’s, it necessarily takes the disasters, disillusion, inconveniences, and changes of a society and its war in its leisurely and measured stride.”

NOVELISTS OF THE 1950’S

Samuel Beckett

The most important writer who emerged in mid-50’s was Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), who was an Irish by birth but remained in Paris and wrote in French much of his dramatic and fictional work. Although better known as dramatist, because of his radical innovations, his contribution to

the English novel is no less significant.

His famous trilogy was published in London in 1959, whose English titles are *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*. The trilogy proved to be the most innovative fiction of the fifties. Another, and early, notable work of Beckett was a volume of interconnected short stories put together under the title *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934), in which he had already presented the typical, unconventional, absurdist hero. His novels, as well as plays, have been described by several readers of repute as illustrations of Sartre's Existentialism. For a summing up of Beckett's concerns in his work, an excerpt from Martin Esslin would do more justice to the novelist than any fresh attempt:

The search for man's own identity—not the *finding* of the true nature of self which for Beckett will remain ever elusive, but the raising of the problem of identity itself, the confrontation of the audience with the existence of its own problematical and mysterious condition; this fundamentally is the theme of Beckett's plays, novels, prose, sketches, and poems.

Such a quest, despairing and nihilistic as it may appear (for at the center of being there is a void, nothingness) is nevertheless a very lofty enterprise — for it is totally fearless, dedicated and uncompromising; it is, in the last resort, a religious quest in that it seeks to confront the ultimate reality.

Hawrence Durrell

True to the spirit of Postmodernism, Beckett's novels could not be interpreted as 'representations' of real life'. In his work the text is maintained as an object of questioning, the working of codes, rather than a series of situations and allusions to a subtext which the reader or audience ought to feel. One can feel an infinite openness (about his texts) to significance and a space for perpetual deferment of any conclusive meaning. Beckett's experiments with the technique of the novel, and with the dis-integration of its conventions, were followed, though not as ruthlessly, by some of the writers of popular fiction, such as Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990). Durrell, incidentally, was born in India of families who had been on the subcontinent for several generations. He is best known by what is called "Alexandria Quartet" - *Justine* (1957), *Balthazar* (1958), *Mountolive* (1958), and *Clea* (1960).

William Golding

A novelist better known than Durrell was William Golding (1911-1993), who came into prominence with the publication of his *Lord of the Flies* (1954). Deriving his title indirectly from Milton (Beelzebub, one of the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*, is called the lord of the flies), Golding sets his novel on a desert island. Here lands on the island a marooned party of boys from an English cathedral choir-school. They gradually deteriorate from their genteel tradition which shaped them into barbarism ending with murder. The novel is actually a moral allegory, making a systematic undoing of R.M. Ballantyne's adventure story, *The Coral Island* (1857). Golding reverses the Victorian tale of optimism into a post-Darwinian pessimism. In a sort of deconstruction of the Victorian novel, an interrogation of the conventional values and attitudes, Golding's novel reflects the spirit and mood of Postmodernism. It measures up to John Barth's conception of the contemporary 'literature of exhaustion'. Golding's other novels include *The Inheritors* (1964), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964), and *The Pyramid* (1967). His *Darkness Visible* (1979) is once again dependent for its title on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where the blind epic poet uses the expression for Hell. The novels that followed in Golding's later life include *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987), *Fire Down Below* (1989), and *The Paper Men* (1984). Of these *Rights of Passage* has been most successful. Its hero, Edmund Talbot, faces the problems of "too much understanding" and tries to comprehend

“all that is monstrous under the sun.” In a sense, the central concern in Golding’s fiction remains what T.S. Eliot puts down in his *Gerontion*: “After such knowledge what forgiveness.” There is, thus, in the post-War novel an exploration of the darker regions of human psyche and the nothingness of human existence, pessimism being the keynote in the fiction of the fifties.

Angus Wilson

While there has been a continuation of modernist experimentation with the narrative technique and novel’s form among the writers of the fifties, there has also been a reaction, rather strong, against experimentalism. A leading practitioner of this reaction was Angus Wilson (1913-1991), who deliberately tried to restore the traditional Victorian narrative style. Adopting the realism of Zola and comic sense of Dickens, he produced a large body of fiction, including *The Wrong Set* (1949), which is a collection of short stories, and *Such Darling Dodos* (1950), yet another volume of stories. Among his novels, the better-known are *Hemlock and After* (1952), *Setting the World on Fire* (1980), *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot* (1958), *Last Call* (1964), *Old Men at the Zoo* (1961) and *As If By Magic* (1973). His best-known novels, however, remain *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956) and *No Laughing Matter* (1967). *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* has become a sort of classic. Panoramic like a Victorian novel, it is focused on an archaeological fraud whose ramifications ruin the ageing historian, Gerald Middleton.

WOMEN NOVELISTS

Iris Murdoch

The most philosophic among the novelists of the fifties was, of course, Iris Murdoch (1919-1999), although she followed the conventional novel form. Starting with her study of Sartre, *Sartre, Romantic Rationalist* (1953), she produced a large number of novels, which clearly reflect her stance of anti-empirical view of mankind. Her moral philosophy is best illustrated by her *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970) and *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992). Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy* has been one of the influences on her, to which she pays homage in her own early novels *Under the Net* (1954) and *Bruno’s Dream* (1969). Her other novels include *They Flight from the Enchanter* (1955), *The Sea* (1978), *The Philosopher’s Pupil* (1983), *The Bell* (1958), *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), *The Black Prince* (1973), *The Time of the Angels* (1966), *The Sand Castle* (1957), *A Severed Head* (1961), *An Unofficial Rose* (1962), *The Unicom* (1963), *The Italian Girl* (1964), *The Red and The Green* (1965), *The Nice and The Good* (1968), *An Accidental Man* (1971).

Murdoch’s article, “Against Dryness,” argues that we are living in an age (the post-modern) in which “we are left with far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality,” in which the relation between art and morality has dwindled “because we are losing our sense of form and structure in the moral world itself.” Like the modernists, she seems firmly to believe in the salvaging power of art. As she argues in *The Sovereignty of Good*, Good art, unlike bad art, unlike ‘happenings,’ is something pre-eminently outside us and resistant to our consciousness. We surrender ourselves to its *authority* with a love which is unpossessive and unselfish. Art shows us the only sense in which the permanent and incorruptible is compatible with the transient; and whether representational or not it reveals to us aspects of our world which our ordinary dull dream—consciousness is unable to see. Art pierces the veil and gives sense to the notion of a reality which lies beyond appearance; it exhibits virtue in its true guise in the context of death and chance.

This view of art and life, of man and age, is reflected in all her fictional work, although not equally powerfully in each. Her *The Time of the Angels* is still rated by some as her best,

although there is no critical unanimity in her case.

Muriel Spark

Another female novelist of the fifties, this prolific decade, was Muriel Spark (b. 1918), who also shares with Murdoch and Golding, a firm commitment to moral issues in relation to fictional form. One of her early novels is *The Comforters* (1957), which focuses on the life of a neurotic woman writer, who is working on a project, *Form in the Modern Novel*, having difficulty with her chapter on realism. This writer, Caroline Rose, is determined to write a novel about writing a novel. Spark also did her biography entitled *Curriculum Vitae* (1992). She not only made a critical study of Mary Shelly (*Child of Light*), but also wrote some novels in the Gothic style, namely *Memento Mori* (1959), *The Ballad of Lekham Rye* (1960), and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). However, the novel that made her famous is *The Driver's Seat* (1970), which deals with the first-person account of a woman with a death-wish, who goes to the extreme of plotting circumstances of her own violent murder. Among her later novels figure *Not To Disturb* (1971), which has its opening quotation from *The Duchess of Malfi*, and *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974), making an investigative study of a convent, but avoiding all Gothic temptations. All in all, the focus in her novels, too, remains, just as in the novels of her many a contemporary, on the irrational and darker side of human nature, reflecting the mood and spirit of postmodernism. A not-so-well-known novelist of the 1950's was Leslie Poles Hartley (1895-1972). Besides a trilogy called *Eustace and Hilda* (1944-1947), she has left behind some novels with catchy titles, such as *The Hireling* (1957), focused on class conflict, and *The Go-Between* (1953), where the novelist's discomfiting feeling about contemporary society becomes manifest.

ANGRY YOUNG MEN

The novelists of the 1950's that we have discussed so far did not constitute any group or movement. They might have had broad similarities among them shared by most post-War or post-modern writers, but they did not have any common manifesto or ideology to bind them into a homogeneous group. There was, however, during the same prolific fifties, a definite group of writers who consciously and deliberately followed an agenda in their novels (in some cases, also plays). This group got the brand-name of Angry Young Men of the 50's. It was John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (performed in 1956, published in 1957) which supplied the tone and title for the movement. This group of writers, mostly novelists, represented the typical mood and flavour of the decade. These "angry young men" belonged to the middle or lower-middle sections of society, educated not in Oxford or Cambridge, but in what are called Red-brick universities. They had not experienced the War, and were not bitten by the bug of absurdism. Their anger was directed against the old establishment, the liberal-human, largely upper-middle class, Bloomsbury intelligentsia (Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, Lytton Strachey) symbolized by *Horizen*. The movement was part social, part cultural. However, the anger they displayed in their novels (and plays) was not of a very serious order. It was not the kind of anger we associate with D.H. Lawrence or Wyndhan Lewis, which emanated from a firm commitment to an ideology or morality. The anger or protest of these young men of the 50's was rather of a lower order, closer to an ordinary disgruntlement. Actually, what they demanded was social and cultural accommodation among the privileged, an extension of upper-class comforts in privileged jobs, etc. Once that was extended to them, the anger was soon subsided. No wonder the movement did not last beyond the decade of the 1950's.

Kingsley Amis

Among these “angries” Kingsley Amis (1922-1995) is considered the leading novelist. His *Lucky Jim* (1954) provides not only a catchy title but also an effective metaphor for the protesting young men. It is also a campus novel, which exposes the academic racket in the British universities, their social pretensions and pseudoculture that so often accompany it. Amis went on exploring further the various dimensions of the aesthetic cant and snobbery in his subsequent novels, such as *I Like It Here* (1958) and *The Uncertain Feeling* (1955), *One Fat Englishman* (1963). Jim Dixon, the hero of *Lucky Jim*, remains a representative angry young man of the 1950's.

John Wain

Another “angry” novelist of the decade was John (Barrington) Wain (1925--), whose *Hurry On Down* (1953) constructs a more careful portrait of the Angry Young Man. Like other protagonists of the 1950's, this one is actually an anti-hero, who wishes to opt out of the society he despises and yet stays in it without any commitments. In the categorization made by Raymond Williams (in his *The Long Revolution*; 1961) of the forms of protest, the Angry Young Man is a tramp who only wishes his individual rights and freedom without responsibilities. As Charles Lumbey, the protagonist of *Hurry on Down*, reflects at the end of the novel, “Neutrality; he had found it at last. The running fight between himself and society had ended in a draw.” The novels by Wain include *The Contenders* (1952), *A Travelling Woman* (1959), *Strike the Father Dead* (1962), and the short stories *Nuncle* (1960) - the Fool in *King Lear* calls Lear ‘nuncle’.

John Braine

Still another “angry” novelist of the group is John Braine (b. 1922), who produced, in the most productive decade, his popular *Room at the Top* (1957), with Joe Lampton as its hero, and *Life at the Top* (1962), both of which expose the emptiness of upper-class life. Depicting the no-holds-bar race for material prosperity and social status, these novels show that when one has made it to the top, he only finds himself trapped and lonely, conscious of the social contempt he has earned. The same theme is elaborated in his *Stay With Me Till Morning* (1970), depicting again the desperate quest of the rich for excitement in sensuous pleasures of sex and social gatherings or business deals. Similarly, the need of such a lot for pretending eternal youth and reassure oneself by promiscuity is at the heart of his *The Crying Game* (1968), *The Queen of a Distant Country* (1972), and *Waiting for Sheila* (1976).

Alan Sillitoe

Another significant novelist of the period is Alan Sillitoe (b. 1928), whose plots are generally placed in Nottingham. He depicts the working-class characters, still haunted by the Great Depression of the 1930's. He is best known by his *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), *The Loneliness of the Long-Distant Runner* (1959), *The Death of William Posters* (1966), *A Start in Life* (1970), and *The Widower's Son* (1976).

Anthony Burgess

Yet another notable writer of this terrific decade - perhaps, no other decade in the history of the English novel can claim such a huge crop of fiction - was Anthony Burgess (1917-1993). Making use of his long stay in Malaysia, he produced his *Malayan Trilogy* (1956-1959), which, like *A Passage to India* or *The Raj Quartet*, depicts life in that country at the end of the colonial regime with emphasis on relationships between different races. What made him famous,

however, were his later novels, namely *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), *The Wanting Seed* (1962), and *The Clock-work Testament* (1974). His novels are full of teenage violence and horror, with farcical humour - an example of dark comedy. There is in all the narratives a hovering sense of doom and nothingness (*nadsat*). Thus, this group of writers, though not quite homogeneous, shared some of their antipathies and a few of their sympathies with each other; they certainly shared a common sensibility which established itself as a new voice of the post-war literary world. Their little narratives and dark humour reflect the typical mood and spirit of Postmodernism.

WOMEN NOVELISTS IN LATER DECADES

Doris Lessing

The broadening of opportunities for women paved way for some of the radical social changes in the later decades of the twentieth century. A "New Morality" emerged to challenge the established values and perceptions of gender, sexuality, marriage, etc. "New patterns of women employment, especially in the professional sector, made a rapid stride after the War was over in 1945. One of the most inspiring books in the feminist movement came from Germaine Greer (b. 1939), namely *The Female Eunuch* (1970), which is, in her own words, a part of the second wave in which "ungenteel middle-class women are calling for revolution." One of the male characters in Doris Lessing's novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962) echoes the phrase Greer has used here: "The Russian revolution, the Chinese Revolution - they're nothing at all. The real revolution is women against men." For both of these women writers that revolution was to be perceived in the female sensitivity to the unfair or highly limited roles of women, to their restricted representation in society and its literature.

Lessing's career as writer had begun in East Africa with the novels she had written about the growth of political awareness among black people and the white settlers. She had experienced the colonial situation in that part of Africa. Her monumental work in five volumes, *Children of Violence* (1952-69), focuses on the growing political involvement, and the subsequent disillusion, of Martha Quest. This English woman in East Africa is shown growing from childhood to youth to age, experiencing the acute and complex problems of race and class. It is an epic sequence covering, in a sense, the entire history of the twentieth-century world. Lessing calls her fiction, and its type, "inner space fiction," by which she means a fiction that has methodically moved in a different direction from conventional realism. *The Four-Gated City* (1969), the last of the sequence, is an illustration of the type. The significance of her central work, *The Golden Notebook*, lies in relating her concept of mental fragmentation to the disintegration of fictional form. Here woman's creativity is to act as instrument of freedom for the fair sex. As the novel's heroine, Anna Wulf, reflects, "women's emotions are all still fitted for a kind of society that no longer exists."

Angela Carter

Another notable woman novelist of the period was Angela Carter (1940-1992), whose unconventional essay on pornography, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979), pleads that even pornographic fantasy could be legitimized in literature if it could be pressed into the service of women and if women could cease to be considered as mere commodities. She is best known by her novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and the two volumes of Gothic tales, *Fireworks* (1974) and *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Her novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972), as the title itself suggests, has a male protagonist. Her later work includes two major theatrical novels, *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and

Wise Children (1991).

Margaret Drabble

Perhaps the most representative of the later twentieth century novelists in England is Margaret Drabble (b. 1939), whose very first novel, *A Summer Bird-Cage* (1963) registered a new presence. It deals with two sisters of the “new” consciousness, who are gossipy, sexually emancipated, university educated, fond of parties. Still better than her first novel is *Jerusalem the Golden* (1967), which, too, focuses on the same themes, but comes out more assured and less jerky. Her most artful novel of the 1970’s is, however, *The Ice Age* (1977), which brings out a sharper picture of contemporary English society. Her favourite themes include corruption, IRA bombs, broken marriages, alienations of upward social mobility, etc. The feminist crusade of these women writers is in tune with the theory of Postmodernism.

OTHER NOVELISTS IN LATER DECADES

John Fowles

Perhaps the last of the well-known novelists of the twentieth century is John Fowles (1917-1993), who made a mark with his first novel, *The Collector* (1963), which is a sort of post-Freudian fantasy. The narrator, protagonist is a rather repressed, butterfly collecting clerk, an anti-hero. His kidnapping an art-student expresses his repression, making the release of sexual energy as a form of liberation. A similar theme of psychic and sexual liberation is also dealt with in his next novel, *Mantissa* (1982).

The Magus (1966, revised in 1977) is also on the same theme. His most popular novel, and most admired, has been *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969), where again juxtaposition of repression and release is set up. The pair of central characters defy all taboos and conventions of social morality. We can see reflected in his work the influence of Lacanian psychology, which is post-Freudian.

Fraser And Farrell

There are some novelists whose work is of special interest to the Indian readers, because it relates the Indian situation during the British Raj. George Macdonald Fraser (b. 1925) and James Gordon Farrell (1935-1979) are among these writers. The Victorian India has been of great interest to many of these English novelists who had the opportunity to experience life on the Indian sub-continent. Fraser has to his credit ten volumes of the so-called “Flashman Paper,” dealing with the imagined career of the ex-villain of *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*. These volumes appeared between 1969 and 1994. The various themes in these volumes concern the Afgan war of 1842, the British acquisition of Punjab, and the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Less provocative than Fraser’s work is Farrell’s *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), which deals with the Indian Mutiny or Sepoy Rebellion, as the British named it from their side. On our side, the event is called the first War of Independence. The perspective brought upon the events is, of course, that of the colonial outfit. It does, however raise questions about the British imperial mission in the colonies. Fraser and Farrell do not compare, in terms of art, with E.M. Forster, whose novel on India is not impaired by any narrow outlook. Here, there is lack of depth of understanding of characters as well as the situation. Farrell’s unfinished novel about Shimla, *The Hill Station* (1981), is the poorest of his work.

Paul Scott

Of all the British novelists who wrote about India, Paul Scott's "Raj Quartet" offers the most comprehensive treatment of the subject. Paul Scott (1920-1978) wrote his quartet (a sequence of four novels) between 1966 and 1975. Collectively called the *Raj Quartet*, the sequence consists of *The Jewel in the Crown* (1966), *A Day of the Scorpion* (1968), *The Towers of Silence* (1971), and *A Division of the Spoils* (1975). The period the quartet covers relates to World War II years and the subsequent phase leading to India's Independence. Scott's last novel, *Staying On* (1977), also deals with India, covering the post-Independence period. It shows how those who chose to stay on found themselves misfits in the changed scenario. Scott may not be as great as Forster, but he is decidedly superior to Fraser and Farrell. As a consequence of the Postcolonial critical theory, the work of these novelists, along with the work of similar writers, such as Forster and Kipling, has now been interpreted from the Postmodernist perspective.

POST-WAR POETRY

Surrealism

Between the Auden group of poets of the 1930's and the Movement poets of the 1950's, there are some poets of the forties who do not constitute any group or movement. One thing common between them is that they do not continue with the experimental poetry of the 1920's, nor the Poetry of Commitment of the 1930's, the decade of Depression. In the later years of 1930's there emerged the movement of Surrealism in Europe,—including England. Primarily related to painting, Surrealism influenced the art of poetry also. One way of defining Surrealism is to see it in relation to Romanticism. One can say that Romanticism intensified becomes Surrealism. Another way to define it is to relate it to Realism. In that case Surrealism is seen as Super-Realism. For, after all, dreams, nightmares, daydreams, emotionalism, irrationalism are also a part of "real" life that we live, and it is these very aspects of life that constitute the stuff of Surrealism. In England, it was introduced in poetry by David Gascoyne (b. 1916), who also wrote *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (1935).

Dylan Thomas

A prominent poet associated with Surrealism was the Anglo-Welsh Dylan Thoman (1914-1953), although some decline to do that. Andrew Sanders is one such critic. His contention is: "As his ambitious and uneven first volume, *Poems* (1934), suggests, Thoma had begun to mould an extravagant and pulsatingly rhetorical style before he became aware of the imported innovations of international Surrealist writing. He was, however, decidedly a poet who thought in images. If there is a kinship evident in Thomas's verse it is with the 'difficulty,' the emotionalism, the lyric intensity, and the metaphysical speculation (though not the intellectual vigour) of the school of Donne." One of the popularly known poems of Thomas is "The Force that through the Green Fuse drives the Flower," considered an example of his pantheism and mysticism; also an example of Blakean symbolism, such as the following:

And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

Another well-known poem of his is "Light Breaks Where No Sun Shines," which is typical of his "obscurity" because his symbolism tends to be personal and private, such as the following:

Light breakes on secret lots,
On time of thought where thoughts smell in the rain;
When logics die,

The secret of the soil grows through the eye,
And blood jumps in the sun;
Above the waste allotments the dawn halts.

Thomas and other poets of the forties are called neo-romantics, having greater affinity with Blake, Yeats, Lawrence, etc., than with Eliot or Auden. Some other poems of Thomas to remember are “The Hunchback in the Park,” “After the Funeral,” “Over Sir John’s Hill,” “Fern Hill,” and “Do not go gentle into that good night.”

As Karl Shapiro has said, “Thomas is in somewhat the same relation to modern poetry that Hopkins was to Tennyson and the Victorians; this is a relation of anti-magnetism. Thomas resisted the literary traditionalism of the Eliot school; he wanted no part of it. Poetry to him was not a civilizing manoeuvre, a replanting of the gardens; it was a holocaust, a sowing of the wind.” Thomas is also known for his catchy, parodic, title *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940), his book of autobiographical short stories. Unfortunately, he had died of drinking, just as Marlowe died in a drunken brawl. His best known volume of poems remains *Deaths and Entrances* (1946). In its Surrealistic revolt against all restraints on free creativity, including logical reason, standard morality, social norms, Thomas’s work reflects one facet of Postmodernism which finds more mature expression later in the literature of the 1960’s.

The Movement Poets

A parallel crusade in poetry to the effort of Angry Young Men in fiction during the decade of the 1950’s was that of the Movement Poets. This, too, was conscious and deliberate just as its counterpart movement was in fiction. In 1955, a number of verse manifestoes found publication from the members of the group known as the Movement. These manifestoes were published in D.J. Enright’s anthology, *Poets of the 1950’s*, which included Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin, Robert Conquest, etc. Amis made the following announcement:

Nobody wants any more poems about philosophers or paintings or novelists or art galleries or mythology or foreign cities or other poems. At least I hope nobody wants them. Larkin’s reaction to “Modernism” is no less violent: I have no belief in “tradition” or a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets.... To me the whole of the ancient world, the whole of classical and biblical mythology meant very little, and I think that using them today not only fills poems full of dead spots but dodges the writer’s duty to be original.

As Robert Conquest contended, the Movement was “empirical in its attitude to all the cosmos.” On the one hand, it was a reaction against the mythical new classicism of the 1920’s, on the other, it was opposed to the neo-romanticism of the 1940’s. It was, one could surmise, a sort of realism, which aimed at consciously narrow concerns of here and now, addressing the world of everyday engagements, closing all windows on the outside world both in time and space. The Movement poets shut their eyes to whatever lurked beyond the tangible present and the mundane multitude. The very dull and drab, morbid and monotonous life of the uneventful men and matters were chosen as the subject-matter of poetry. After the War, which was between the European nations primarily, the reaction to Continentalism of the Modernists sounded perhaps unpatriotic. So, there is, for sure, this nationalist aspect also to the Movement philosophy of new aesthetics. As Calvin Bedient puts it, “The English poetic ‘Movement’ of the Fifties (the very name suggesting an excess of dull plainness) did much to fix the image of contemporary British poetry as deliberately deficient, moderate with a will. This image is gradually frayed and will probably give way altogether, for the truth is that, however *deliberate* — and after a faltering start — postwar poetry in Britain and Ireland has proved increasingly robust, varied, responsive to the times, felicitous, enjoyable.” Thus, the anti-modernism of Larkin and his fellow poets reflected the Postmodernist spirit of problematising Modernism. Their postmodernism involves a

going beyond modernism.

Philip Larkin

The poet chosen by common consent as the most significant of the Movement poets is Philip Larkin (1922-1985). He still remains the best known of the group. His poetic works include *The North Ship* (1945), *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), and *High Windows* (1974). It has been rightly remarked that “English poetry has never been so persistently out of the cold as it is with Philip Larkin.” The following extract from his “Wild Oats” will illustrate the remark at once:

About twenty years ago
Two girls came in where I worked -
A bosomy English rose
And her friend in specs I could talk to.
Faces in those days sparked
The whole shooting-match off, and I doubt
If ever one had like her:
But it was the friend I took out,

This shows a good deal of Larkin—plain and bare as wood, matter-of-fact, not entirely a mind of winter, with a slight sense of homour. Larkin represents the post-War mood of depression. As he says in his novel *Jill* (1946), “events cut us ruthlessly down to size.” His other novel is *A Girl in Winter* (1947).

Larkin has something of both Frost and Hardy in him, writing small poems on small affairs of life, sharing their scepticism, even nihilism at times, but always reassuring in his love for the very ordinary things of life. Note, for instance, the following:

‘This was Mr. Bleaney’s room. He stayed
The whole time he was at the Bodies, till
They moved him.’ Flowered curtains, thin and frayed,
Fall to within five inches of the sill,

Such small things, studded with care on the small canvas, came out with a certain care for the small and the underdog. His lyricism and lucidity are never lost in the dense detail of his little descriptions. These two qualities always come out:

I was sleeping, and you woke me
To walk on the chilled shore
Of a night with no memory
Till your voice forsook my ear
Till your two hands withdrew
And I was empty of tears,
On the edge of a bricked and streeted sea
And a cold bill of stars.

Thus, Larkin served his generation of the post-War with the soothing balm of little concerns, focusing on the immediate so that the disturbing outside world could be kept subsided at the back of one’s mind. His poetry, no wonder, became the truly representative of the post-War outlook on life and cosmos. Larkin’s tirade against the metanarratives of modernism is one form of Postmodernism that emerged in the 1950’s.

Donald Davie

Another “Movement” poet, Donald Davie (b. 1922), came out with his own brand of “commonality” (if realism has historically an old ring), quite different from Larkin’s. He lays a good deal of emphasis on “urbanity,” which Larkin rather repudiated. Davie wants reality to appear in his work, not “in some new form,” but in its most familiar form, its morally guaranteed form—in fact, as “moral commonplace.” However, as Calvin Bendient has observed, “But the truth is that reality does not appear in his work at all. Seen from ‘the center,’ reality falls into the blind spot in the middle of the eye. No longer Appearance, it becomes a storehouse of signs, of which the meanings are moral abstractions.” Davie has a very pronounced, as well as announced, polemical “urbane” poetic programme, very much like (his most admired) the Augustans. As he argues, linguistic urbanity lies in “the perfection of a common language.” Using Arnold’s phrase, Davie insists, that the object of urbanity is to voice “the tone and spirit of the center.” No wonder that he wrote his critical book *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (1952).

Davie’s attempt, therefore, is to have a style as transparent as water, but also as pure. Decidedly, to achieve that goal a lot of “ore” of reality will have to be removed from the pure metal, and so Davie does. Note, for instance, the following, from “Tunstall Forest”:

...the tense
Stillness did not come,
The deer did not, although they fed
Perhaps nearby that day,
The liquid eye and elegant head
No more than a mile away.

Some other notable poems of Davie include “The Cypress Avenue,” “After an Accident.” A critical book, *Articulate Energy*, pleads for a “story sense” in poetry, which again is an Arnoldian emphasis. An interesting poem of Davie (recalling Joyce and Thomas) is “Portrait of the Artist as a Farmyard Fowl,” where the monologue proceeds on such a pace as the following:

A conscious carriage must become a strut;
Fastidiousness can only stalk
And seem at last not even tasteful but
A ruffled hen too apt to squawk.

Davie’s notable works include *Six Epistles to Eva Hesse* (1970), *The Forests of Lithuania* (1959), *A Winter Talent* (1957) and *Events and Wisdoms* (1964): while some more notable poems include “Creon Mouse,” “North Dublin,” “Cherry Ripe,” “A Meeting of Cultures,” “New York in August,” “In California,” “The Prolific Spell,” “Viper Man,” etc. His attempt always remained to sing and to keep his song lean, devoid of all history and mythology because that was the “character” of the post-War era. But there is, for sure, an integrity in his leanness which, the more one reads his poetry, the more one learns to admire. His work finally, slowly and steadily, that is, has become broader, but without sacrificing its innate purity.

Robert Conquest and D.J. Enright

Still another of the group of poets covered under the term “Movement” is Robert Conquest (b. 1917), whose poetry is largely devoted to the depiction of landscape; of course, with man, as in Wordsworth, as an integral part of nature. The subject-matter, in the true spirit of the “Movement,” remains reality, that is, the commonplace, but his approach is rather intellectual. Some of his notable verse appears in his volumes entitled *Poems* (1955), *Between Mars and Venus* (1962), and *Arias for a Love Opera* (1969). One more of the core group, so to say, of the “Movement,” is J.D. Enright (b. 1920), who is known, not so much by his own poems as by his

edited work, *Poets of the 50's* (1955). His own poems are included in his *Language Hyena* (1953), *Some Men are Brothers* (1960), and *The Old Adam* (1965). His poetry has for its subject the individual man, just as in Larkin, in all his conditions, treating his suffering with sympathy, also with indignation. But he always upholds individual dignity, reiterates strong faith in it. His language, also like Larkin's, is derived from colloquial speech, stripped of all elaborations. His is a style marked by ironical disgust of hypocrisy and cruelty.

Charles Tomlinson

A notable poet of the post-War period, perhaps the most considerable British poet, is Charles Tomlinson (b. 1927). Like the other poets of the period he, too, is committed to some sort of realism, the world of empirical realities. However, each of these poets have their individual versions of reality. In Tomlinson's case, he can be called a poet of exteriority and its human correspondences. His outwardness, however, need not be confused with superficiality. His principal theme, in his own words, is "the fineness of relationships." One can see something of Wordsworth in him, his wise passivity, his reflections within the bounds of reality. The power of message and healing of his poetry remains central in most of his compositions. Note, for instance, the following from "The Gossamers":

Autumn. A haze is gold
By definition. This one lit
The thread of gossamers
That webbed across it
Out of shadow and again
Through rocking spaces which the sun
Claimed in the leafage. Now
I saw for what they were
These glitterings in grass, on air,
Of certainties that ride and plot
The currents in their tenuous stride
And, as they flow, must touch
Each blade and, touching, know
Its green resistance. Undefined
The haze of autumn in the mind
Is gold, is glaze.

Clearly, mind is light, and like the light it is a wealth, but also like the wealth, it makes wealth of objects that it reflects upon. His poetry consists of several volumes that came out at different dates, namely, *Relations and Contraries* (1951), *The Necklace* (1955), *Seeing is Believing* (1958), *A Peopled Landscape* (1962), *American Scenes* (1966), *The Way of the World* (1969), *Written on Water* (1972), *The Way In and Other Poems* (1974), *The Flood* (1981), *The Return* (1987), *The Door in the Wall* (1992) and *Jubilation* (1995). In Tomlinson's case, contemplation seems to be the fulfilment of being, just as it does in the case of Wallace Stevens. Like the other poets of the Movement Group, he, too, recalls us to the life of the moment conceived as an end in itself. Here, the Movement gains the meaning of flux, reality that is marked by movement, by change.

R.S. Thomas

A notable Welsh poet after Dylan Thomas is Ronald Stuart Thomas (b. 1913), although not as well-known and established as his senior compatriot. His poetry is both sensual as well as

sensitive, which quickly engages both eye and emotion equally intensely. Note, for instance, the following from “Ninetieth Birthday”:

And there at the top that old woman,
Born almost a century back
In that stone farm, awaits your coming;
Waits for the news of the lost village.
She thinks she knows, a place that exists
In her memory only.

One feels tempted to cite Calvin Bendient’s comment on the poem, which has a charm of its own: “How direct, naked, human, and sociable this is. Has Thomas not heard of ‘modern’ poetry and its difficulty? Has he no embarrassment before the primary emotions? Never mind; nothing vital is missing from such a poem. Reading Thomas one learns to endure the glare of emotion; one learns again a kind of innocence.” Thomas, evidently, shares with the poets of the 1950’s their key emphases on simple, clean, and clear diction; direct and straight syntax; no use of mythology or tradition; no reliance on ambiguity or paradox.

Thomas has to his credit several volumes of poems, including *The Stones of the Field* (1946), *Not That He Brought Flowers* (1969), *Song at the Year’s Turning* (1955), *The Bread of Truth*, and *Pieta* (1966), *Laboratories of the Spirit* (1975), *The Echoes Return Show* (1988), *Counterpoint* (1990) and *Mass for Hard Times* (1992). His poetry is strongly marked as much by moral quality as by aesthetic. The theme may be love or anger, his poem is invariably directed at an entire people. There is, in that sense, something of Whitman in Thomas, without, of course, the former’s bombastic optimism. He is rather hardened and narrowed Whitman, although not without broad sympathy, especially for the peasants. Note, for instance, the following:

I am the farmer, stripped of love
And thought and grace by the land’s hardness;
But what I am saying over the fields’
Desolate acres, rough with dew,
Is, Listen, listen, I am a man like you...

Some of the memorable poems of Thomas include “Green Categories,” “The Gap in the Hedge,” “A Peasant,” “The Airy Tomb,” “Death of a Peasant,” “Portrait,” “Absolution,” and “Walter Llywarch.” Writing about the repressed and marginalized (peasants have been one such class) is in keeping with the philosophy of Postmodernism.

THE NON-MOVEMENT POETS

Ted Hughes

Famous for his animal poetry, Ted Hughes (1930-1998) earned the reputation of being the first English poet of the “will to live.” His choice of animals as the themes of his poems is, of course, not without the reverse side of his choice. The reverse side is as much of a disenchantment with the world of mankind as there is an enchantment with the world of animal kind. He was highly influenced by the German philosopher, Schopenhauer, the only one, he says, he “ever really read.” The philosopher in question believed, “the whole and every individual bears the stamp of a forced condition.”

Ted Hughes can be appropriately said to be the poet of that condition, and in that role, he is rather a hangman than a priest. Hughes once revealed, “My interest in animals began when I began. My memory goes back pretty clearly to my third year, and by then I had so many of the toy lead animals you could buy in shops that they went right round our flat-topped fireplace

fender, nose to tail....” Later, he had live experience with them in the fields, feeling them crawling under the lining of his coat.

In his poetry, animals are presented, not as playthings, but as lords of life and death. They assume the status of mythical gods. They are presented superior to men, with their lack of self-consciousness, and sickness of the mind. They are found free from inhibitions, hesitations, fears; and full of courage and concentration. With their focused life, with all the innocence of man’s corruptions, they emerge, like Adam and Eve in Paradise, in a state before the Fall. His very first volume of poems, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), illustrated all these ideas, and made him famous as a poet. Note, how man is placed below the animal in the hierarchy Hughes builds up in his poems:

I drown in the drumming ploughland. I drag up Heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth’s mouth, From clay that clutches my each step to the ankle With the habit of the dogged grave, but the hawk Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye...

His other volumes of poems include *Wodwo* (1967), *Crow* (1970), *Crow Wakes* (1971), *Eat Crow* (1972), *Cave Birds* (1975), *Season Songs* (1976), *Moortown* (1979), *Wolf-watching* (1989), *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Being* (1992) - a prose work, *Tales from Ovid* (1997), and *Birthday Letters* (1998). The last, published just a short while before his death, is a sequence of poems about his bitter-sweet relations with his wife, Sylvia Plath, who committed suicide in 1963. Although composed much earlier, he chose to make them public near his own end.

Tom Gunn

Although he had been included in the Movement anthologies along with Larkin, Tom Gunn (b. 1929) sharply departed from the group and took his individual course. He had resolved rather early in his career to seek out the heroic in the experience of nihilism. He writes about various forms of driving power which characterize our cities, as also about self-destructive violence. No doubt, he views human existence as full of pain and suffering, lovelessness and meaninglessness, but he still finds solace in the tenderness of man’s essentially animal nature. His very first volume of poems, *Fighting Terms* (1954), startled the readers. One notices in these poems his love and admiration for a certain masculinity, a type of manly energy, which is rather aggressive. His situations measure up to the existentialist or Sartrean dimensions. His other volumes of poetry include *The Sense of Movement* (1957), *My Sad Captains* (1961), *Touch* (1967), *Moly* (1971), *Jack Straw’s Castle* (1976), *The Passages of Joy* (1982) and *The Man With Night Sweats* (1992). Those more sympathetic to him have compared him, because of his logical and economical style, studded with startling imagery, with John Donne. But there are others less sympathetic who find him often committed to a kind of nihilistic glamour for which, it is alleged, he is not able to convincingly apologise. The most unsympathetic of the better known critics is Vyor Winters who observes that “as a rule, he has a dead ear, and the fact makes much of his work either mechanical or lax in its movement.” Both Ted Hughes and Tom Gunn, by glorifying animals or animal-energy in man, with sardonic humour spared for mankind, reflect the Postmodernist inglorious conception of human nature.

Seamus Heaney

An Irish by birth, and acutely conscious of his country’s long history of hostility towards England, Seamus Heaney (1939-2000) counted himself among the “colonials.” But he was fully conscious of his divided inheritance: “I speak and write in English,” he writes in an article (dated 1972), “but do not altogether share the preoccupations and perspectives of an Englishman...and the English tradition is not ultimately home. I live off another hump as well.” That other “hump,” we know, is no other but Ireland, or more precisely the rural Ulster, which, like the Wessex of

Thomas Hardy, occupies a central place in his poetry. Heaney's poetic volumes include *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1969), *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975), *Field Work* (1979), *Preoccupations* (1980), *Station Island* (1984), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), *Seeing Things* (1991), *Sweeney's Flight* (1992) and *The Spirit Level* (1996). Heaney has been known as a peasant as well as a patriotic poet of Ireland. He depicts both farm activities as well as the colonial imperial effects on his countrymen. In a poem called "At a Potato Digging," for instance, he writes:

Flint-white, purple, they lie scattered
like inflated pebbles. Native
to the black hutch of clay
where the halved seed hot and clothed
these knobbled and slit-eyed tubers seem
the petrified hearts of drills. Split
by the spade, they show white as cream.

Similarly, in "North," he depicts, with a backward glance, the buried sorrows and treasures of the Irish people as well as of their language, concluding with an advice:

'Lie down
in the word-board, burrow
in the coil and gleam
of your furrowed brain.
Compose in darkness.
Expect aurora borealis
in the long foray
but no cascade of light.
Keep your eye clear
As the bleb of the icicle,
Trust the feel of what nubbed treasure
your hands have known.

Thus, poetry of the post-War, post-modern, or contemporary period, born out of the aftermath of the war devastation caused to cities and psychics alike, remained rather tame, compared to the highbrow modernist poetry. It deliberately chose to remain level, everyday, matter of fact, narrow, and, like the poetry of Hardy and Frost, solid and specific, serious and cynical. It contented itself with the micro rather than macro narratives, minute rather than meta concerns, national rather than international scenes, simple rather than difficult style, direct rather than indirect address.

Postmodern Drama (The New Theatre)

Drama of the post-war period shares, in some ways, the dominant spirit of the age we have witnessed in novel and poetry from the 1950's onward. One thing that seems common to all the three is their concern with life at the elemental level—with life bare and bony, wholly demystified and demythologized, and with questions raised at the existential plane, and without any attempt to seek soothing escape or magic solution to the problems of existence.

The central stance in all the literary forms seems to be to face the stark realities of life, to take suffering as it comes, and to learn to accept the unheroic status man seems to have been assigned in the absurd universe in which he is condemned to live. Drama of the post-modern period brings a still sharper focus on all these aspects than do its counterpart forms of poetry and novel. And to do that, drama of this period has been more daring than the other two; it has been more

innovative in technique, more shocking in defying social and moral conventions.

John Osborne

When John Osborne's (1929-94) *Look Back in Anger* was opened at the Royal Court Theatre on May 8, 1956, it at once made an impression that a dramatic revolution was afoot in England. The play was published in 1957. The early audiences did, however, feel shocked, as well as its more sensitive critics, into deeper response. The play shook the middle-class values of the "well-made play" founded by Ibsen and practiced in England by Shaw and Galsworthy. The audiences saw in Osborne's play a new kind of drama which addressed "the issues of the day." What was new about this drama was neither its politics, nor its technique so much as its alarm in rancour, language, and setting. The New Theatre ended the reign of country drawing-room setting with its moral cant and its sherry. It introduced instead the provincial bed-sitter with its abusive noises and its ironing-board. The conventional theatrical illusion of neat and stratified society was replaced by dramatic scenes of untidy and antagonistic social groups, grating upon one another's nerves. There may not have been any change in the social class of these characters, but there had, decidedly, come about a change in their assumptions and conversations. Other plays by Osborne include *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1957; pub. 1958), *The Entertainer* (1957), *Luther* (1961), *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964), *A Party for Me* (1965), *West of Suez* (1971), *A Sense of Detachment* (1972) and *Watch It Come Down* (1976). His autobiographies *A Better Class of Person* (1981) and *Almost a Gentleman* (1991), and a miscellany of reviews and letters, *Damn You, England* (1994), too, make interesting reading.

Samuel Beckett

Although considered a foreign influence (because *Waiting for Godot* reached England via France), Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) was, in fact, the real pioneer of the New Theatre in Europe, including England. His much more radical drama than Osborne's had been launched quite a few years earlier than Osborne's. His *Waiting for Godot* was staged in Paris in 1953, and then in London (at the small Arts Theatre) in 1955, and had created sensations all over Europe, which must have influenced the composition of Osborne's play as well. Beckett was an Irish by birth, but from 1937 onward permanently resided in Paris, wrote his drama as well as fiction in French, only later to be translated in English. Earlier, he had worked with his fellow Irish writer James Joyce and his Parisian circle, becoming a part of the polyglot and polyphonic world of literary innovation. Beckett's plays include, besides *Waiting for Godot* (1955), *Endgame* (1957), *Krapp's Last Tape* (1960), and *Happy days* (1962). His *Come and Go* (1967) is a stark 'dramaticale' with three female characters and a text of 121 words. Then there is the even more minimal *Breath* (1969), a 30 second play consisting only of a pile of rubbish, a breath, and a cry. There is also a play called *Not I* (1973), a brief, fragmented, disembodied monologue by an actor of indeterminate sex of whom only the 'Mouth' is illuminated. All these plays are revolutionary in different ways.

Beckett's interest in the functioning and malfunctioning of the human mind, reflected by gaps, jumps, and lurches, remains at the centre of his fiction as well as drama. We see in his plays an overlapping of minds, ideas, images and phrases. We see voices both interrupting and inheriting trains of thought begun elsewhere or nowhere. We also see separated consciousnesses both impeding and impressing themselves on one another. Beckett's dialogue, for which his *Waiting for Godot* is especially remarkable, remains the most energetic. It is densely woven but equally supple. His settings are bare, just as his language is bald. In *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, there is only a country road and a tree, both, in fact, incomplete even as road and tree. The tree gets only four leaves in the second act. In the first, it remains without leaves. As for characters,

there are only two pairs who occupy the stage by turns all through the play. The dialogue also runs into repetitive phrases and sentences and subjects leading to no conclusions or results. Beckett uses blindness and other disadvantages, as he does in both *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot*, suggesting that one kind of deprivation may sharpen the other organs of perception in a character.

Beckett's concept of time in his plays is the most radical of his innovations. He presents the time present as broken, inconsistent and inconsequential. He also allows within that time present the intrusion of time past. It is, of course, never a flashback. Rather, it is oppressively enriching in the private histories of characters as well as in the general perception of life. He also shares with his mentor, Proust, an antipathy to literature that describes. Hence there are no descriptions in his plays. As Beckett affirms, again echoing the mentor, "there is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us." As Sanders remarks, Beckett's "dramatic repetitions and iterations, his persistent echoes and footfalls, emerge not from a negative view of human existence, but from an acceptance of 'dull inviolability' as a positive, if minimally progressive, force. As his inviolable and unsentimental Krapp also seems to have discovered, a path forward lay in exploring the resonances of the circumambient darkness." Thus, Beckett remains the most radical among the Postmodernist playwrights in England, in fact, in the entire Europe.

While Beckett remained in popular perception a 'foreign' influence, Osborne emerged as a rebel within Britain's own established tradition. Also, while Beckett remained a representative of French symbolic and philosophically-based drama. Osborne responded to the native social and moral issues of his time, and without the burden of philosophy and symbolism. His *Look Back in Anger* came to be considered an epoch-making play. It became the launcher of the movement called "Angry Young Men." The play, of course, presented the noisiest of the lot of "angries." Jimmy Porter, the play's hero, is a young man of 25, presented as "a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting; restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike." Porter is not an idealist. He is said to be "born out of his time." He is described as a revolutionary without a revolution, or a rebel without a cause. He loudly and bitterly protests against the establishment values, against his wife's middle-class ex-Indian army parents; against his Member of Parliament brother-in-law; against bishops and church bells; against Sunday newspapers, English music, and English literature including Shakespeare, Eliot, and "Auntie Wordsworth." He is a new type of protagonist, classless, aimless, restless, although placed in a conventional social context. Osborne's *Luther* (1961), which too has for its title character an "angry young man," who makes a strong assertion of his identity when he says, "Here I stand; God help me; I can do no more. Amen"; *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964), in which Osborne provides for a location "where a dream takes place, a site of helplessness, of oppression and polemic." Osborne also wrote his autobiography, *A Better Class of Person* (1981), which is both pungently observant and spiteful. His characters and their anger and rebellion seem to have been an extension of his perception of himself. Thus, in a way, Beckett and Osborne complemented each other: while the former innovated new technique, the latter exploded conventional social norms.

POST-50's PLAYWRIGHTS

John Arden

Among the post-50's playwrights, John Arden (b. 1930) emerged in the 60's as a representative of the new generation of writers who were provocative, argumentative and Anglo-Brechtian. These dramatists, namely Arden, Wesker, Pinter, Orton, and Stoppard, were launched by the Royal Court theatre in London.

Arden's first play, *Live Like Pigs* (1958), presents the plight of gypsies, explores their anti-social behaviour, and seems to suggest that "respectability" and its guardians, the police, ultimately prove far more damaging to a society's health than the unconventional style of living of the gypsies. His most popular and punchy play, *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959) deals with an anti-militaristic theme, using a dramatic combination of Brechtian exposition and music-hall routines of dance, song, and monologue. His other plays include *Left-Handed Liberty* (1965), *The Hero Rises Up* (1968), and *The Island of the Mighty* (1972). In his later plays, Arden's rigorous scepticism seems to have mellowed.

Arnold Wesker

Another playwright of the period is Arnold Wesker (b. 1932), whose first play, *Chips with Everything*, was acted at the Royal Court in 1962. It is largely based on the playwright's own experience in Royal Airforce Service. His other plays include *The Kitchen* (1959), in which both camp and kitchen are used as metaphors for an unfair and stratified society (class-based), in which the disadvantaged, like drop-outs, have to fend for themselves. And when it comes to doing that, they have nothing to fall back upon but their proletarian vigour and innate emotional richness; and his famous trilogy—*Chicken Soup and Barley* (1958), *Roots* (1959), *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* (1960), which brings to fore his sympathy for the working-class, his socialism, his inclination for the Jewish cause, etc. His effort to combine art with socialist agenda in setting up "Centre 42" did not succeed, leaving him rather disheartened.

Harold Pinter

A more popular dramatist who emerged during the period was Harold Pinter (b. 1930), who shared with Wesker his Jewish background, but who was an actor by profession rather than an activist like Wesker. Unlike Wesker, he does not directly address the political issues of the time in his plays. "They open up instead," as Sanders remarks, "a world of seeming inconsequentiality, tangential communication, dislocated relationships, and undefined threats." Pinter started as dramatist with a bang, producing three plays in the same year - *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Birthday Party* - in 1957. The last of these three has been a favourite of the readers. Then came out in 1959 his *The Caretaker*, which was performed the following year. His plays show an influence of Beckett as well as Kafka. They also show, in their dialogue, the influence of Eliot. *The Birthday Party* remains his most polyphonic, in which incongruous clichés intrude quite often.

One notices a definite change in Pinter's art with the performance of his *The Homecoming* (1964) at the Royal Shakespeare company. It is generally taken as a turning point in his career. Rather indefinite and unspecific in situations and characters, it dramatizes several sides of social tensions woven in the lives of a large family (presumably Jewish). The play leaves behind an impression of sourness and negativity. It was followed by *Old Times* (1971), *No Man's Land* (1975), and *Betrayal* (1978), all marking an extension in themes handled in *The Homecoming*. As John Russell Brown sums up, "the new playwright is then the portrayer of character, new in the shortness of his plays, their small casts and the replacement of conventional plot development by strange and often menacing events. His plays are half character studies and half fantasy or imitation of parts of an early Hitchcock film."

Joe Orton

Another dramatist of the post-War era, less known in India than Pinter, or Osborne, or Beckett, was Joe Orton (1933-1967), whose dramatized protest against state oppression is more direct and

powerful than in Pinter. A character in his play *Loot* (1966), named Inspector Truscott, underlines the dramatist's attitude to the subject of state repression of common citizens: "If I ever hear you accuse the police of using violence on a prisoner in custody again, I'll take you down to the station and beat the eyes out of your head." Orton earned notoriety because of his active and promiscuous homosexuality (his predecessor, we know, was Oscar Wilde) at a time when it was still a criminal offence in England. Orton wrote four major comedies, besides *Loot*, namely, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* (1964), *The Ruffian on the Stair* (1967), *The Erpingham Camp* (1967), and *What the Butler Saw* (1969), all calculated to outrage. His comedies attempted to expose the folly of the fool, the hypocrisy of the hypocrite, the incoherence of the incoherents. They also attempted beyond this task to upset the *status-quo*. As for the form of comedy, he does not just exploit the traditional forms, but also transforms them into something dangerously different.

Tom Stoppard

In comparison to Orton's explosive and untidy comedy, the comedy of Tom Stoppard (b. 1937), a Czechoslovakian by birth, is implosive and tidy. His plays are meticulously designed, which logically find their endings in their beginnings. The play that has made him famous (partly because of the title derived from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) is *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967). According to the play's stage direction, the play opens with "two ELIZABETHANS passing the time in a place without any visible character." The play, as a matter of fact, is a re-reading of *Hamlet* from the viewpoints of Einsteinian laws, Eliotic negatives, and Beckettian principles. Everything is presented relatively. Perspective changes, time is fragmented, the Prince is marginalized, or decentred. The two coin-spinning attendant lords are made to take on the weight of a tragedy which is both beyond their comprehension as well as above their status. Although on surface it is a farcical comedy, it carries beneath the surface a lurking sense of doom or death, which the audiences are never allowed to forget. The play's contemporary relevance lies in the present-day consciousness of the two leading characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who in their Elizabethan costumes, language, and setting, feel out of place, with their twentieth-century awareness of convergence, concurrence, and consequence: "Wheels have been set in motion, and they have their own pace, to which we are...condemned. Each move is dictated by the previous one - that is the meaning of order. If we start being arbitrary it'll just be a shambles." The message is that life may look arbitrary, there is logic in life which is inescapable, just as the pattern of Shakespeare's play determines that Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's strutting and fretting must come to an end with death, just as human life on earth does.

Stoppard's other plays include *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968), which is a parody of an English detective story; *Jumpers* (1972), which ridicules intellectual gymnastics, in which intellectuals do jumping exercises, raising unstable philosophic structures; *Travesties* (1974), which is considered his most witty and inventive play, and includes the cast of historical figures such as Joyce, Lenin, Tristan, Tzara, etc.; *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977), which is on a direct political theme; and *Arcadia* (1994), in which locations alternate between Byron's England and Stoppard's England, attempting a fusion of complementary oppositions. This is considered Stoppard's most allusive and subtle play.

Edward Bond

Still another notable playwright of the period is Edward Bond (b. 1934), who has faithfully followed the didactic German tradition, although he later disclaimed that he was working as a sort of disciple of Brecht. His point of departure, in his view, was to necessarily "disturb an

audience emotionally” through various means to make what he called the “aggro-effect” more complete. His early plays include *The Pope’s Wedding* (1962) and *Saved* (1965), both of which deal with the inherited lexical and emotional deficiencies of the working class life. This life, he believes, perforce finds expression in violence. His analysis is that violence is a logical consequence of the brutalization of the working class. And brutalization, in his view, results from the uncaring treatment meted out to them by the stratified, industrial society. In his subsequent plays, *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1968), *Lear* (1971), *Bingo* (1974), and *The Fool* (1976), he presents anger and violence not merely as means of self-expression but also as instruments of social change. In his *Lear*, he drastically changes the story of Shakespeare’s play, making it a twentieth century tale of violence and repression, where love always remains something that might-have-been.

Caryl Churchill

Very much like Bond, Caryl Churchill (b. 1938) has been greatly opposed to a social system based on exploitation. She, however, relates exploitation and repression to the subjection of women. In her view, there is a direct correspondence between the traditional power of the capitalists and the subjection of women. She always presents her women characters as victims of a culture which regards them as mere commodities, or which has imposed conditions of inequality on them, brought up to subject to the masculine social conventions. Her plays include *Owners* (1972), which draws parallel between colonial and sexual oppression; *Cloud Nine* (1979), which creates farce through the shifts of gender and racial roles; *Top Girls* (1982), which exposes the superficial nature of women’s liberation (so-called) in the 1980’s. Her later work includes *Serious Money* (1987), which is topical and apocalyptic presenting the effects of stock-market deregulation in the city of London; *Mad Forest: A Play from Romania* (1990), which makes a searching study of competing truths and half truths; and the two inter-related short plays, *Blue Heart* (1997), the first of which carries the title of *Heart’s Desire*, the second of *Blue Kettle*, which focus on lexical problems and failure of communication. We need to include here, as a sort of late entry, Robert Oxton Bolt (b. 1924) whose *A Man For All Seasons* (1960), based on Thomas More’s life, deals with power politics and the clash of ambitions. His first play, *Flowering Cherry* (1957), deals with self-deception striving to disguise failure.

POST-MODERN CRITICISM

Until the time of the modernist period of English literature, literary criticism was a “literary” activity, with leading (call them policy) documents written by the leaders of the literary movements. We know how from Dryden and Pope and Johnson to Wordsworth and Coleridge and Keats to Arnold and Rossetti and Swinburne to Eliot and Auden and Spender, English poetics was theorised by the leading English poets.

But in the post-modern period there is no such thing as literary theory, nor any of the dominant theoretic documents of today’s activity of criticism has come from any man-of-letters. It is mostly the philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, linguists, etc., who have propounded all kinds of dismantling orders, which are being applied, by their followers, in the field of literature. Today, the activity called “theory,” is related to, not any particular subject, but to all subjects. No wonder the literary criticism today has become cultural studies, feminism, postcolonialism, etc., which use literary texts for making political, sociological, or psychological case studies. As Jonathan Culler has attempted to explain the nature of THEORY:

Theory in literary studies is not an account of the nature of literature or methods for its study.... It is a body of thinking and writing whose limits are exceedingly hard to define....a new kind of

writing has developed which is neither the evaluation of the relative merits of literary productions, nor intellectual history, nor moral philosophy, nor social prophesy, but all of these mingled together in a new genre. The most convenient designation of this miscellaneous genre is simply the nickname *theory*, which has come to designate works that succeed in challenging and reorienting thinking in fields other than those to which they apparently belong. This is the simplest explanation of what makes something count as theory. Works regarded as theory *have effects* beyond their original field.

Thus, the main effect of theory is disputing all that we have been considering “common sense.” It questions all the concepts and beliefs we have held about literature, author, reader, text, meaning, etc. It questions as well the non-literary concepts of philosophy, sociology, linguistics, etc. Theory challenges the conception of the author’s intention, that the meaning of work or speaker is what he “had in mind.” It also challenges that literature is a representation of “life”, whose truth is outside of itself, in history, or biography, etc. It further challenges the very notion of reality as something present at a given moment. In this all-round critique of common sense, theory insists that all that passes in the name of natural or essential or universal is nothing but a construction of social practices, a production of a certain discourse. Broadly, Culler makes the following four points to sum up the activity called theory:

- a. It is interdisciplinary, always deriving ideas or leaving effects outside an original discipline.
- b. It is analytical and speculative, always working out what is involved or implied in a text, or language, or meaning, or subject, etc.
- c. It is a critique of common sense, always questioning whatever is considered a given or natural or essential or universal.
- d. It is thinking about thought, always enquiring into categories and concepts we use in making sense of things, such as what is woman or man or meaning or text, etc. (Culler, p. 15)

Critics like Terry Eagleton (a well known British Marxist critic) may find in theory an expression of democratic impulse, and a liberation “from the stranglehold of a civilized sensibility,” the fact of the matter is that it has seriously subverted the value of literature in various ways, such as the following:

1. It has made criticism a jargon-ridden writing, inaccessible to the common reader. As such, it is anti-democratic.
2. It has reduced literature to the status of a speech, any speech, political, pornographic, stray writing, etc. As such, it deprives art and literature of their humane and ennobling effect.
3. It has reduced literary criticism to dividing people into regions, races, tribes, cultures, colonizers, colonized, etc. As such, it is divisive, not unifying.
4. It has also made criticism a negative activity, which is meant to trace faultlines, lapses, absences, what the text does not say or has failed to say.

Thus, theory has given birth to a set of approaches in criticism, which transforms the activity of understanding, appreciating, and evaluating a literary work into (largely) an activity of self-reflection. It tends to marginalize artists and their art-works.

THEORY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Reading through the vast variety of contemporary critical theories and textual interpretations under the various brand names, such as structuralism and post-structuralism, deconstruction and new historicism, cultural studies and feminism, minority discourse and post-colonialism, one is left wondering where the discipline of literary criticism has arrived in our time. The alien idioms one encounters, the gigantic critical apparatuses one confronts, the mind-boggling systems one has to comprehend, all quickly combine to create a climate utterly discomfiting, making one unstable even for a ‘temporary stay against confusion.’

Terrorized by the teasing games of the dreadful discourses, the common reader instinctively

terminates his journey through the dense forestry and returns to his own common-sense reading of the literary works. Of course, after his abortive journey through the verbal forest he does not return the same man; he comes back sadder but not wiser. What leaves him completely nonplussed are the oracular declarations, such as the 'death of God', the 'death of the author', the 'death of the subject', etc. Mortally afraid of encountering more of such declarations, he decides never to seek any critical company for his future journeys into the 'cities of words.'

In such a situation it has become imperative for all those who value literature and literary criticism as instruments of education, essential for preserving and promoting the humanity of human societies, to understand and analyse the factors responsible for effecting this unprecedented change in the nature of literary criticism in our time. Until the end of the nineteenth century literary criticism had remained committed to elucidating for the common reader the social and moral significance of literary works, and was always written in a literary style as readable as literature itself. Note, for example, the following from S.T. Coleridge: The characters of the *dramatis personae*, like those in real life, are to be inferred by the reader—they are not told to him. And it is well worth remarking that Shakespeare's characters, like those in real life, are very commonly misunderstood, and almost always understood by different persons in different ways. The causes are the same in either case. If you take only what the friends of the character say, you may be deceived, and still more so, if that which his enemies say; nay, even the character himself sees himself through the medium of his character, and not exactly as he is. Take all together, not omitting a shrewd hint from the clown or the fool, and perhaps your impression will be right; and you may know whether you have in fact discovered the poet's own idea, by all the speeches receiving light from it, and attesting its reality by reflecting it.

The very first thing one notices here is the use of an idiom readily available to the common reader. One also notices that the analogy used for explaining the critical method is taken from everyday human dealings, which implies that literature is a representation of life. One notices, too, how in a very simple manner the issue of the author's intention has been explained, which makes clear that it is available within the text itself, and that one does not need to look for it anywhere else, including the author as a historical personage.

A drastic change in the nature of criticism began to become noticeable in the early years of the twentieth century. Those who brought about this change include I.A. Richards, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and the New Critics. With them literary criticism changed from art to science. Perhaps it had to change with the increasing influence of science in the modern age. As W.T. Stace has observed, 'The positive stage is the stage of science which, when fully attained, abolishes both metaphysics and theology. In the golden age of the future which the triumph of science is to usher in, nothing will be considered knowledge unless it is science.' Read, for example, the following from Ezra Pound: 'The Proper METHOD for studying poetry and good letters is the method of contemporary biologists, that is, careful first-hand examination of the matter, and continual COMPARISON of one "slide" or specimen with another.' Thus was adopted by Pound, as well as by those 'new' poets and critics who faithfully followed the dictates of this poet's poet and the critic's critic, the method of science in poetry and criticism. A similar thrust in the direction of science was given by I.A. Richards, who in his *Science and Poetry* pleaded, once again, for the scientific method of analyzing the working of the poem as well as the poet's mind. Note, for example, the following:

To understand what an interest is we should picture the mind as a system of very delicately poised balances, a system which so long as we are in health is constantly growing. Every situation we come into disturbs some of these balances to some degree. The ways in which they swing back to a new equipoise are the impulses with which we respond to the situation. And the chief balances in the system are our chief interests. Suppose that we carry a magnetic compass

about in the neighbourhood of power magnets.... Suppose that instead of a single compass we carry an arrangement of many magnetic needles, large and small, swing so that they influence one another...

The mind is not unlike such a system if we imagine it to be incredibly complex. The needles are our interests....

Thus, from Pound's scientific 'method' we move to Richard's scientific 'system.' In the convention of criticism from Aristotle to Arnold, there used to be approaches to literature based on the social and ethical goals of human society. They considered literature as an instrument of education. Now with the High Modernists it got reduced to the status of the material productions of science and industry. The most influential of these high priests of scientism, T.S. Eliot, carried this task with greater force than even Pound and Richards. Note, for instance, the following:

There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I shall, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide. Here the poet's mind becomes the gas chamber in which various experiences combine like different chemicals to form a new compound. The chemical reaction is used to explain the process of composition of a poem or any other literary text. No doubt, this conversion of literary criticism into a study of systems and structures, principles and processes, involved in the making of literature, is effected under the express influence of science. In the same vein, the New Critics, namely John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, W.K. Wimsatt, Monroe Beardsley, and William Emerson, viewed a poem as a structure of words, reducing the function of criticism to explicating the functioning of various verbal devices such as metaphor, ambiguity, paradox, irony, image, etc., in the working of the structure called poem. In this New Critical effort, while literature changed from being one of the beautiful arts into one of the functional sciences, literary criticism changed from being an educational source into a scientific method.

In its attempt to introduce scientism in literature and literary criticism, the modernist criticism in the early twentieth century also made the author invisible, for like the filament of platinum he does not go into the compound called poem; he just stays behind. It also made the business of criticism a specialist's job. It became inaccessible to the common reader who would not have the benefit of knowing various sciences and their principles and processes, systems and structures. The very language of literary criticism acquired a special ring, becoming far removed from the language of everyday conversation. The macro commentaries of earlier criticism were replaced by the micro explications of verbal devices used in the making of a poem. The writing called criticism became arduous. W.B. Yeats, who called himself one 'the last romantics', soon realized this arduousness of modern poetry and of modern criticism. In a letter to Dorothy Wellesley, he separated himself from the high modernists:

The difficult work which is being written everywhere now has the substance of philosophy and is a delight to the poet with his professional pattern; but it is not your road or mine & ours is the main road, the road of naturalness and swiftness and we have thirty centuries upon our side. We alone can think like a wise man, yet express ourselves like the common people. These new men are goldsmiths working with a glass screwed into one eye, whereas we stride ahead of the crowd, its swordsmen, its jugglers, looking to right and left. 'To right and left' by which I mean what we need like Milton, Shakespeare, Shelley, vast sentiments, generalizations supported by tradition. Yeats is obviously drawing a contrast between the popular literary writers and the writers as specialist. We know how the writings of Eliot and Pound, Joyce and Woolf, became special readings, based as they were on philosophies and theories drawn from extra-literary sources. We also know how the critical writings of the New Critics acquired the nature of scientific investigations, seeking relations between the parts and the whole, the components and the structure, modelled on the functioning of a chemical process or biological system. Thus, literary

criticism became one of the specialities in the corporation of knowledge disciplines.

The New Critics also changed the nature of literary criticism from a moral source of life to an amoral tool of investigation. Wimsatt and Beardsley came out with their famous (or notorious?) articles on 'intentional fallacy' and 'affective fallacy', with explicit implication of disinfecting literary criticism of moral as well as social significance. Like any physical or biological phenomenon, like any chemical or industrial process, a literary work came to be viewed as only a product of words. Naturally, then, the nature of literary criticism also became amoral, like any discipline of science, having nothing to do beyond the functions of various parts, or the workings of various structures or systems. While the 'intentional fallacy' took away the living voice of the author, the 'affective fallacy' took away the living response of the reader. Both reiterated the scientific study of literature, restricting its activity to the explication of verbal devices, their interrelational functions, and their functions in relation to the working of the structure of which they are internal components.

The Modernists paved the way for the Post-Modernists, who carried further the activity of making literary criticism a super-speciality, subjecting it to scientific empiricism. While 'invisibility' of the author was pushed further to declare the 'death of the author', the 'intentional fallacy' gave way to the 'reader-oriented theories'. The language of the super-speciality made literary criticism far, far removed from the access of the common reader. Even those in the business of teaching literature were forced to choose their micro areas of specialization, for it was impossible for any individual scholar to keep pace with the fast developing specialities in all the areas. In an era of mass production ushered in by multinationals, literary theories could not have remained otherwise. There came in the literary market numerous brand products of the Post-Modern multinationals. Read, for example, the following from Roland Barthes to have a feel of the special language evolved by one such brand:

In an author's lexicon, will there not always be a word-as-mana, a word whose ardent, complex, ineffable, a somehow sacred signification gives the illusion that by this word one might answer for everything? Such a word is neither eccentric nor central; it is motionless and carried, floating, never *pigeonholed*, always atopic (escaping any topic), at once remainder and supplement, a signifier taking up the place of every signified. The word has gradually appeared in his work; at first it was masked by the instance of Truth (that of history), then by that of validity (that of systems and structures); now it blossoms, it flourishes, this word-as-mana is the work 'body.' One can add to this sample a small list of words to show how incomprehensible the language of criticism has become in our time. We frequently come across today in the writings of the Post-Modernist critics words such as dialogic, discourse, enthymeme, exotopy, heteroglossia; agonaporia, difference, deconstruction, grammatology, logo-centrism, phallogocentrism; genotext, phenotext, multivalent, slippage, dispositif, episteme; androcentric, androgyny, biocriticism, biologism, gynocritic, pornoglossia, sexism; actualization, cratylism, idiolect, lang, parole, paradigm, diaspora; fetishism, flaneur, homology, ideologeme, etc., etc. Specialism forces the scholars to evolve their special languages known only to those who have acquired the required efficiency in the super speciality. The special voices cannot co-exist in any common space. They must perforce remain alien to each other, each becoming a code communication, leaving no scope for general conversation.

Another bane of scientific spirit, notwithstanding its various virtues, is that, ultimately, it leads to the dehumanization of the human material. One could trace the course of scientific spirit from its early demystification of the universe to later despiritualization of society to further mechanization of human life to, finally, dehumanization of mankind. Literature and literary criticism have always opposed science on this very ground, fighting all along the fast increasing forces of science and technology, industry and commerce. They have always stood for the preservation and promotion of humanism across national boundaries, racial reservations, or cultural constraints. It is a sad phenomenon today that the Post-Modernist critical approaches

have adopted the scientific spirit of enquiry, making a casualty of the human concerns to which literature and literary criticism have always been closely related. The manner in which some of the brand products of Post-Modernism have chosen to champion the cultural, ethnic, or genderic causes, has in fact made the remedy worse than the disease. In the name of voicing the concerns of the hitherto repressed, colonized, marginalized, etc., discourses have been developed based solely on the differentiating features of 'cultural', 'ethnic' or 'genderic' life, promoting a new form of tribalism. In these discourses, mankind is viewed as an aggregation of cultural islands, suspicious of each other, clashing on the 'darkling plain', accusing each other of having encroached upon their special rights. One is reminded of Plato's caves inhabited by tribes with horizons of the mind measuring the narrow holes of their respective caves, utterly unable to comprehend the open universe.

If literature and literary criticism are to perform their destined and true function, then they will have to return to the original path of the humanities, leaving the adopted path of sciences (including social sciences) which have deflected them from their prime duty to mankind. Today, what have become more important for criticism are, not the human concerns, but the purely non-human enquiries into the nature of things—a study of principles and processes, systems and structures. As for human concerns, they are conceived, if at all, only in terms of narrow, sectarian rights of groups divided by all sorts of 'spaces.' If we look at the titles of leading books and articles in the field of criticism today, the nature it has acquired, adopted, and imbibed becomes quite clear. The direction of its drift with the dominant current of science and technology becomes quite apparent. Here is a sample list of some of the titles from the vast verbal forest that has grown over the years. *The Semiotic Challenge* (Roland Barthes), *Of Grammatology* (Jacques Derrida), *Writing and Difference* (Derrida), *The Theory of Semiotics* (Umberto Eco), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Michael Foucault), *What is an Author?* (Foucault), *Logic and Conversation* (H.P. Grice), *Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics* (Roman Jakobson), *A Theory of Literary Production* (Pierre Macherey), *The System and the Speaking Subject* (Julia Kristeva), *The Theory of Reading* (David Morse), *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Richard Rorty), *The Theory of Reading* (Frank Gloversmity), *Meaning and Truth in the Arts* (John Harpers), etc., etc. This list shows how criticism in our time has turned heavily theoretical and, finally, philosophical, focusing on either theorizing about how meaning is produced, or enquiring into the meaning of meaning, working of language, or the behaviour of words. In sum, the nature of criticism has acquired the character of science in all respects, turning away from the humanities, and has become a philosophico-scientific discipline called theory, which mixes literature with non-literary writings and the pseudo-literary films or journalism, and confines itself to the study of sociological behaviour of literary texts, their political overtones, their psychological suggestions, their anthropological patterns, their historical narrations, their linguistic structures, etc. The Post-Modernist criticism has done to literature what science had done to life; it has demystified its creation, despiritualized its contents, and dehumanized its interpretation.

Criticism today has been taken over by the disciplines of philosophy and psychology, sociology and anthropology, entirely changing the parameters of reading literary works. We no longer look for aesthetic or moral grounds for the appreciation of an art work. We look for the sub-texts and sub-structures, for faultlines and fictographs, using the apparatus borrowed from one of the disciplines just mentioned. The reason why this has happened is convincingly stated by Northrop Frye in the following:

It is clear that the absence of systematic criticism has created a power vacuum, and all the neighbouring disciplines have moved in hence the prominence of Archimedes fallacy...the notion that if we plant our feet solidly enough in Christian or democratic or Marxist values we shall be able to lift the whole of criticism at once with a dialectic crowbar. But if the varied interests of critics could be related to a central expanding pattern of systematic comprehension, this

undertow would disappear, and they would be seen as converging on criticism instead of running away from it.

Since Frye made this observation in 1957 much water has flown through the Thames. The critical activity has changed beyond recognition. All aspects of a literary work are talked about in the name of criticism except the aspect of its humanity. What we have, in fact, is not literary criticism but only critical attitude drawn from various disciplines that have claimed the vacancy the failure of criticism has created.

No doubt, the discussion of art, particularly literature, cannot confine itself to the formal aspect of art considered in utter isolation. It must consider as well the participation of the literary work in the human vision of the goal of social effort, "the idea of complete and classless civilization. This idea of complete civilization is also the implicit moral standard to which ethical criticism always refers, something very different from any system of morals.' Unfortunately, the current craze in criticism for the idea of 'pluralism' and 'amoralism' has left the critical effort devoid of all moral and humane concerns. Its 'grand flourish of negativised rhetoric', comprising such impressive keywords as 'discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, decentring, indeterminacy, and antitotalization', does hypnotise some intellectuals, but it leaves highly dissatisfied the steady explorer of ultimate meanings in literature as well as life. If pluralism means an assembly of mass individual or group opinions, if questioning means challenging one and all who have attained any respectability in society, then one might compare the Post-Modernist critical effort to a jungle of high-pitched voices raised in closed corridors. The goal of criticism must remain, as Frye insists: '...the ability to look at contemporary social values with the detachment of one who is able to compare them in some degree with the infinite vision of possibilities presented by culture. One who possesses such a standard of transvaluation is in a state of intellectual freedom.'"

The current critical effort refuses to decide upon any goal of literature or literary criticism beyond the contingent. It is high time that resistance was put up to the confusing critical cries of our time, paving the way for the restoration of the every-abiding goal of literature and literary criticism.